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Development and educational policy in Latin America

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From the end of the Second World War to the close of the 1960s, the idea prevailed in Latin America that educational development was an indispensable requisite for the successful promotion of economic growth and distributive justice. Although opinions differed as to the level that should be given priority –primary, secondary or higher– all agreed that through the expansion of the formal education system a state of affairs would be reached that resembled the picture presented by the developed countries which served as models.

But some years ago doubts started to be cast on the validity of these assertions respecting the economic and social effects of educational development; since then, traditional and 'developmentalist' ideas alike have began to totter, and new utopias have come to the fore whose aspiration is to create a system of non-formal education, accessible to all, egalitarian and lifelong. The purpose of the article is to present a critical analysis of the utopias, and to show that although their proposals have some positive features they cannot constitute a satisfactory basis for the reorientation of the educational system in Latin America.

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1.

Legitimating principles

1. Any policy implies both a foundation in fact –sound or mistaken– and a utopian dimension. The particular weight of each of these two components and the way in which they are combined vary enormously; nor is it even always easy to distinguish between them. Educational policy is certainly no exception to this general rule, although the utopian element is probably more clearly present in it. Since the beginning of the 1960s diverse fundamental principles have been suggested for educational policies in Latin America, as well as widely varying means of attaining their objectives, and different utopias for society in general and education in particular. The hallmark of this process seems to have been a tireless search for novelty, with the result that often supposedly new proposals masked familiar and tested notions which had fallen into neglect or which their proponents believed themselves to have discovered. Today, following exhaustive criticism of the ideas accepted for a time, new and more attractive utopias are being constructed. All these real or apparent changes justify a historical analysis of the fundaments of educational policies over the last twenty years, an attempt at a critical review of the different proposals and an assessment of the present state of our knowledge.

This preliminary and partial investigation is centred on the basic principles and assumptions underlying educational policies, without going into the details of the policies themselves or the specific problems of carrying them out. Again, since the models recommended have originated outside the region, this article may be considered, from another angle, as a study of the heteronomy of our educational policies.

The importance of such policies needs no urging. Alike in government statements, in the reflections of intellectuals and in society as a whole, education appears to be one of the values most highly prized in Latin America. Social demand for it has grown enormously since the Second World War, and the expanding educational system has become one of the most important sources of employment in every country. Governments concern themselves with the education problem not only because of ideological convictions but because of the political importance of what they do in this field: the support they gain or lose by it.

Obviously, too, this social demand can be satisfied in very varied degrees, depending essentially on the real power structure of the different social groups, and whatever basic principles and utopian ideals are postulated, structural conditions raise insurmountable obstacles to the attainment of the declared goals.

The structural factors just mentioned are ever-present in the background of this article.[1] We are not primarily concerned with them, however, but with the different models put forward since the Second World War and the stages which can be distinguished in the evolution of the fundaments of educational policies. First, however, what may be called the traditional model in Latin America must be described in brief and somewhat rough outline.

[1] The present writer has analysed them on many occasions. See *Estudios sobre educación y empleo,* Cuadernos del ILPES series, Santiago, Chile, 1973; (with Néstor Campiglia and Susana Prates), "Education, occupation and development" in *International Social Science Journal,* Vol. XIX, Nº 3, Paris, UNESCO, 1967; "Educación y cambio social" in C. Arnold Anderson *et al., Educación y cambio social,* Buenos Aires, ECO, 1971.

2. An analysis of this kind always runs the risk of lapsing into over-simplification. Some assumptions are common to many approaches, and the need to higlight others that are distinctive of any one particular conception should not cause its complexity to be forgotten. Such simplification is occasionally almost inevitable, however, within the limits of an article.

3. It is especially common in respect of what can be called the traditional ideologies in the field of education. The great reformers of the last century, Sarmiento or Varela, for example, view education as a good in itself; human beings cannot develop fully except through education, just as they cannot develop fully except in a democracy. The latter presupposes the existence of citizens, which only the educated can properly be. A basic conviction of the believers in enlightenment is that the progress of education is alone capable of generating true political and social progress, and, furthermore, that once the former has been brought about, the other two will inevitably follow.

Education, then, is every human being's right, and it is the duty of the State to provide it. Those who wish to contrast this viewpoint with later and with relatively recent ideas frequently succumb to the temptation of adding that it attached no importance to the economic role of education. This is not so, however. One of the assumptions of this concept is that education contributes to the increase of wealth and that better educated peoples possess more economic goods. Economic development is not referred to by that name, of course, but its positive relationship with education is asserted all the same in different words. What happens is that for some of its proponents this argument plays a less important role than the other, but there can be no doubt of its

meaning that only education can free us from economic hardship, just as it will free us from political hardship.

What kind of education, though? The education which the State has the duty of providing to all citizens is what today would be called basic, and was then called primary. The great fight of the reformers is to universalize education at this level. Its priority follows naturally from the initial assumptions: there is no true citizen body unless education is universal, no wealth without people who have a minimum educational background common to the entire population. Besides being doctrinally logical, the universalization of primary education is what is in fact offered by the society taken as a model, i.e., the North American, and also by European society. On the other hand, no particular importance is attached to State action in respect of intermediate and higher education, because it is taken for granted that the expansion of these is secondary to the universalization of primary education.

This was not the case in actual fact, of course, and Sarmiento lived long enough to express his concern because secondary education was expanding very rapidly, long before primary education became universal.[2]

The confusion about the opinions of the early reformers stems from the fact that, in the course of the subsequent process, the economic importance of education is completely cast into the shade, and the propositions regarded as the successors of those initial concepts disappear almost entirely, in favour of the arguments which we would describe today as based on human rights.

4. When the idea of economic development, and the need to promote it actively, gained ground in Latin America after the Second World War, its theorists could not fail to take up the problem of education. There are a great many shades of developmentalism, a term often used pejoratively.

A reproach common to them all, and repeatedly levelled at developmentalism in recent years, is the 'economism' of its arguments. This criticism is unfair to its better representatives. The theoretical position may be unsound, but it is clearly tied to a whole ideology on democracy and political stability as products and at the same time bases of economic development. Suffice it to recall Ahumada's words: ". . . it may be considered that the goal of programming is to attain the highest growth rate compatible with stability".[3] Admittedly –but logically enough, since the main concern is the economic problem–, every object of analysis is approached from the economic standpoint, which is valid but limited.

Of course, education is not a priority concern comparable to such areas as investment, saving or industrialization. In the first important CEPAL documents, for example,[4] neither education

[2] On the historical development of this important problem in Argentina, see the excellent book by Juan Carlos Tedesco, *Educación y sociedad en la Argentina, (1880-1900)*, Buenos Aires, Editorial Pannedille, 1970.

[3] See Jorge Ahumada, *Teoría y programación del desarrollo económico*, Cuadernos del ILPES series, first edition 1967, p. 24 (in Spanish). This contains the lectures given by that distinguished economist as from about 1955, and the context shows clearly that he is referring to political stability.

[4] Such as that of Ahumada quoted in the preceding footnote, and CEPAL, *Analyses and Projections of Economic Development. I. An Introduction to the Technique of Programming* (E/CN.12/363), United Nations publication, Sales No: 55.II.G.2., June 1955.

nor social investment in general are considered. Later studies make good this omission,[5] and view the relationship between productive investment and social investment as one of the central problems. The priorities do not change, however. The reader is cautioned that while the latter is investment it is nevertheless by its nature close to consumption expenditure and therefore should not exceed a certain level so as not to slow down the process of development, i.e., of growth of the per capita product.

This view is the consequence of adopting a particular economic theory, but not the inevitable result of starting from the standpoint of the economy, from which very different conclusions can be and have been reached. Adam Smith, Alfred Marshall and many others have insisted on the importance of education in the formation of human capital and the decisive nature of the latter in the workings of the economic system.

In any event, the initial view of the CEPAL economists had little effect on educational policies because it was very soon replaced, even in the writings of the same authors, by the approach considered in the next section.

5. The idea of education as a factor in economic development was far from new in economics, but it acquired fresh impetus as the result of a series of studies, and had a powerful impact in Latin America, as in the rest of the world. Education was regarded as an investment which increased the growth rate; thus it was no longer a costly effort which raised problems for the rapid development of societies by limiting their capacity to invest. It was seen instead as an investment in manpower which became one of the basic factors in the generation and acceleration of development. This discovery seemed to solve all problems, since apparently whether one started from the standpoint of human rights or from that of the imperatives of economic development one arrived at the same conclusion: education was of priority status. As this coincided with both public conviction and political necessity, the result was a convergence rarely evidenced in history; and indeed expressions of wonder and pleasure at such harmony were not wanting.

Educators regarded with mixed feelings the invasion by economists of a terrain which they had always defended as strictly their own. Nevertheless, the predominant reaction seems to have been gratified acceptance of so important a principle, which warranted increases in the education budget that they had always fought to obtain. In this respect, the relationship between economists and educators has not reached the state of paranoia referred to by Emmerij[6] in the context of the developed countries, although some elements of it do appear when the economists start to intrude upon the domain of the internal performance of the educational system.

As might have been expected, however, the question is not quite as simple as all that. The implications of both arguments are the same in part, but not necessarily in relation to all the problems that arise in determining the objectives

[5] CEPAL, *Economic Development, Planning and International Co-operation* (E/CN.12/582/Rev.1), Santiago, Chile, United Nations publication, Sales Nº: 61.II.G.6., 1961.

[6] See Louis Emmerij, *Can the School Build a New Social Order?*, Amsterdam, London, New York, Elsevier Scientific Company, 1974.

and priorities of educational policy. If the point of departure is the idea that education is an investment, it will be essential, in view of the limited resources available, to invest in such forms and types of education as will ensure a higher return. There is no reason why these priorities should necessarily conflict with those deriving from the concept of human rights, but neither are they bound to be compatible, particularly if there are many ways of interpreting the implications of the two sets of principles; and such tensions and conflicts existed, as will be seen later.

6. First, however, a point too important to be passed over is that the concept of education as an investment creating human resources for development emerged when the idea of planning had gained considerable ground in Latin America. It is understandable that these two ideas should go together. If education is an investment, and mainly a public one, if resources are scarce and if their use must be rationalized to achieve development, education must be planned, and the educational plan must form part of the overall plan. Thus there came into vogue educational planning and human resources planning, which are not exactly the same concept, although some may confuse them, but which are obviously closely linked.

2.

What action should be taken?

1. Given the basic premises referred to above and the manifest inadequacy of the educational system, the question is what policy should be adopted. A review of the solutions proposed not only serves as a reminder of past history, but determines how far the earlier ideas were too general, inasmuch as they concealed many divergences, and to what extent they had certain elements in common.

2. The best course is to start with the latter. An inevitable assumption is the existence of a model, i.e., that offered by the *common elements* of the *present* system in the developed countries.

The term *common elements* is italicized because, taking an abstract view of education-development, it is possible to show that certain basic characteristics are present in all developed educational systems; from that standpoint, whether a system is capitalist or socialist is immaterial, as most writers affirm or take for granted.

The word *present* is italicized because, although a process of change is proposed to bring Latin American education closer to the model and the need for this process to be conducted by stages is recognized, the starting-point for defining it is also an abstract, a-historical conception: so much so that no account is taken of the characteristics of the historical process whereby the developed societies arrived at the present educational system, or the Latin American countries established the system they now have. This omission, which in theory may be surprising, is perfectly logical. If their evolution had been duly considered, it would have been realized that the two processes are so different that the assumption of a common point

of arrival is indefensible as such, since neither the point of departure nor the stages on the road are similar.[7]

3. A second common element is the fact that attention is concentrated on the formal educational system and on the identification of its shortcomings in relation to the model. The first of these features coincides with a long-standing tradition in Latin America, where all expectations are centred on the formal system. Non-formal education rarely appears in reflections on the subject, and when it does it is considered mainly as an obstacle to the changes desired. Underlying this idea is the following postulate: the disparity between the overall cultural levels of developed and developing societies is even more marked than the difference that exists *or may exist* between their educational systems. (If the disparities are in fact equal, it is assumed to be easier and quicker to improve the level of the educational system than that of the social system in general.)

The logical conclusion is that in developing societies much more can be expected from socialization in the school than from socialization in general in terms of its contribution to change and development —which, incidentally, expressed in simpler language, is a very old argument. The non-formal educational media, therefore, in so far as they are considered to be more dependent upon spontaneous socialization mechanisms and the family, are dangerous instruments of conservation rather than instruments of change. The logic of this whole argument, however, is merely implicit. Some of those whose attention is centred on the school system would perhaps disagree with it, and more will be said about its nature later on.

More decisive reasons for the concentration of attention on the formal system are that historically it has always been the most important; that it may be credited with a capacity for relatively rapid change if an adequate policy is adopted; and, lastly, that it lends itself more readily to quantification and planning than the other education media.

As regards the second aspect, namely, the identification of short-comings, the essential requisite for determining them is to compare the educational pyramids in developing and developed countries, or present rates of access to the different levels, or both. Obviously these and other ancillary methods lead to the discovery of fairly pronounced differences at all levels, which need to be overcome. The question then is what objectives should be given priority in the strategies pursued. It is on this point that opinions differ widely.

4. A possible objective might have been to improve all levels so as to approach, either gradually or rapidly, a situation close to that of the developed countries. Few, particularly in the field of economics or planning, accepted this, probably for the following reasons.

First, the shortage of resources made so ambitious a project impracticable in the majority of the countries. Secondly, in view of this shortage, it was only natural that investment in education should be channelled into those levels or branches of formal education which produced the highest economic returns, and considerable differences of opinion

[7] As the present writer has already endeavoured to show. See "Algunas paradojas del desarrollo de la educación en América Latina y su influencia sobre la universidad", in *Estudios sobre educación y empleo*, Cuadernos del ILPES series, Santiago, Chile, 1973.

existed among the most noted economists as to which those branches were. If on the one hand the need to adopt priorities was unanimously accepted, on the other hand these discrepant views combined with other factors to create a remarkable degree of confusion, on which it is worth while to dwell here.

According to one current of thought, a comparative analysis unquestionably shows that secondary education is the pivot of development and that investment in this area yields the best return. Almost always, although not inevitably, this conviction is accompanied by the idea that in the developing countries the notable results of investment at that level can be fully achieved only if the traditional academic education is abandoned in favour of a system more in keeping with development needs, which should be of a polytechnic or diversified nature, should provide training for the labour market instead of the university, etc. In other words, investment in secondary education should be accompanied by an instrumental and utilitarian concept of education at this level.

Setting aside for the present the intrinsic merits of the theory, what must be noted is that in addition to any it might have, it was preached on other no doubt more important grounds. In the first place, criticism of the traditional secondary education had long had influential adherents in Latin America: so long, indeed, that a utilitarian conception not very different from that described had been proposed and in some cases introduced in the region at the end of the last century, that is, before the existence of the secondary education that was now being criticized as traditional. Since these attempts had generally been forgotten, however, the voice of the existing criticism enthusiastically hailed as a novelty a concept that was backed by the opinion of trained economists. More weight, perhaps, was carried by the fact that for the middle classes secondary education had always been of fundamental importance, and anything that could be done for it, in whatever guise, was welcome. Lastly, if the new utilitarian approach had some elements which conflicted with their highest expectations, it was not so very difficult to adapt or distort –whichever term is preferred– the former in such a way as to satisfy the latter. In this its supporters were perfectly right, as became evident later. To clinch the matter, this theory became the official policy of the World Bank and determined its loans to the education sector for several years. As everyone knows, the rationale of a theory becomes singularly compelling when it is backed by so rational an instrument as money.

Concurrently, some specialists maintain that the developing countries' great lack is high-level personnel. Productivity cannot be expected to increase if, as the figures show, percentages of high-level personnel in the various sectors of activity in Latin America are minimal compared with those recorded in the developed countries. What is more, an immense proportion of high-level occupations is filled by persons who have not only had no higher education, but have not even completed the secondary –nor, in many cases, the primary– cycle. Such low qualifications in those conducting the economy are incompatible with development; conversely, if they were higher they would have a significant dissemination effect. The same may be said of this élitist theory of development as of the one described before: it had substantial support irrespective of its intrinsic merits. In Latin America the

social groups with access to the university and those that make their living in it or within its orbit have a recognized political influence. Moreover, they had already obtained or were obtaining an increasing proportion of expenditure on education for the universities, so they could not fail to look favourably upon a doctrine so manifestly in harmony with their own interests. An important factor in this case too was that IDB adopted the doctrine as a basis for its policy on loans to the sector. Once again the rationale became more rational . . .

Lastly, nearly everyone accepted in theory the priority of literacy campaigns and primary education; but although it was always stated to be important, it was seldom presented as excluding the priorities referred to above. The reasons for this are not hard to understand. In the first place, economists and human resources specialists rarely attached priority to elementary education; secondly, if elementary education was so backward in Latin America it was because the groups which might in theory have supported firm priority for it had very little power; and, thirdly, the only external backing came from UNESCO. This had two limitations: first, that it was not as exclusive as the support given by the World Bank and IDB; and secondly, that since UNESCO is not a Bank, its influence as regards the possibilities of obtaining loans was very indirect, though helped by the fact that AID assigned a certain priority to primary education.

5. The situation thus summarized in very broad outline is, to say the least, paradoxical, and merits some additional comments.

First, on the curious, though not complete, agreement of the international agencies, particularly banks, with the theories in vogue, while they all adopted different priorities. In fact, whether or not by *ex profeso* arrangements, there was a kind of division of labour among the financing institutions, some giving special attention to secondary education and others to higher education. Secondly, on the no less curious and, in this respect, complete agreement with regard to education between the financing institutions and the strongest internal pressure groups in Latin America, always in favour of the expansion of secondary or higher education: one of many examples that are worth taking into account in considering the problem of external dependence, in which internal groups invariably mediate.

The paradox is that two such different priorities could not seriously be adopted at the same time, but by virtue of the above-mentioned forces they were. In practice, the governments received loans for secondary education on the basis of scientific demonstrations assigning priority to education at this level, and the universities —which, although they could not officially accept loans without government approval, to a great extent availed themselves of their autonomy to act on their own account— obtained them on the basis of other no less scientific demonstrations that the best possible course was to give priority to higher education. Thus, scientific principles and financial needs were, to all intents and purposes, equally satisfied.

6. It must not be forgotten that usually at the core of these conflicting internal and international pressures, of so many different doctrines on how best to orient the development of education, was the supposed Grand Master of its rationalization, the educational planner. Nowadays, educational planners are often heard to

say that their plans either remained on paper or were unrealistic, etc. Others have found that they were unrealistic because they were of too global a nature and were not broken down by regions, a truly reprehensible omission in the present phase of development planning ideas (or fashions?).

All these justifications, and others which are not given here, once again bear witness to the fertile imagination displayed by technocracy in inventing self-criticisms which at the same time demonstrate that new and supposedly more efficient technocratic action will demolish the errors of the past and build a promising future.

The most striking fact, in my view, is not that their plans should have failed or been of little use, but that in the existing circumstances they should have been able to formulate plans at all. Obviously, they managed to do so by making the plans as unlike as possible to what a plan was in theory, as has been amply demonstrated.[8]

7. Much more important than the planning situation was the fact that, as might have been expected, educational policy was extraordinarily confused as regards objectives and priorities. This confusion stemmed from the main causes indicated above. In practice, the chief victim was primary education. There cannot be said to have been any sweeping changes in policy towards it; it was already the poor relation of the system and continued to be such; but the situation worsened because the new priorities assigned to secondary and higher education by the financing institutions were reflected in substantial loans to many countries, with their corresponding counterpart expenditure, which raised the proportion of the educational budget allocated to those levels, at any rate at the stage of implementation, even if the estimates were still the same as in the past. In secondary education, for example, World Bank loans for establishing polytechnic institutes, under different names in the various countries, were tied to the recruitment of high-level teaching personnel, and other requirements of a different kind, which, in addition to the maintenance of large-scale buildings and equipment, meant much higher expenditure per student than is usual in secondary education of the traditional type. Thus the considerable difference between the direct costs of the first two levels was accentuated, and the primary-education deficits became much more chronic, because of the imperative need to keep up the counterpart payments against international loans so as not to forfeit the chance of obtaining new ones.

Accordingly, the only clear-cut result was a further postponement of the needs and requirements of primary education on a universal basis and, therefore, a *de facto* conflict with human rights in respect of education. This was far from being a novelty, however; it merely strengthened the historical trend.

8. Undeniably there was, in spite of appearances, a certain consistency within the recommended policy itself and between it and the distribution of power in both the internal and the international society. No radical changes could be expected in education because no radical changes occurred in society either, or the changes that did take place required only simple adaptations of the educational

[8] See, *inter alia, Education, human resources and development in Latin America,* United Nations publication, Sales N°: E.68.II.G.7., 1968, pp. 214 *et seq.*

systems. In this sense, the proposals for modifying the system to a moderate extent were functional in relation to the power structure existing in most of the countries. Barriers were erected which, in practice, prevented a large proportion of the population from ever completing their primary education, but this did not create too many problems when most agricultural occupations did not require even that amount of schooling. Secondary and higher education were strengthened partly in response to the pressure of social groups and partly to meet the relatively limited need for manpower with training at those levels. The policy faced other problems, however, which were shortly to come to the fore.

3.

The collapse of developmentalist educational policy

1. The ideas briefly reviewed above are still extant and will continue to be so for some time. However, the short duration of their predominance is both surprising and noteworthy. Even the most generous estimate would date the coming into vogue of such ideas on investment in human capital, educational planning, human resources planning, concentration on priorities within the formal education system, etc., no earlier than 1955, and would put the end of the fashion at the close of the 1960s. In barely 15 years these doctrines gained influence, prevailed as far, as is possible in such a field, and came to be the target of fierce criticism, which in its turn increasingly swayed opinion.

Thus, the triumph of the doctrines described was so short-lived that no country had time to apply them systematically, much less to test, even fairly satisfactorily, either their wisdom or their errors. They carried the day before it was possible to ascertain their degree of rationality and validity in the context of Latin America, and were in full retreat before any progress had been made in this direction or in determining the degree of rationality or validity of the criticism levelled at them.

The basic reasons for so swift a triumph are the same as for so swift a defeat: the evolution of ideas on educational policy in the central countries and the new power structures in Latin America.

The central countries witnessed a major expansion in their educational systems, particularly at the secondary and higher levels, because needs at the primary level had long since been catered for, and investment in human capital increased more than proportionally to the expansion in question. In October 1961, at the OECD Conference in Washington, a document was presented on targets for education in Europe in 1970,[9] which postulated hypothetical 'high' and 'low' rates of increase in educational expenditure. The 'high' rate was in fact surpassed by all the countries; Spain and Portugal, although they exceeded it least, did so by 10 per cent. The main reasons behind this trend were

[9] See Ingvar Svennilson, Friedrich Enning and Lionel Evin, *Targets for Education in Europe in 1970*, paper presented at OECD Conference on Economic Growth and Investment in Education, Washington, October 1961.

that during the decade the real salaries of teachers rose at rates higher than those forecast and, in particular, that the number of students was much larger than had been assumed in the projections.[10]

In the United States, moreover, for the first time in the history of mankind more than half an age cohort completed the secondary cycle, and in 1971 80 per cent entered college. In this respect the theories on the influence of investment in education on economic development, etc., whatever their intentions, serve to justify a socio-political process which is acquiring overwhelming momentum.

2. In the first half of the 1960s, various writers tried to show that an increase in investment in education would raise economic growth rates, using essentially two procedures: the so-called residual method, and calculation of the rates of return. In the first case, the effect of investments in physical capital is directly estimated, and the resulting growth rates are compared with the real growth rates of the economy; when the former are deducted from the latter, an unexplained residue is left that is attributed to the training of human capital, in which formal education plays an important role, although one which it is impossible to evaluate. The second method attempts to make a direct estimate of the returns on investment in education by comparing the average incomes of persons at different educational levels, and calculating the interest on capital invested in obtaining further education as represented by the income differentials.

[10] See Louis Emmerij, *Can the School Build a New Social Order? op. cit.*, chapter I.

The conclusion reached by the first method is that during the first half of the century between 42 per cent, according to some, and approximately 66 per cent, according to others, of the increase in the product per employed person in the United States can be ascribed to the residual factor; the second method gives estimated rates of return ranging from 8 to 12 per cent, which are favourable compared with yields on capital.

The second major hypothesis in vogue in the early 1960s was that higher expenditure on education would make for less inequality in income distribution. Inasmuch as opportunities would be given to the less privileged social groups, the rates of return would tend to become more uniform among the various social strata.

This theory, regarding which, in point of fact, several economists voiced well-found doubts from the very outset, enjoyed a certain degree of currency and was heavily relied on as a basis for expansionist public policies in the education sector, either on its own account, or through the support it gave to human rights considerations. From the end of the 1960s to the present day, each and every one of its aspects has been called in question in a process which is spreading to Latin America with relative rapidity.

The calculation of the residual factor is based on weak premises. The residue comprises a large number of elements, and there is no way of determining what part of it ought to be attributed to formal education. Presumably the part in question is sizable; but it is impossible on that basis, and on that alone, to give education priority over other fields of investment. Such important parameters as entrepreneurial capacity and the

technology variable are included in the residue, and it is easy to understand the scepticism with which many economists have always eyed this method of estimating the role of education.[11]

The argument as regards rates of return on investment in education seems better founded, but it has also been the object of severe criticism. Some have alleged that additional years of education do not really mean higher productivity at work, and it has even been declared that, in the final analysis, we do not know how far the preference for educated workers is rational or irrational.[12] An assertion of this nature, which is linked to the screen hypothesis (namely, that education really serves as a screen to assist entrepreneurs in making their selection, but that productivity depends on other factors), is highly controversial and has been widely discussed. Without going into the intricate arguments currently bandied about in this connexion —an impossible task here— such a contention means that certain results are open to question which would have seemed indisputable ten years ago.

More serious still are the efforts to show that investment in education has not had the equalizing effect expected of it. The Coleman Report,[13] the book by Jencks mentioned in a footnote above, and countless other works on the subject have sought to demonstrate that the relative inequalities between groups tend to remain constant, and that investment for expanding education and establishing special policies for the underprivileged is totally unrelated to the benefits which they obtain, the reason being —*inter alia*— the powerful influence of outside factors on performance within the school system.

To sum up, the conviction that investment in education is a good thing is not disappearing, but the belief that it is in principle a priority matter has been shaken to its foundations. The developed countries invest higher proportions of their gross national product in education than do the developing countries, but how can one know whether this is not an effect rather than a cause of development?

3. Of course, doubts as to the importance of the role of education as an investment reflect on the possibility of determining the priority to be given to specific levels. If it is difficult to reach valid conclusions on the problem as a whole, it is even harder to do so on parts of it. In addition, structural situations are so varied that it appears scarcely possible for any generalizations to hold good as regards which levels play a more significant role in development, and under what conditions

4. No less important than the foregoing are the reservations concerning the classic conception of human resources planning. The OECD's Regional Project for the Mediterranean was the model that exerted most influence in Latin America, and, as a result, the criticisms levelled at it, particularly those of

[11] For a scintillating criticism see Thomas Balogh, *The Economics of Poverty*, London, Weinenfeld and Nicolson, 1966, pp. 87-107.

[12] See Christopher Jencks *et al.*, *Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America*, New York, Basic Books, 1972, p. 183.

[13] See James S. Coleman *et al.*, *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, Washington, United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1966.

Hollister,[14] greatly undermined the confidence previously felt in this field. Doubt is cast on the very possibility of defining in quantitative and qualitative terms the manpower requirements for achieving a specific level of development, or of determining how to organize a formal education system which will produce a labour force with the characteristics deemed desirable. It is also maintained that widely varying combinations of skills can produce the same or analogous results in respect of productivity; that consequently highly different expectations as regards the product of the educational system can have the same outcome; and that, lastly, no exaggerated claims can be made as to the relationship between formal education and employment, which is much more tenuous than is assumed in the classic approach to human resources planning.

The idea which has gained the most ground is that while highly flexible models with certain basic guidelines for the training of human resources can be constructed, it is impossible to go further than this. These arguments do not, of course, negate the role of planning in education, but stress that it ought to be based on criteria other than the mere input-output concept which is applied to the educational system.

5. The foregoing criticisms are not directed against the formal education system itself. Even if this were assumed to be perfect, the same problems would arise as regards, *inter alia*, investment in education, the concentration of such investment at specific levels, or human resources planning. Concurrently, however, and with steadily increasing vigour, a whole series of strictures on the formal system is taking systematic shape; it perhaps marks the most important change in this period, and constitutes a stubborn head-on attack against the school system, finding its most extreme expression in the proposal to do away with formal schooling in society.

For the purposes of this article it is pointless to analyse such views in connexion with the central countries. Applied to the developing countries, some of these criticisms are focused on the expansion potential of the formal school system. The following is the form this argument generally takes. The developing countries proposed to attempt to cover the entire school-age population at the primary or basic level, and a reasonable number at the secondary and university levels. In order to attain this target almost all of them considerably increased their expenditure on education not only in absolute terms, but also in relation to their GNP. At the end of this long and costly effort, however, large numbers of children still have no access to schooling; it even happens in some countries that although the proportion of illiterates is falling, in absolute terms their numbers are increasing. Therefore, if the countries have reached the maximum they can spend on education and are so far from attaining the goals proposed, we have proof that the indefinite expansion of the school system is too costly to be possible in developing societies, and, therefore, that new forms of education, different from the traditional school system, must be created.

A second group of criticisms is directed against the content of formal education. The most important are levelled at its academic nature, by which they mean

[14] See Robinson Hollister, *A Technical Evaluation of the First Stage of the Mediterranean Regional Project*, Paris, OECD, 1967.

the inappropriateness of its content to employment needs, to the requirements of society and of development. The schools, at their different levels, prepare people without any contact with real life, and all efforts to remedy this situation are in vain. At most, the school systems add new contents, change curricula, etc., but their basic features remain unaltered and the sole achievement is a further increase in the cost of education.

The target of a third series of strictures is the bureaucratization of the formal system. This is an immense network which in many countries is the main source of employment, and hence large bureaucratic organizations grow up which are generally centralized and highly inefficient. The most tragic result is that these and other factors end up by making bureaucrats of the teachers and professors themselves. They become civil servants whose main concern is to discharge their duties formally, and to prepare themselves, or exercise pressure, for promotion and advantageous transfers and/or higher salaries. Lastly, what they lack is the mystique necessary for giving impulse to a genuine educational project of the type that a developing society needs.

The most radical form taken by these attacks on the formal educational system is the proposal purely and simply to do away with it (Illich and his collaborators).[15] The formal system is monstruous, enormously expansive, and performs none of the functions for which it was created, or does so in a fashion that goes from bad to worse. New systems of education must be created which have no ties with the past, and in order to do this the existing system must first be demolished: in other words, society must be deschooled.

Implicit in all these criticisms, of course, is the hypothesis that other forms of education do exist and ought, according to some, to operate alongside the traditional system, or, according to others, to replace it entirely. The chief of these is what is generally called non-formal education. This system, which was almost unheard-of in Latin America fifteen years ago, is gaining increasing ground, and is viewed with growing frequency by experts as the grand panacea for all the ills diagnosed.

This arsenal of critiques, the validity of which will be analysed later on, provides one of the fundamental bases, although not the only one, for the construction of the new utopias[16] which are proposed as a substitute for existing educational policy.

[15] See Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society*, New York, Harper and Row, 1971; and B. Reimer, *School's Dead: An Indictment of the System and a Strategy of Revolution*, Garden City, New York, Anchor Books, 1970.

[16] It is an abuse of the term 'utopia' to apply it to these conceptions. In fact, they lack the better features characteristic of true utopias, including a coherent philosophical basis. They have been somewhat ironically called "utopias by aggregation of objectives" (see Aldo E. Solari, Rolando Franco and Joel Jutkowitz, *Teoría, acción social y desarrollo en América Latina*, Mexico City, Editorial Siglo XXI for ILPES, 1976, p. 621). Here and in the following pages the term is used in the ordinarily-accepted vague, but convenient, sense of an illusory vision of the future which is presented as possessing a certain degree of coherence.

4.

The new utopias and the current situation

1. In essence, the new utopias can be described in a few words. Education must be provided for all, throughout their lives, with due regard to the principles of equality. No more, no less.

Perhaps a short explanation is called for respecting the sense of the expressions just used. 'Education for all' means that all citizens must be assured of a minimum education, the content of which must meet their needs, and suffice to enable them to be true citizens in every sense of the word. 'Throughout their lives' involves the idea that education is a continuing process which goes on or should go on for ever, and whose instruments it is the duty of society to make accessible to every citizen. 'Equality' is, of course, the right of all to be placed on an equal footing as regards the possibility of utilizing those instruments to obtain permanent education. The learning polis or society discussed in the Faure Report is one way of expressing the same idea.[17]

2. How can these goals be reached? At this point a distinction must be made. Most writers hold the view that what is needed is to combine the traditional formal system, duly modified, with non-formal education and the new educational technologies. Only a harmonious conjugation of the systems and the new media which science has placed at man's disposal in the field of education can enable such complex and lofty objectives to be achieved. Almost all the exponents of the new utopias clearly cherish two beliefs side by side: one, that they could not be attained without the combination proposed, and the other, that once this is effected, their attainment is certain. The difficulties are formidable, but we have the means of overcoming them, and if a truly rational educational policy is arrived at sucess will follow as a matter of course.

For a minority, although a very influential one (Illich and his disciples) results can be obtained only through the complete destruction of the formal school system. Repeatedly, and rightly so, it has been pointed out that whereas in their critical aspects the arguments of this group are highly lucid and impressive, the content of the proposals on how to replace the school system, and how a deschooled society would operate, is much vaguer. These objections seem well-founded, but it is worth while to stress that, even if they are, the coherence of Illich's ideas is very strong. If the school system has the defects attributed to it, as most of them are irremediable it seems more logical to turn to a completely new system rather than to a combination of the old system –however rejuvenated– and the new patterns.

Nevertheless, the dominant idea is the other. It is possible and necessary to establish in educational planning, as in social planning in general, target groups, that is to say groups of persons who are in a specific situation for reasons common to all members of the group

[17] See UNESCO, International Commission on the Development of Education, *Learning to Be*, Paris, Harrap, 1972.

concerned. Through different educational media —varying roles being played by the formal and non-formal systems as the case might require—, systematically linked in many instances with instruments that are not educational in the strict sense of the word (health programmes, nutrition, etc.), satisfactory educational levels suited to the needs of such groups would be attained.

3. The difference between the traditional utopia, based on the expansion of the formal school system, and the new utopias is so enormous that there seems no need to point it out, much less analyse it. However, a few remarks are essential to underscore the fundamental points of divergence.

The traditional concept also incorporates the assumption of education for all and equality in education. It is only the idea of lifelong education that has been omitted up to recent times, for it was not until lately that the term itself was coined.[18] However, the proponents of the traditional concept were not ignorant of the fact that education is, also, an extra- and post-mural process; but they thought this less important than the intramural aspect, and held that organized social action, particularly action by the State, should concern itself with the latter.

Of greater importance is the difference in respect of equality. According to the traditional concept, the equality requirement is met only if education is universal, at least until the end of the primary cycle, and essentially the same in respect of its content and methodologies. On this basis alone is it possible to guarantee, not equal results for all, but at least equality of opportunity. The new concept is based on the belief that equality of results can be obtained through non-formal or formal education media, through various combinations of both, etc.

This discrepancy reflects another of a more basic and radical nature. The traditional concept starts with the utopian premise that an egalitarian school system can be organized within an inequitable society. Precisely because society is inequitable, if the educational process is left to the existing machinery available to the different groups for the transmission of education, the inequality can only be perpetuated. On the other hand, the organization of universal access to a system which would equalize education in terms of quality and content would make the school an agent for reducing social inequalities.

The proponents of the new utopias do not omit to underline the utopian nature of this claim, nor fail to recall the wealth of studies which show that the school is also a means of perpetuating and strengthening existing inequalities. In contrast, they do not appear to be too concerned with finding a reply to the assumption by which the other concept has always been accompanied, namely, that the out-of-school mechanisms are more exposed, so to speak, to inequality. Educational equality is a utopia which is inherent in both views; the real question is, therefore, to ascertain whether the

[18] The idea in itself is by no means new. The Report of the Committee on Public Education (drafted presumably by Condorcet) to the Legislative Assembly in France, in April 1792, after describing some ways of achieving the aim under discussion, stated: "If general education is thus continued *throughout life*, the knowledge acquired in school will not be quickly erased from memory . . . *It will be possible to demonstrate the art of self-education* . . ."* (The italics are mine). The text is reproduced in F. Buisson, *Dictionnaire de Pédagogie et d'Instruction Primaire*, Paris, Hachette, 1911. **Translator's note*: Unofficial translation.

probabilities of overcoming social equalities by setting up non-formal systems are higher or not. The other possible idea, namely, that education can have no effect whatever, seems to be rejected by both doctrines. These questions can be better understood if an analysis is made of the difficulties implicit in the new utopias.

5.

Difficulties and perplexities concerning the new utopias

1. The first of the moot points raised by the new utopian theories is the following: they start by observing that the existing formal education systems are and mainly for financial reasons will be inadequate to provide for the whole population in the age groups requiring basic education plus a considerable part of the population in other age groups, and end by asserting that it is possible to introduce another system which will serve the entire population throughout life. Non-formal education and the new technologies constitute the essential instruments of this great leap forward. To establish the truth or falsity of this claim, what is needed is not an act of faith, but rational proof. However, no such proof has been furnished. Although this does not mean that it cannot be produced, the omission is a serious one, since past experience shows that there are societies which have succeeded in universalizing basic education through the formal system, and it would be necessary to identify the specific causes which prevent others from reaching the same result. As to lifelong education, all societies without exception are very far from having attained it to an even moderately satisfactory degree, so that in this respect too proof is needed.

2. The arguments of an economic and financial nature are important enough to merit special consideration. There are in fact various lines of reasoning which become entangled or whose logic is not always easy to detect. As has been seen, one of the favourite examples cited is that of the countries which have reached the limit of what they can spend on education without having succeeded in providing schooling for their entire population. Sometimes, in relation to this problem, arguments drawn from recent research in the United States are adduced, although there the interpretation of their significance for educational policy is a matter of great controversy. Most writers are prepared to agree that new investment in education, or, if preferred, an increase in inputs, exerts little or no influence on the output of the school system; 'output' here being the cognitive ability of the students. Jencks and others conclude from this that expenditure on education should not be reduced, but increased in the light of considerations based on human rights; Moynihan maintains that it should not be increased, and can even be reduced. However, no conclusion applicable to Latin America can be drawn either from this controversy or from Moynihan's

extreme position within it. The conclusion reached by the latter writer is that "after a point school expenditure does not seem to have any notable influence on school achievement. To repeat, *after* a point. A school without a roof, or without books, or without teachers would probably not be a school in which a great deal of learning went on".[19]

In other words, even those in favour of reducing expenditure on education base this view on a phenomenon of diminishing returns after a certain level has been reached. It is very possible and fairly logical that, above a certain level of expenditure per student, the favourable effects produced are much less substantial. But in these terms the argument is inapplicable to Latin America. Which are the countries that have reached the stage of diminishing returns? Research would have to be carried out on the problem in relation to each and all of the countries of the region. Such scant evidence as exists yields varying results. For one country, the findings are similar to those appearing in United States research; in two other cases, greater expenditure on education seems to have a positive effect on school performance. The country which is approaching a situation of diminishing returns is Chile, one of those which have advanced furthest towards providing schooling for the entire population.

The evidence drawn from United States experience either conflicts with the results obtained in Latin America or, at any rate, gives no support to the idea of the financial impossibility of providing schooling for the entire population.

3. One argument which is linked with the foregoing but has a significance of its own is that the formal educational system does little or nothing to reduce inequality.

This affirmation has several specific facets, of which only the commonest and most important are considered here. The testimony of research carried out mainly in the United States suggests that education has no influence either on income distribution or on social mobility. In this case too the evidence is the subject of controversy in the country of origin. Even supposing that the assertion is true for the United States, its applicability to Latin America is more than debatable.

In the first place, this argument is linked to the assumption that expenditure has reached a level at which an increase neither improves income distribution nor promotes social mobility, as already discussed in the previous section.

Secondly, the United States research assumes dimensions to be constant which in Latin America are variable and which are fundamental in any controversy on the effects of education. For example, a satisfactory level of nutrition throughout the school-age population is taken for granted, a premise which, while logical for the United States, would be absurd in the case of Latin America.

Lastly, a basic difference is overlooked, which cannot be disregarded, although its implications are far from clear in the present state of knowledge: the distribution of education is better

[19] See Daniel P. Moynihan, 'Equalizing Education: In Whose Benefit?' in Donald M. Levine and Mary Jo Baine, The *'Inequality' Controversy: Schooling and Distributive Justice*, New York, Basic Books, 1975, p. 100. (Italics in the original text.)

than that of income in the United States and in the most developed European countries.

Again the same conclusion is reached; the point can only be settled by evidence drawn from the Latin American situation itself. But owing to the lack of research all that can be offered is a series of hypotheses or conjectures of varying probability.

In the first place, everything seems to suggest that in the Latin American countries, with the possible exception of Chile, Argentina and Uruguay, the distribution of education is even more unequal than that of income. Under these conditions it seems very unlikely that education can have a positive effect in respect of more equitable distribution.

An even more serious fact is that an improvement in the distribution of education –still leaving it worse than that of income, however– does not appear to have had any favourable impact, as Barkin has sought to demonstrate in the case of Mexico.[20]

Arguments of this type, based on data at a high level of aggregation, seem to have much less importance in settling the problem than is sometimes attributed to them. The fact that the distribution of education improves while that of income remains the same or even deteriorates does not prove that the former has no influence on the latter. The factors which affect income distribution are manifold, and until more detailed studies exist it can always be argued that education has a positive influence which has offset the action of other factors, and that without the improvement in the distribution of education, income distribution would have been even more inequitable.

That education *per se* cannot change income distribution is obvious enough. It is reasonable to believe, however, that public expenditure on education has a favourable redistributive impact. Jallade has proved in the case of Colombia[21] that this impact is the composite product of a very favourable effect of public expenditure in the case of primary education, a much less favourable one in that of secondary education and a regressive one in that of higher education.

In other words, certain forms of education financing, particularly expenditure on basic education, exert a moderate but undeniable influence in favour of better income distribution.

An ancillary argument can be derived from the fact that the rates of return on educational investment are high in Latin America –more so than in the United States.[22] Admittedly, the existing data must be taken with considerable caution. The calculation of the rates of return does not make allowance either for the effects of individual ability or skill, which are reflected in more years of education and presumably in higher income at work, or for those of the socio-economic

[20] See David Barkin, *La Educación: ¿una barrera al desarrollo económico?*, in *El Trimestre Económico*, Vol. XXXIII, Nº 4, Mexico City, Fondo de Cultura Económica, October-December 1971, pp. 951-993.

[21] See Jean Pierre Jallade, *Public Expenditure on Education and Income Distribution in Colombia*, Occasional Papers, Nº 18, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1974.

[22] See, for example, Miguel Urrutia Montoya, "La educación como factor de movilidad social", in *Cuadernos de economía*, Bogotá, Universidad Católica, December 1975, Nº 37, p. 22, where a table covering various Latin American countries is presented.

origin of the students. Both should be discounted in order to form a more exact notion of what can be considered as a rate of return on education itself. Recently Larry Griffin sought to show that if the two factors in question are introduced into the seven surveys which have been used in the United States to calculate rates of return, these are found to be over-estimated by between 35 and 40 per cent.[23]

There is no means of knowing whether the over-estimation which is obviously bound to exist in the calculations made for Latin America is greater, lesser, or about the same. It might be supposed that inasmuch as the social differences are more marked the over-estimation is likely to be greater; however, since the school population covers a much narrower spectrum than in the United States, social differences within it may possibly be smaller. In any case there are grounds for the belief that a fairly substantial rate of return does exist, although it is not as high as that appearing in the usual calculations. Urrutia,[24] maintaining as a constant the education of the parents, a relatively valid indicator of the socio-economic origin of the students, finds a positive link between the education of the child and parental income.

In short, the existing evidence is far from conclusive; it does, however, indicate that expenditure on education has a favourable influence, or at least furnishes no data to warrant the belief that any good would be done by reducing it.

4. The favourite weapon in the debate, however, is the example of the countries which have reached the limit or assumed limit of possible expenditure on education and despite that have not succeeded in providing schooling for their entire population. Let us assume that a country really has reached this limit and that only 50 per cent of the population receive five years of basic education. On this assumption, which is on the optimistic side for Latin America, schooling still has to be provided for 50 per cent of the population, a need that can be met through the new media or by combining these with the old methods. Obviously, the combination must cut the unit costs of education by half so that the desired result can be obtained with the same resources. In reality the cost would have to be reduced much more, since this expansion in respect of the age groups absorbed by the formal system today would have to be supplemented by currently non-existent mechanisms for educating the entire population throughout life. Since at the same time it is admitted that an unspecified part of the population will continue to be served by the formal system, the question arises of how to check its long-standing trend towards ever-increasing costs.

In response to these objections, stress is commonly laid on the role of the new technologies in making it possible to extend education to the masses at very low costs. Not all the new technologies have low costs, however; some are expensive, and there is no certainty that the final result will be cheap enough to provide grounds for the hopes implicit in the new utopias.

[23] See Larry Griffin, "Specification Biases in Estimates of Socioeconomic Returns to Schooling", in *Sociology of Education*, Vol. 49, Nº 2, Albany, N.Y., The American Sociological Association, April 1976, pp. 121-139.

[24] See Urrutia Montoya, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-31.

Furthermore, the formal system exists and the apostles of the new concept do not propose to destroy it, but to reform it. How would its costs be reduced? An essential part of the costs is represented by the salaries of the teaching staff. Although in many countries they are low in individual terms, as a whole they constitute a very heavy burden. What political transformation would be required to reduce their share in expenditure on education? Moreover, in most of the countries the service offered by primary education is wretchedly poor. How could it be further constricted? And if instead of being constricted it were developed as it should be, what means could be found of obtaining the overall reduction of costs needed for the utopia to be workable?

5. A striking feature of the controversy is the scant attention paid in the criticism of expenditure in the formal system to its internal priorities. In many countries higher education has come to account for more than a third of all educational expenditure. Brazil, for example, in 1973 allocated 35 per cent of total expenditure to the primary level and exactly the same proportion to higher education. This largely accounts for the inability of the system to universalize basic education. Countries in which the university has never absorbed more than 20 per cent of total expenditure, such as Uruguay, have succeeded in fulfilling this aim to a more or less satisfactory degree.

When the formal system is denounced as ineffectual because it expends the maximum available resources without achieving its objectives, and at the same time the problem of the internal priorities is disregarded, a solution is being offered that conserves the priorities existing within the system, shirking discussion of their significance.

6. No less conservative is the assumption that it is impossible to spend more on education. Why? Is it perhaps because someone has decided that it is rationally impossible to spend less on armaments? The riposte that, given conditions in the Latin America of today, it would be utopian to expect a reduction of military expenditure that would benefit education seems a kind of fencing that suits oddly with the new ideas. Can it be that the transformation of society implied by the conception of education they are urging is any less utopian? It is difficult to weigh utopias in the balance, but utopia for utopia the most desirable is the best.

7. The criticisms of the bureaucratization and fossilization of the formal system hit the mark. Nevertheless, one general comment on them seems called for. Broadly speaking, they show that formal education cannot attain the utopian objectives which many theorists have proposed, but these objectives themselves are not re-examined and denounced as utopian; instead, they are accepted and formal education is attacked for being incapable of fulfilling them. The assumption is that other methods could make it possible to achieve them. In this reiteration of objectives, in the refusal to consider whether, in the form and within the time-limits proposed, they are attainable by any society, in the condemnation of a system existing *de facto* on their basis, and in the acceptance of an

ideal and vaguely-conceived system, lies the very essence of the new utopias, which, as such, deserves careful consideration.

6.

A new system of illusions?

1. The bureaucratization and conservatism of the formal education system are hard to deny. Its capacity to change is slight, sometimes non-existent. This is not a novel criticism, of course, but one often levelled in the past: the history of education is an inexhaustible source of examples of the resistence of educational institutions to innovation.

But this is not the heart of the matter. The question is, what are the nature and origin of the changes contemplated. Again, it is a difficult one to pose in purely abstract terms, without reference to specific historical situations. The attempt to do so seems to be a flaw common to both the old and the new utopias.

A first basic query is: what can be expected from education with regard to change? No answer can be given unless it is specified what changes are meant and what would be their historico-social context.

Since education is a social phenomenon, it may be taken for granted that theories on educational change depend on the theories which are accepted about social change in general. This relationship, however, is more complex than may appear at first sight. Normally, for example, a distinction is drawn between theories of social change based on consensus and those based on conflict, the former being represented by structuralism and functionalism and the latter by marxism, among other possibilities. Apart from being over-schematic, this distinction does not even have necessarily differing implications for the problems of educational change. The reason is that the two theories have a common root, which may be described as structuralist if one is so inclined, and which leads them both to view changes in education as essentially derived from social change. While they differ enormously in their way of conceiving social change, and thus in the meaning they attach to education, they agree on the central idea that, ultimately, important changes in education can only occur as a consequence of others that have already taken place in the social system.

Sociological analysis seems to have shown that the idea that education, whether formal or non-formal, can be the *primum mobile* of radical change is wholly mistaken. Societies change more or less radically; and these changes, sooner or later (sometimes much later), penetrate into the educational system, which plays a part in hindering or strengthening them or in creating minor internal innovations of its own. But education and the changes introduced within it can hardly be a basic cause of social transformations.

At any rate, whereas thousands of examples may be given of the slowness of educational institutions to incorporate changes, none can be found that clearly show significant changes pro-

duced by education. There is the phenomenon of education as a revolutionary instrument, i.e., used by the group in power once the revolution has triumphed. The role of education in this case, however, is in no way different from that of the reactionary education established once the forces of reaction have triumphed. It is a tool for imposing and maintaining changes which have already occurred.

In a pluralistic society, the power structure tends to be mirrored in the system of domination implanted in education. It may be alleged that often groups which do not pertain to that system may nevertheless manage to acquire some power in education, which may thus become an instrument for changing the power relations in the global society. This is true, but only within very narrow limits, as is proved by what happens whenever such groups go too far and openly attempt to place the educational system at the service of their ideals or their interests, or both. The reaction is not slow in coming, and it then becomes clear just how relative is the autonomy of the educational system.

The basic error lies precisely in the absurd and fanciful attempt to separate education from society and then transform it into an autonomous source of social change; and it is an error which may be committed in relation to any form of education. Furthermore, great changes may take place in society and yet, on the surface at least, very few in education, but this occurs when it serves the purpose of the new groups in power: not because education is autonomous, but precisely because it is not. When Christianity triumphed in Rome, a great controversy broke out among the Christians: what to do with the Roman school system, which was undeniably an excellent network. Many argued that the existing system should be destroyed and that a fresh start should be made from scratch. In the end, however, the idea of preserving the system almost intact won the day. Some writers have stressed how very slight the changes introduced by Christianity were, and how extraordinary it was that the old pagan names and characters should have been kept on as instruments of education. It may be maintained, with Marrou,[25] that only one innovation is observable, namely, the introduction of the words 'Blessed be the Lord' on the first page of every text and a carefully-drawn cross on each of the following pages. All the rest of the system continued to function just as before. Obviously, however, this change is fundamental. It expresses a whole system of new beliefs and values. The pagan authors may still be studied, but inserted in the new system their stories become part of mythology and no longer belong to religion. Victorious Christianity could not but use so important an instrument already established in society, and to that end the necessary changes were introduced to bring it into line with Christian values and no others.

Many other arguments might be adduced. What is important is that they all lead to the conclusion that it is absurd to reproach one type of education for being incapable of producing changes of a specific kind —as absurd as to think that any other type could produce them: the fallacy lies in the shared premise.

[25] Henri-Irénée Marrou, *Histoire de l'Education dans l'Antiquité*, 2nd. ed., Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1950, pp. 423-431.

Essentially, then, the really important changes in education are generated outside it, and, therefore, presuppose considerable changes in society. This conclusion places the new utopias in a more awkward position. The aim of creating a learning society is identical with that of profoundly transforming society as a whole; and in society the distribution of education is linked with the distribution of power.

2. The neglect or under-estimation of the difficulties pointed out in the preceding section is clearly exemplified in the problem of education's contribution to social equality.

It is common knowledge that generally speaking the children of those who have accumulated more goods in a society in turn receive in it more education of the formal type; and, likewise, that formal education is a way of confirming the existing status distribution rather than altering it. An abundant literature has stressed these points. One of the most important interpretations leads to the concept of the school system as a means of cultural reproduction tending to maintain social differences, since the family transmits the basic means to acquire cultural capital, while the school transmits the cultural capital itself but not the basic means to acquire it. As a result the school merely sanctions and legitimates the existing inter-family differences in cultural capital.[26] Whatever the validity of this and other explanations –discussion of which is beyond the scope of the present article– it should be stressed that the basic cause of inequality is always *outside* the formal system, stemming from social inequality as evidenced in families. Any educational system will be subject to the influence of inequality of this kind, and it is not clear what miraculous qualities a non-formal system, for example, could possess to escape it.

In the last analysis, then, any system of education in a society with very marked inequalities tends to confirm and transmit them. This is not to say that education has no role as an instrument of mobility. In some situations and for some groups it has played such a part. Carried to extremes, the theory of the reproduction of cultural capital is untenable: if it really worked in practice, the number of families possessing cultural capital would be bound to decline steadily. Only families which possessed it could transmit the means of gaining access to it; the others could not. The former could but would not necessarily do so; the latter could not do so in any circumstances. Therefore, from generation to generation the number of families with a given cultural capital would tend to dwindle. The empirical evidence shows that education is an instrument of mobility for some families, which obviously implies that there are structural possibilities of mobility and that education is not too unequally distributed.

On the other hand, the idea that education is necessarily an instrument of social mobility *per se*, so dear to many proponents of utopias, seems absurd. However, to condemn the educational system because it does not fulfil the expectations or illusions cherished with respect to it is meaningless;

[26] See, for example, one of the latest versions of the thinking of Pierre Bourdieu, "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction", in Richard Brown (ed.), *Knowledge, Education and Social Change, Papers in the Sociology of Education*, London, The British Sociological Association, 1973, pp. 71-112.

and still less does it prove that other forms of education can play such a role more effectively.

3. This brings us once again to the problem of non-formal education. Although the term is often used loosely, most authors who refer to it tend to distinguish between formal, non-formal and informal education. The term non-formal is defined by Coombs, for example, as applicable to "any organized, systematic educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population, adults as well as children".[27] Formal education is synonymous with schooling, and informal education is the residual category which includes all the remaining ways of learning.

For the purposes of this article there would be no point in embarking on a critical analysis of these definitions, which are mentioned only because they represent the broadest consensus on the question. It is worth emphasizing that non-formal education is organized and systematic, features which it shares with formal education and which are the two that essentially distinguish it from informal education *strictu sensu*.

According to the most widely accepted theories, the specific characteristics of non-formal education lie in its costs, its structure, its teaching methods, its links with the job structure and the nature of its rewards.

A major argument put forward in favour of non-formal education is that it is less expensive than formal education and would thus resolve the much-canvassed problem of the limits on educational expenditure. To tell the truth, no systematic comparison following rules that make it strictly fair to both sides has been carried out. For example, the State or mixed public/private institutions which exist in Latin America to train manpower —Chile's National Vocational Training Institute (Instituto Nacional de Capacitación Profesional - INACAP), Brazil's National Industrial Apprenticeship Service (Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Industrial - SENAI), etc.— have varying costs which cannot reasonably be compared with those of formal education since their goals and methods are very different. Some forms of vocational training which fall in the category of non-formal education are very expensive, and the cost per student is higher than in formal education; obviously, however, no conclusion can be drawn from this, since they imply, *inter alia*, the use of expensive equipment which the latter can do without. Moreover, in such cases non-formal education is not designed to replace formal education but to complement it.

The argument that it would be cheaper to substitute non-formal for formal education altogether, or to a large extent, hangs upon several assumptions. The most important derives from the fact that both in the United States and in Latin America many cases that can be cited to substantiate this contention are based on mainly voluntary services.

It may be estimated that for the time being non-formal education in Latin America does not cover more than 5 per cent of the total number of

[27] See Philip Coombs, *Attacking Rural Poverty*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1974, p. 8.

educands, and no attempt at State control appears to be made, except in respect of large institutions for vocational training, adult education, etc. The other forms, ranging from private academies to a large number of community education movements outside the school system, are subject to very little control, if any.

It is precisely these which are the most promising from the financial point view, in terms of lower costs, and which, as pointed out above, are based on voluntary services. What would happen if non-formal education expanded sufficiently to replace formal education or complement it to a significant extent?

Obviously this is a matter of conjecture; but then it is likewise mere guesswork to suppose that the relatively low costs which obtain in a very special situation will be maintained if considerable growth occurs. In the first place, it would be reasonable to believe that, in the event of such growth, State control would be inevitable. A system of non-formal education which reached a large number of the population, and fulfilled an increasingly important function, would have the same chance of escaping State control as formal education, since the essential reason for this control lies in the importance of the social function of education, and not in its formal or non-formal character.

A second reasonable surmise would be that, in the conditions prevailing in Latin America, the system would tend to undergo a good deal of bureaucratization, that many voluntary and unpaid functions would become remunerated, that real or apparent technification would be inevitable and that, in sum, costs would rise considerably. It is by no means difficult to imagine that the most probable outcome would be a conflict between formal and non-formal education over the distribution of very limited resources. Nor should it be forgotten that in the last century many educational reformers, basing their judgement on contemporary examples, believed that extension of the formal system would be much cheaper than it turned out to be.

It is commonly alleged that preparation for work is more efficient and less costly in the non-formal system. The evidence for this is far from conclusive in Latin America; and even if it were, the arguments relate to the expansion of non-formal education to fulfil other functions than vocational training of this kind: i.e., to replace formal education or complement it to a hitherto unprecedented extent.

Many writers, after criticizing the inefficacy of the formal system in reducing the existing inequality, explicitly or implicitly assert that non-formal education would have more positive effects from that standpoint. It is true that this assertion, although controversial, has been made explicitly in a number of studies, but not indiscriminately in relation to non-formal education of any kind. The virtue in question is attributed to it on the assumption that it involves: (a) groups with a relatively high degree of autonomy which wish to assert their identity; (b) groups which are more or less strongly in conflict with the prevailing system of domination and are fighting to obtain a better position in it, sometimes asserting a counter-culture; and (c) the use by these groups of non-formal education systems directly controlled by themselves and not from outside to attain some of the goals mentioned under (a)

and (b).[28] Hence the "need to identify and classify examples of non-formal education programmes as they have occurred over time in collective efforts by groups seeking to oppose acculturation, inequality, racism, economic exploitation and structured violence in non-revolutionary societies".[29]

Two points must be stressed. In the first place, this role of non-formal education as strategy to change the power structure in the hands of a group enjoying a relatively high degree of autonomy is wholly absent from the policy advocated by the World Bank or by UNESCO in the Faure report. In the second place, if groups with these potentialities do exist, the use of education as a means to alter the power structure in their interests may be a real possibility in the case of both non-formal and formal education. The assumption made is that groups which have acquired some power in society and are engaged in the conflictive process of asserting it and extending it have very little access to the formal system and therefore use the non-formal one. If they had access to formal education, however, they would presumably attempt to bring it into line with their goals from the outset, or once non-formal education had served as a vehicle for them to strengthen their position. In other words, the assumptions used to endow non-formal education with a dynamic character in the power conflict can also be used to ascribe the same quality to formal education. In certain combinations of circumstances, either it is true of both types –and whether at a given moment non-formal or formal education appears more important depends entirely on the specific conjuncture– or it is false of both, because neither formal nor non-formal education can have an egalitarian effect so long as the prevailing system of domination remains intact.[30]

4. All kinds of arguments, in addition to those mentioned above, have been adduced to advocate a greater expansion of non-formal education in Latin America. I shall not discuss them here because I fully agree with them. Unquestionably Latin American education suffers from an unhealthy concentration in the formal system, and great advantages would flow from the use of non-formal education as a substitute or complement, but not at the level of basic education. Our criticism here is that the new policy bases suggested attribute to non-formal education effects which it simply cannot have or which are in contradiction with the initial assumptions made. And this is very easy to demonstrate. If an indigenous group, for example, in order not to lose its identity, creates more or less systematic non-formal education mechanisms, the relevant question is how society and the power structure it embodies will view this assertion of identity and autonomy, not whether the group does or does not make use of non-formal education. If such self-

[28] An excellent example of this argument may be found in Rolland G. Paulston & Gregory LeRoy, "Strategies for Nonformal Education", in *Teachers College Record*, Vol. 76, Nº 4, 1975, pp. 569-596.

[29] *Ibidem*, p. 589.

[30] Along these lines, Carnoy's position appears more coherent, although I do not share it. See Martin Carnoy, comments on Phillip Coombs' book, *World Educational Crisis*, in *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 44, Nº 1, February 1974, pp. 178-187; and *Education as Cultural Imperialism*, New York, David McKay, 1974.

assertion is seen as damaging to the system and if the group has no other means of strengthening its position in the power structure, the process of doing so, together with the non-formal education contributing to it, will be brought to a standstill. If the opposite is the case, non-formal education may fulfil some positive function. But if there is no threat to the existing power structure, then it lacks all egalitarian significance.

In short, the propositions which aim solely at making the existing system more efficient and less costly can only end by creating two parallel systems at the level of basic education or training. However, non-formal education is subject to the same alternatives in respect of inequality as formal education. The most favoured groups, in the society proposed, will either obtain formal and non-formal education in different combinations, depending on what seems to them best for maintaining their *status quo*, or will resort mainly to formal education. The rest will secure the one type of education or the other according to their degree of power and participation, and basically will have access only to inferior forms of education.

These conclusions, which may appear unduly pessimistic, are expressly and frankly endorsed by the World Bank in a paragraph which is worth reproducing *in extenso:* "It must be recognized that this approach frequently gives rise to controversies with important political and social dimensions. Objections are made that it creates a dual system —a standard primary school which provides access to higher levels of formal education, and a second-rate parallel structure which is terminal. This is considered a violation of the principle of equality of opportunity. Shortening the primary cycle and other cost-saving or simplifying proposals are opposed on grounds of educational quality. These objections are important, particularly since they are often supported by parents who perceive primary schools as being the only avenue for social advancement of their children. These views are based, however, on an assumption that conventional primary schooling can accommodate all children within a reasonable time. This assumption is unrealistic for low-income countries which face a choice between a standard system serving only 30-40 per cent of the children, and an alternative which aims at providing some kind of education for all".[31]

One of the most interesting features of this passage is what it does not say, that is, how the proposed system can be made compatible with the principle of equality, since from that point of view, so long as it is true that financing is not available for first-class education for everyone, this principle would require that it should be of second-class standard for everyone, or something between the two, but in any case the same for all. In other words, the logical proposition, if the principle is respected, would be that the quality of traditional education should be reduced so as to save resources and establish one universal system for everybody. The education provided would be inferior to that currently received by the 30 to 40 per cent referred to in the paragraph quoted and superior for the rest, which today have none. This conclusion is not drawn, however, so that the principle is quite simply negated; and it would be better to recognize the fact explicitly than to disguise it

[31] See IBRD, *The Assault on World Poverty*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975, pp. 297-298.

with arguments that have nothing to do with the matter. The premise is not respect for equality, but a form of political realism pure and simple, which accepts as unshakable the basic elements of an existing social structure.

The concern for political realism is so evident that what gives weight to the objections against the proposed system is that "they are often supported by parents". In other words, it does not matter whether they are in themselves well-founded; it is on the parents' support that their significance depends. Basically, what is being said is that as long as the parents who sustain these objections and possess the power to voice them continue to have the traditional system at their disposal, they will not put obstacles in the way of extending to the others, that is, to the children of the others, an inferior system of education.

The financial argument, as has already been shown, involves a vicious circle: it is political realism which gives it force, but this force does not derive from any economic argument which would make it possible to demonstrate that the countries of Latin America have reached their maximun level of expenditure. Moreover, if the figures quoted are considered carefully it will be clearly seen that they are based far more on the majority of the Asian or African countries than on those of Latin America, since very few of the countries of this latter region cater for only 30 to 40 per cent of the school-age population.

5. One notable fact to be stressed is that the enthusiasm to propagate a policy which it is supposed will ensure universal basic education through non-formal education begets implicitly, and probably inadvertently, contradictory arguments. In effect, the following assertions are made:

(i) Formal education cannot reach everyone at the basic level and is not a suitable instrument for promoting greater social equality;

(ii) If basic education is to reach everyone it is necessary to establish a new type of education which is recognized to be inferior to formal education;

(iii) This new type of education will be an instrument of social equalization.

Although it is explicitly or implicitly admitted that parallel systems of unequal quality must be created, the inferior system is credited with possibilities of promoting the social mobility of certain groups which, paradoxically, are denied to the superior system. If these were to materialize it would be something more than an absolute novelty in the history of education; it would be a veritable miracle. Forms of education which are inferior to other parallel forms or considered as such, have always been seen to lead to occupations which are also inferior and illpaid, a sequence that is explicable enough.

One of the basic questions is, indeed, that of the employment opportunities of those who pass through this inferior system, even supposing that they take full advantage of it. For example, what would be the attitude of employers to credentials not deriving from the formal system? Almost nothing is known about this in Latin America, and what little empirical research exists on the subject yields negative results. Employers seem to have an enormous faith in the formal system as a source of credentials.[32]

[32] See James Bruno and Cornelio Van Zeyl, "Innovación educativa e ideología social en un sector de Venezuela", in *Revista del Centro de Estudios Educativos*, Vol. IV, Nº 1, Mexico City, January 1975.

It can be argued that when these credentials derive from training in the enterprise itself or through mechanisms totally or partly controlled by it, non-formal education will contribute to the upward mobility of the workers. Assuming this to be true, it does not seem to be of great significance for the poor, because the enterprises which organize courses of this type are so huge that there are few or no poor people among their personnel. Furthermore, the scant empirical evidence is doubtful. La Belle[33] has shown that in the case studied by him the workers who take these courses improve their incomes; but he rightly points out that only those recommended by their supervisors can follow the courses, so that the ultimate cause of wage increases lies in the opinion of the supervisor rather than in the courses themselves.

It can be maintained that such evidence is fragmentary and therefore may be misleading, and this is undoubtedly true. It is also true, however, that there is no evidence in favour of the policies recommended. At best, the proponents of the latter can only claim that there is no adequate support for either of the two positions. It is clear, however, that a system of the nature advocated, in the light of all the historical evidence available and of the corroboration provided by the scanty empirical research existing in Latin America, is destined to perpetuate the situation of the underprivileged.

6. Under the political system which can be termed traditional, social inequality is recognized as a fact, and it is assumed that the school is an effective instrument for reducing it, always provided that the school itself is strongly egalitarian. This assumption is totally or largely invalidated because the latter condition is not fulfilled; external inequality finds its way into the school.

This fact does not *per se* prove that the traditional concept of equality of opportunities is erroneous, but merely that it is inadequate. It has always been considered obvious that if better educational opportunities are offered to those with most social privileges, the inequalities will be accentuated. What is being discovered, with a certain naive surprise, is that even when educational opportunities are equal, outside factors, particularly the socio-economic level of the students, produce great differences in the utilization of the school system, or that, at best, the average differences which exist among the various social groups when they enter school remain the same when they leave. Thus, those who believe that education can be a factor, albeit a partial one, in greater social equality, are forced to the conclusion that emphasis must be placed on equality of results instead of on equality of opportunities alone. The school should ensure that the average results of the different groups at the end of their school life are equal, or at least that the initial differences between them will have diminished considerably. This reasoning leads logically to a further step. If the basic objective is to seek approximate equality of results between groups that are *de facto* unequal, it may be necessary and legitimate, in order to attain such a goal, to create inequality of opportunities in the sense of allocating better school inputs to the most deprived groups. This is the idea underlying

[33] See Thomas La Belle, "Impacto de la educación no formal sobre el ingreso de la industria: Ciudad Guayana, Venezuela", in *Revista del Centro de Estudios Educativos*, Vol. IV, Nº 4.

the concept of compensatory education, for example.[34]

It is a known fact that in practice groups in the lower social strata lack, or possess in lesser measure, the linguistic tools, the cultural background and the codes of values which prevail in the school system, even when they are not cut off from it by the lack of family resources and/or the need to work. These differences are obviously to be found among fairly broad social groups or categories, taken as a whole, and not between individuals separately considered. Some workers' children may have better pre-school preparation than others from middle-class sectors, for example. Hence reference must be made, as above, to the differences between the averages observable within each of the groups distinguished.

However, a different view can be maintained. The disparities under discussion, which indicate disadvantages for certain groups, are measured on the basis of the dominant school culture. Is it legitimate to do this? There are no grounds for the allegation, at times explicitly or implicitly made, that the most under-privileged groups are without a culture. What happens is that the instruments it provides are inadequate, or make it difficult to master the school culture and its dominant values. The requirements of equality would thus necessitate a change in the dominant culture to adapt it better to the conditions of such groups, which in turn would mean replacing it completely or creating new forms of synthesis or approximation. This point of view, which can only be summarized in the present context, involves a considerable transformation of society as a whole, not merely of the school, but its ultimate aim is also to reduce, in a different and even more drastic fashion, the inequalities outside the school.

In other words, whatever the validity of this possibility of attaining equality of results, the spirit which animates the new expressions of the traditional concept is that of the struggle against inequality.

The conception presented as new, in contrast, not only recognizes inequality as a fact but also institutionalizes a school system to maintain it, creating a special form of education for the socially underprivileged. In this respect there is nothing new about it; the idea of special education for the poor, to make them good and efficient poor, is very old indeed, and has found striking expression in the past.

Thus the truth is not, as is claimed, that scientific research has now shown the basic assumptions of the traditional concept to be erroneous. Some are, but those that lie deepest, those that are linked with the concept of society and the *polis*, no-one has proved to be scientifically false, for the very simple reason that such a thing is unprovable. The real motive for abandoning them is the purpose of adopting other assumptions and other concepts which tend to recognize, maintain and ultimately strengthen the *status quo*, despite all the fine words to the contrary.

[34] It is manifestly impossible to undertake a detailed study of the intricate problem of the different concepts of equality in respect of education. All that has been attempted is to review in briefest outline a few basic questions. Among the abundant literature on the subject, an excellent summary (although I disagree on some points relating to the history of the idea) can be found in James A. Coleman, "The Concept of Equality of Educational Opportunity", in Donald M. Lavine and Mary Jo Bane (eds.), *The Inequality Controversy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 199-213.

7. It is certainly ironical that when the priority of universalizing basic education at last obtains the blessing of the international financing institutions, it should be in the shape of creating a system whose inferiority is recognized, although it is justified in the name of a supposed necessity.

It is uncertain whether the attempt to establish inferior norms of basic education for special population groups will be successful, but the possibility cannot be prematurely discounted. The congruence between the post-war conceptions of educational policy and the internal power structures of Latin America was pointed out elsewhere in this article. The same sort of thing may happen again with the new policies, except in the countries which have already succeeded in providing schooling for all or nearly all their population by the traditional methods, where such an eventuality is less probable.

The new concept would be applied mainly in respect of the most deprived rural population groups and also, to a very limited extent, in the towns. Thus none of the groups holding any power in Latin America would be adversely affected, and they would continue to base their expectations on the forms of education that suited them best.

Furthermore, the new conception is presented as an instrument which will promote greater productivity among the poorest groups and create self-help systems to improve their condition. There is nothing more attractive than this idea of the poor becoming less poor, which diminishes the threat they may represent, and more productive, which will increase national income and reduce the need for transfers of resources to them from the rest of society. This idea, which could be termed that of 'the poor for development's sake', seems therefore to fulfil diverse aspirations and satisfy a variety of interests.

In addition, this concept, by leaving formal education *de facto* intact, legitimizes the current distribution of resources.

Similar conclusions can be reached if the potential support for opposition to the new conception is considered, even though only as summarily as in the foregoing analysis. The most deprived groups have neither power to oppose its application, nor sufficient knowledge to realize that its ultimate significance is to keep them in the same situation as at present.

The professional groups, particularly teachers, are in a paradoxical position. In general, professional organizations in Latin America have always advocated the need to maintain and expand the application of the principle of equality. But at the same time, the teachers themselves have voiced and continue to voice more and more criticisms of formal education. The power of the teachers, however, although varying in the different countries, is never very great, especially if it is compared with that of other groups which influence education. Thus we have a group with little or moderate power which engages in relatively important self-criticism in public, over against other groups which have a great deal of power and which never indulge in self-criticism for the public ear. If, in addition to all this, the new concept is presented as having a certain progressive content, as being the only way of making education available to the groups which have always lacked it, the forces of the teaching profession can easily be divided.

Lastly, and most important of all, in most of the Latin American countries

many factors which it would be impossible to analyse here have been cutting away the ground from under conceptions based on human rights, and have conferred special respectability on all those which, in the name of efficiency, wittingly or unwittingly legitimate the ideologies of the groups in power.

8. Once again it must be stressed that the author of the present article shares many of the critical opinions expressed respecting the traditional school, and is also convinced of the need to assign non-formal education a much more important role than it has had in Latin America in the past. It is likewise unquestionably necessary to introduce radical reforms in the school system, to reconsider the study plans and to integrate education, particularly rural education, with other programmes. A possibility worth considering is that of reducing the number of years of formal schooling in conjunction with far-reaching changes in its content and methods, so that it is not prolonged beyond what is really necessary in order to provide everyone with basic education.

What needs defending, therefore, is not education as it stands, or the ways in which it has been organized, but its basic postulates in respect of equality, which, far from being abandoned, should be strengthened by every means that proves effective in serving that end.

Our knowledge only warrants consideration of measures that: (a) make the formal system more efficient, particularly at the basic level, so that it effectively reaches everyone and reduces inequalities; (b) expand the non-formal system in all respects in which it is clearly more efficient and cheaper than formal education, particularly in vocational training; (c) seek to give more weight to qualifications obtained outside the formal system and to restrain the rat race in educational requirements as a method of reserving jobs –even those which are not very well paid– for members of the middle strata.

The improvement and radical renovation of the present model are unquestionable needs, but to destroy it, on the basis of arguments false in themselves or inapplicable to the Latin American situation, in order to create second-rate educational systems is yet another way of perpetuating and intensifying the immense social inequalities which put so great a distance between Latin America and development worthy of the name.