

For a New public Education System

40th Rosa Sensat
Summer School
Declaration

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For a New public Education System

It may be somewhat daring to present this declaration during the
40th Rosa Sensat Summer School in Barcelona.
But this chance-taking is more necessary than ever in order to face the
challenges posed by our world.

It is precisely the history of this small institution,
which began underground 40 years ago, that enables us to have great
hopes in the future of education and schooling.

A hope and a responsibility that we
wish to be able to share with everyone who throughout these years
has contributed to making a positive transformation
of education and the school.

Thirty years ago, while still under the dictatorship, the Rosa Sensat
Summer School adopted a document entitled
for a New Public School System.

Its tenets were shared by all those who, in Catalonia and Spain,
were struggling so that, in the framework of a future democratic political
system, we could configure the changes
that education and the schools required.

And that utopia, that very same collective hope became
a reality across the state.

But now we find ourselves in a new context.

The old Europe of nation states may be transformed into a new, social and solidarity-based Europe of peace. The construction of this new reality, its future, depends also on the capacity that we have to structure a new shared utopia that connects, makes visible and gives strength to all those situations in each country, each city and each people of Europe in which people are working in the field of education at the service of all men and women and their emancipation, an emancipation that frees the individual, an emancipation based on the building of a new democratic society.

The Europe that has been under construction in the last 40 years is the Europe of dialogue within diversity. In every people and institution that we have known, we have encountered their history, tradition, values and the ongoing process of the building of a new reality in order to meet the challenges that the present and future are constantly posing in so many different contexts.

We are dealing with a diversity that not only must be respected, but which must also be strengthened as a fundamental element of our culture, of the political and pedagogical wealth of a social Europe, a Europe of citizens, in which education is written on the skin.

The realities and ideas of each context, if we share them, open new vistas, possibilities, general analyses and critical thought on current affairs; they bring to life new ideas on what education should be like, on how it should be changed. And they renew our hopes.

Sharing a utopia can stimulate the imagination and develop resources that adapt to change, foster renewal, open up new possibilities. Although traditional democratic institutions appear feeble, new and creative forms of democratic expression are emerging in every country; we see that technologies can be tools for emancipation, and globalisation an opportunity for change. Both traditional and modernity have become sources of inspiration for education, a shared experience in a democratic society.

On the other hand, in Europe and the world as a whole, one has the sensation that education is in crisis. A series of inter-related forces –neo-liberal economic policy and hegemonic globalisation– have skewed the complex relationship between the economic and the social, between the individual and the collective, between the private and the public. The citizen is often viewed and treated as a consumer. And at the same time, the economy and the markets need the individual to be a dutiful producer.

We are dealing with a context in which children and young people find themselves immersed in an environment saturated by fragmentary information at the service of the market economy, which dominates the media, very often as commercial or ideological advertising permeating everything, from technology to new areas of informational broadcasting, now conforming a source of stimuli for lifestyles and values at the reach of children and youth.

In this context, the school is being viewed as just another private company, just another business, which must compete in the marketplace for customers. One speaks of choice, individuality, and diversity, but as if dealing with commercial brands; and the school is becoming an instrument of socialisation for governing children and young people in a “control society”, an instrument for training labour to adapt to market demands: thus, traditional education, its values and methods, is once being posed as the model to follow.

The so-called crisis in education also forms part of a context of severe crisis and human unease: a sick environment, increasing inequality, a lack of safety, and, in addition to all of this, growing xenophobia and the alienation of people from some or many democratic, public institutions. This is a context in which the increase in material prosperity has not been accompanied by an increase in happiness and satisfaction, and the future does not look promising.

However, in spite of all of this, one can and wishes to affirm that education, rather than being in crisis, is at a cross-road. Whither education? What can our role be in the current context, which is complex and, accordingly, hopeful and exciting? What can our role be in building a new utopia for a common future, one of a world where human beings can develop, achieve deeper, higher levels of humanity while respecting and helping others and the environment?

Our conception of education, from birth and throughout one's entire life, takes into account all social contexts because they impact it. Our declaration places special emphasis on childhood and youth that are slotted into these inter-related contexts; we emphasise an education system that helps to transform the forest of information into human wisdom, an education that is a process in the construction of identity, knowledge and values, of democratic subjects that can think for themselves, an education whose objective is emancipation, an education that is based on ethical and political praxis.

To sum up, the old dialectic between education and society leads us to think that neither one nor the other, by themselves, can change things, that

they must both contribute and do contribute to changing each other. We propose, a new education system by everyone for everyone, a new public education system is required because we feel the need to share **a new education utopia**, which we summarise in the following points:

1. Education, that which makes us human

The new public education system is born out of the consideration that the duty to educate is inherent in the human species, that education goes hand in hand with emerging freedom, that it promotes humanity in the entire person.

And humanity is made through education, “each generation educates the next”, making it the heir of the former and prepares it to continue the process of humanity.

The new public education system is, therefore, education for and through freedom.

2. Education, a public responsibility

The new public education system is a collective responsibility and task, It has consubstantial relationships with a democratic project in which citizens define the common good and write the laws for a true education of and through freedom.

The new public education system is the expression of the citizenry that takes responsibility for all children and young people.

The new public education system is a shared experience, a meeting place between the individual and others.

The new public education system respects difference and promotes solidarity,

uses an ethics of encounter that respects otherness and struggles in order not to convert the other into oneself to think of the other as a free individual who needs not be dominated.

This is the challenge facing education.

A democratic state has the primary responsibility for educating all children in the values of democracy.

3. A child that is rich and recognised by society

The new public education system is based on a positive image of the child

as an active person since birth,

as a citizen with a place in society,

a subject-protagonist of law whom the society must respect and support.

A rich child:

born with the potential that can be expressed in a hundred languages;
as a co-builder of knowledge, identity, culture and values,
seeking the meaning of the world from birth.

A child that can live, learn, listen and communicate.

A public person, a citizen with a recognised place in society,
protagonist and subject of law, always in relation to others,
who lives interdependently the conquest of his or her own autonomy.

The new public education system is based on the educability of all children

and postulates that all can progress, no matter what difficulties they may have as a result of their social, cultural, psychic, mental and physical condition.

In the new public education system no one has the right to say that this or that child will never get on.

Every child, every person has the right for trust to be placed in their future.

4. Families, essential protagonists

The new public education system recognises the diversity of the family, their basic responsibility

and their role in the education of the children they have given birth to or adopted,

so that they can become persons and citizens of a democratic community.

It recognises the major contribution of families to education

and, moreover, values and welcomes their participation in the development of public education and the life of the school.

However, recognising their competence and responsibility in respect of education,

the new education system cannot limit itself to the fact that some families take on this responsibility while others do not;

we must set up a system of structural assistance for all families,

including the most fragile, so that they can exercise their educative duty.

5. Public educative contexts

The new public education system contemplates all those contexts that influence life

and, therefore, the education of children and young people.

It contemplates society as a whole that educates

through all the activities that take place within it.

The new public education system educates through the participation of adults,
the organisation of time and space,
territorial legislation and housing policy,
cultural offerings, the regulation of radio and television broadcasting, and
communication technologies.
All the domains of public action must reflect on and ask themselves if they
are truly making a contribution to education.

6. The School

The public education system requires a new concept of schooling,
A change in the meaning of education and the school:
education in the most global, holistic sense
without separating care and education, reason and emotion, mind and body.
Education as a process of construction of knowledge, values and identity.
the school as a public meeting place,
in the etymological sense of the Greek root, of a meeting of people
In their leisure, free time and study.
Therefore, the schools includes all the institutions that influence the
education of children and young people in a modern society:
compulsory schooling, non-compulsory schooling,
both for children and the elderly,
as well as recreational centres and institutions
in order to jointly meet the challenges of education.
In the new public education system the school must be a place for
everyone, a meeting place in the physical and also social, cultural and
political sense of the word.
A forum or site for meeting and relating,
where children and adults meet and commit to something, where
they can dialogue, listen, and discuss
in order to share meanings; it is a place of infinite cultural,
linguistic, social, aesthetic, ethical, political and economic possibilities.
A place of ethical and political praxis, a space for democratic learning.
A place for research and creativity, coexistence and pleasure,
critical thought and emancipation.
The new public education system considers the school, all schooling,
to be a right of all citizens, from birth and throughout one's entire life.
A social right, which the public authorities must guarantee
by creating and maintaining the school for everyone, without discriminating
in terms of age, gender, origin, creed, ethnicity or capacities,

and to compensate through equality the inequalities that subsist in our society.

The new public education system sees the school as the institution that guarantees access of everyone to everything. Consequently, it is incompatible with any logic of Darwinian selection. It must allow all children to have access to all knowledge considered indispensable, and to make this knowledge desirable to everyone. A democratic society must commit itself to making the school equal for all, so that it can be for all. The multiplicity of ways of grouping children together is one of its pillars. This means that the school must give everyone the help, support and accompaniment that they need. This means that the schools cannot separate children for any reason whatsoever on the basis of ethnic origin, gender, language, family, religion or creed. We must learn to know, respect and coexist with all religions and beliefs. From the democratic perspective, the school must be inclusive; Difference and pluralism, must become essential values.

7. The educators

The new public education system requires a powerful commitment from the educators as the persons who accompany our children and young people throughout the educational process.

Diverse educators, in the image of society, but educators that share a positive view of children and adults. Educators who communicate and work with each other and with all those with whom they share the educational task. The educator is the intermediary between the education project and the children and young people; he or she is sensitive to the influence of the environment. As professionals they must be trained in the theory and practice of education, from the perspective of the new public education system,

The exercising of their profession must be an ongoing research project for them.

An educator must be a person that participates in contemporary culture, who is capable of questioning it and analysing it from a critical perspective. A person interested in all aspects of life and social activity, interested in remembering, debating and examining experience critically.

A person with curiosity, who opts for building knowledge with others,
Who must permanently invent dialogue and activity
so that all the children and young people can appropriate their knowledge.
Their creativity must be stimulated and supported
within the framework of true collective work at the school
and through the exchange of experiences,
through the creation of networks of collaboration
as a basic element of the new public education system.
The educator has a public responsibility.
In order to exercise it, he or she must be guaranteed
initial and ongoing training that is constantly being renewed,
and they must be recognised socially and professionally.

8. Curriculum, knowledge and learning

The new public education system organises its contents
on the basis of that which is absolutely necessary in order for a person
to exercise their citizenship.
Educative content must be taught in a way that brings with it emancipation.
This is why said content must not be presented as eternal
and immutable, but as a construction of humanity in its process of
emancipation, of construction of one's own personality.
This knowledge can be grouped into six major types:

1. Education for gestural, oral, visual, written communication, etc. so that one can enter into a peaceful relationship with the Other.
2. Education on the major cultural works that have marked the ascendance of humanity.
3. Scientific and technological education that allows one to understand the contemporary world.
4. Education in health, the environment, and sustainable development so that the world will last beyond our presence.
5. Education for being a citizen and for discovering the history of the emergence of democracy and the experimentation with these principles and means of functioning in accordance with the level of development of the children and young people.
6. Education in creativity, imagination, curiosity, etc., which will allow everyone to find their place in the world?

We are talking about all the learning that can enable all children and youth to learn to distinguish between knowledge and beliefs,
between knowledge and opinions.

The new public education system must not discredit personal beliefs, but it must teach what is valuable to everyone.

Learning in the new public education system must be based on methodologies that respect the dignity and freedom of children.

As the child grows and can absorb them, he or she must be able to participate in the election of the methodologies.

9. Evaluation

Evaluation must be considered an ongoing process, a participatory, democratic process that has the support of all those involved in the educative community. Education requires processes that make the praxis of evaluation visible and transparent, and is,

Therefore, subject to reflection, dialogue, interpretation and value judgments.

The new public education system must be based on objectives and criteria that must be discussed previously.

The new public education system has a different concept and language of evaluation, a participatory language for the construction of meaning.

An evaluation subject to values, which does not seek the merits and lacunas in the children and youth but rather in the education system.

Evaluation is carried out through normal school work and the pedagogical documentation of the collective processes and progress. From this new perspective, evaluation becomes an element of emancipation, a positive valuation, but never something to be used to hang a label on what is actually a process of the work of teachers and schools.

Evaluation in the new public education system is the work of all citizens at all levels.

The public authorities must facilitate its information and systematic consultation.

10. Participation and government

The new public education system defines participation as an essential value, the democratic expression of a collective responsibility and public interest.

In the new public education system all authority is based on competence, responsibility and participation. It includes the entire community at all levels. It includes children, parents, teachers, politicians and other citizens. Participation is the construction of a common project, which requires thinking about the meaning, value and practice of education. Participation is also sustained by exchange between the different educational institutions and the creation of networks for common action.

**We the undersigned of the declaration
For a New Public Education System,
make two commitments collectively:**

1. To apply the ten points contained herein, with the willingness to move forward in our schools, towns, cities and countries in order to extend our activity, in the multiplicity of coordination activities and exchanges in pedagogical and social thought and action in the new Europe of Citizens, a Europe that is open, plural, optimistic, creative, full of hope and future projects, a Europe without borders between countries as it is today, in solidarity with the world.

2. To assure in a coordinated manner that the reforms and educative policies and reforms in each country and in the European Union move in the direction of strengthening and contributing to making the tenets of the Convention of the Rights of Children of 1989 a reality, beyond the necessary provision of human and material resources.

These are commitments that will allow us to renew our hope in the future, in making visible this shared utopia, this new public education system.

Barcelona, 14 July 2005

