

# PROSPECTS

quarterly review of  
comparative education

ISSUE NUMBER ONE HUNDRED AND TEN

## OPEN FILE



GUEST EDITOR:  
STUART N. HART



INTERNATIONAL BUREAU OF EDUCATION

Vol. XXIX, no. 2, June 1999

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# **VIEWPOINTS/CONTROVERSIES**

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# WHAT CAN BE DONE TO FURTHER CLOSER AGREEMENT AMONG LEGISLATION, POLITICAL DECISIONS AND EVERYDAY PRACTICE?

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*Ulf Fredriksson*

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The most important provision that governments worldwide make for children is schooling. That being so, how can the right to education be further emphasized in order to achieve education for all and how can the rights of the child be met in educational institutions?

## **Legislation, political decisions and international recommendations**

International conventions are part of national legislation. When a country ratifies a convention, it commits itself to incorporating its content into national legislation. Political decisions made by national politicians to accept international declarations and recommendations are effectively commitments to certain principles. Accepting

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*Original language: English*

*Ulf Fredriksson (Sweden)*

Primary and secondary teacher. Between 1983 and 1993, he worked as a full-time official for the Swedish teachers' union, international secretary from 1988. Since 1994, he has worked for Education International, the international federation of teachers' unions based in Brussels. Preparing doctoral thesis on the topic of migrant children's reading skills at the Institute of International Education, Stockholm University. He has published a number of books and articles in Swedish on international education, intercultural education, the history of teacher unions and reading among migrant children. E-mail: [ulf.fredriksson@ei-ie.org](mailto:ulf.fredriksson@ei-ie.org)

an international recommendation is not legally binding but, from a moral point of view, may be considered as binding as ratification.

International recommendations and conventions of importance falling within this discussion are:

- *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*;
- *The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*;
- *The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*;
- *The Declaration of the Rights of the Child*;
- *The Convention of the Rights of the Child*;
- *The Recommendation Concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education Relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*;
- *World Declaration on Education for All* (World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien, Thailand, 1990);
- *The ILO/UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of Teachers*;
- *The Minimum Age Convention* (ILO Convention No. 138); and
- *Rights of Indigenous and Tribal People* (ILO Convention No. 169).

It is clearly stated in these international recommendations and conventions that:

- every child has the right to education;
- children should receive quality education;
- schools should be safe places for children;
- schools should give children certain democratic rights and help them to learn to use those rights in society;
- children should not be forced to work; and
- children should possess these rights without discrimination.

To what extent do national governments follow these principles? What is happening in national education systems, in schools and classrooms? Or, in some cases, what is not happening?

## The current situation

Many of the principles contained in international recommendations and conventions are not met in national education systems.

- Large groups of young people still do not receive any education at all or only some years of primary education. About 13% of all children are not enrolled in primary education (EFA Forum, 1998).
- Many children, despite some years of schooling, have not learned basic literacy and numeracy skills. For example, tests conducted in Ghana in 1996 showed that only 5.5% of students in Grade 6 had learned the main skills required by the English syllabus and only 1.8% had gained the required skills in mathematics (Quansah, 1997). An Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report claims that more than 20% of adults in some of the richest countries of the world cannot read or write except at the most elementary level (OECD/Human Resources Development Canada, 1997).

- Girls get less education than boys and in some countries the enrolment ratios of boys and girls differ substantially. The average worldwide enrolment ratio in primary education is 84% for girls and 90% for boys (EFA Forum, 1998).
- Children from ethnic minorities, nomadic groups, indigenous populations, migrant groups and other minorities get less education than children from the majority groups in societies. In industrialized countries, fewer children from migrant families go on to academic specialization in secondary and tertiary education than do children from the majority population (Fredriksson, in press).
- Many school buildings are in bad shape and lack basic equipment. On behalf of UNESCO and UNICEF, a group of researchers examined primary schools in some of the least developed countries. They found that the schools seldom had basic equipment such as a blackboard, a map of the world, cupboards, a desk and chair for the teacher, or desks and chairs for the students. In Ethiopia, for example, 72% of students in the schools covered by the study were taught in schools that needed basic repairs or to be totally rebuilt (Schleicher, Siniscalco & Postlethwaite, 1995).
- Many schools are not safe places for children and there are growing concerns about violence in them. Although no statistics are available, there is a feeling in most countries that violence in schools is on the increase (Standing Sectoral Committee on Secondary Education, 1998; Standing Sectoral Committee on Pre-school and Primary Education, 1998).
- Many children do not learn about basic democratic rights in their education or get the opportunity to practise these rights. In countries where adults have little or no freedom to think, to express an opinion or to associate, it is obviously difficult to see how children could enjoy such rights.
- Many children never have access to basic education and are instead forced into child labour. There is no exact count of the number of child workers in the world, but estimates suggest that it is between 100 and 250 million.

## Where do the problems arise?

Why do governments not fulfil the commitments they have undertaken by accepting international recommendations and even ratifying international conventions? Lack of national legislation is seldom the problem. Most countries recognize the right of children to education. Legislation in a large majority of countries provides for compulsory primary education. Legislation also often seeks to guarantee a certain quality of education.

When we scrutinize statements and policy declarations made by ministers for education, we find commitments to the principles of education for all, quality education and democratic education. An overview of educational policy statements from a group of African countries (Psacharopoulos, 1990) identified several references to increased coverage of primary education, improved teaching quality, increased coverage of secondary education, etc. While the policy stated that, by 1980, 100% of all children should be enrolled in primary education, 23% in secondary education



and 2% in tertiary education, the reality in 1980 for the same group of countries was that only 76% were enrolled in primary education, 16% in secondary education and 1% in tertiary education (p. 18).

## Implementation

Lack of implementation of legislation and policy is the real problem. An examination of 153 educational reforms and projects in Africa revealed that only 3% had been fully implemented, while 5% could be considered to have been mostly implemented (Craig, 1990).

There are various explanations as to why reforms or other types of educational projects are not implemented. Was reform really intended in the first place? Statements are sometimes made for electoral purposes or to gain short-term popularity. In many cases, only lip service is paid to objectives such as education for all. In others, the lack of implementation stems from political ignorance, some political circles simply failing to understand the need for implementation. For many, the hard part is to take the right decision in the first place. Often policy makers and planners believe that policies, once adopted, implement themselves.

Lack of implementation could be because the objectives were unclear from the beginning or even contradictory. Aims could have been too vague or even unrealistic. Policies were not implemented properly because they were not based on adequate information. Statistics, research and other information, which could have supported the policy, were lacking. Reliable statistics and financial information were missing. The implementation of policies can also fail because of an incompetent bureaucracy that has neither the skills, nor the will, to implement policies.

Another reason for the lack of implementation may be that policy makers and planners did not consult those who were supposed to actually implement the policies, most often teachers and head teachers. Other important stakeholders such as parents and students could also have been forgotten.

## Lack of funding

Lack of funding is a prime cause of the poor fulfilment of reforms. Sometimes, it is just part of the huge financial problems facing many countries. Many of the least developed countries allocate 20% or more of their national budgets to education but cannot enrol all children and young people in school. In extreme cases, governments spend more than 30% of the national budget on education and enrol less than 30% of all children in school. Population growth forces governments to continuously increase the resources allocated to education simply in order to maintain the same ratio of school enrolment. Increased enrolment would require increased allocations to education. National budgets already under heavy pressure can ill afford them. Structural adjustment policies in many countries have pushed government expenditure to levels where every budgetary reallocation has severe repercussions on other essential services.

Debt service and re-payment of loans to international finance institutions form a considerable part of the national budget for many of the least developed countries—in some cases, up to 20% or more. These large sums effectively block increased investments in other areas. In Sub-Saharan Africa, if just 20% of the \$10–13 billion annual cost of servicing the over \$200 billion foreign debt could be re-invested in education, every child could be given a seat in the classroom (Sawyerr, 1997).

Financial constraints force many governments in the least developed countries to make an impossible choice between teachers and textbooks. Providing good textbooks without competent teachers is fruitless (Torres, 1996). Nor can the teacher teach well without any aid. The financial resources available cannot buy both well-trained teachers and textbooks. Whatever priorities a government sets in such a situation, the result is unavoidably unfavourable.

There is no universal estimate of what the costs per student should be for quality schooling. Obviously, these costs shift between countries and even within countries. It is clear, however, that the resources spent on a child's education are inadequate in many countries. In developed countries, the average public expenditure per student in 1995 was \$4,979 and among the least developed countries \$33. The more developed regions, basically the industrialized countries (in total, twenty-six countries in the UNESCO statistics), spent \$1,109.9 billion on education, which is 79% of world public expenditure on education. The least developed countries in the world (a total of forty-eight of the countries covered by the UNESCO statistics) were spending \$5.3 billion on public education, or 0.4% of world public expenditure on education (UNESCO, 1998).

## **Lack of political will**

Some governments talk about the need to provide education to all and to improve the quality of education, but they are not prepared to pay the price. Only lip service is paid to education policy, and it is not backed up with the necessary resources. Resources are available, but used for other purposes.

We have seen that there are no international estimates as to how much a child's schooling should cost, but there are estimates as to how much a country ought to allocate to education as part of its total resources for meeting educational needs. The International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century (also known as the Delors Commission) suggested that every country should allocate at least 6% of its gross national product to education (Delors et al., 1996, p. 165). In UNESCO's education statistics for 1998, 74% of the countries covered had spent less than 6% on education.

Some countries still invest heavily in military expenditure, while giving education considerably less importance in the national budget. World Bank figures show that among the ninety-three countries for which figures were available in 1995, sixteen countries were spending more on defence than on education and health combined (World Bank, 1995). If just \$3–6 billion of the estimated annual \$680 billion currently being spent worldwide on military expenditure could be diverted to edu-

cation, most experts believe that every child would have a place in a decent school (Sawyerr, 1997)

Corruption too drains resources. It is impossible to estimate how much money supports unfair privileges and is pocketed by politicians, administrators and/or others. If only some of these resources could be traced and used for their appropriate purposes, they would add considerably to educational budgets.

## **Economic theory**

During recent years, international markets have played a growing role in governments' decision-making. Many economic operations in international markets centre on short-term gain and quick profits. Governments, especially in small countries and countries dependent on foreign investors, are forced to play along with these market forces. Governments want to attract investors and try to adapt their policies to the demands they assume investors make. Investors, it is assumed, like to pay low taxes and favour policies of tax reduction and public sector cuts. Such policies have a price and the price might not be seen immediately. Public sector cuts leading to policies that will disfavour children may yield full costs ten or twenty years later.

Economists have started to realize that the environment has a price and that the destruction of environmental value is part of the calculation of gains and losses of economic transactions. It has been understood, at least partially, that it is cheaper to minimize environmental damage now than to try and cure irreparable destruction later. In the same way, it is necessary to start to realize the need for long-term investment in, and support of, children and their education (Vylder, 1997).

## **The teachers**

One cannot discuss closer agreement between legislation, political decisions and everyday practice without discussing the role of the teacher. All educational policies and reforms come down in the end to their practical implementation in schools and classrooms and to the relationship between teachers and students. If the teachers do not share in the objectives of reforms, do not understand them or are not even informed about them, these reforms are unlikely to be implemented. Examples abound of reforms and innovations in education systems that have simply not been implemented because the reformers forgot about the teachers (Villegas-Reimers & Reimers, 1996).

A questionnaire addressed to member organizations of Education International in some of the most populous countries of the world yielded as its most striking conclusion reports of insufficient, or in some cases absence of, consultations between governments and education unions (Education International, 1996). The International Labour Organization (ILO) also observed in 1996 that teachers' consultative participation at the site level had been under attack or ignored as part of structural adjustment policies.

Involvement of teachers in decisions on educational policies is not only a mat-

ter of recognizing teachers' expertise, but also an integral part of the whole idea of a democratic school. Teachers can only help students learn to function in a democratic society if they themselves can work in a democratic structure. Teachers cannot be ordered to be democratic if they themselves do not have a fair chance of participating in discussions preceding educational reforms. Lack of such rights for teachers undermines the whole idea of a democratic school.

## Teacher education

Too many teachers do not receive sufficient training. A study of the educational conditions in some of the least developed countries revealed that, in many countries, 20–30% of teachers had no teaching qualifications (Schleicher, Siniscalco & Postlethwaite, 1995). Education International has received reports from several countries about difficulties in recruiting students to teacher-training colleges (Education International, 1995). Reports from several Latin American countries tell how the shortage in teachers is forcing training institutions to accept all applicants, regardless of their academic backgrounds (Villegas-Reimers & Reimers, 1996).

## What to do?

On the basis of the above discussions, a number of actions can be proposed.

- International recommendations and conventions must be defended. They play a key role in setting acceptable standards for education and children's rights. They must be continuously revised and improved. International non-governmental organizations can play an important role in defending these recommendations and conventions and in their continuous improvement.
- National legislation has to be brought into line with international standards. National legislation and policies need permanent review in order to ensure that they guarantee education for all and the fundamental rights of children.
- Problems with educational policies often lie not in legislation or official policies, but in their implementation. To improve implementation, governments therefore have to be more concerned with seeing innovation and reform translated into action. Education policies must be based on adequate information and valid educational theories. Objectives must be clear and realistic. Before any decision is taken, the various groups of stakeholders have to be consulted.
- Insufficient resources are a major reason for the lack of implementation. Increased investment in education is crucial. Some countries have to change their priorities and reallocate resources from other sectors in society to education. Others are dependent on contributions from the international community.
- There is an urgent need to develop and elaborate knowledge of economic policy and its impact on children. The specific long-term effects that different measures have on children need to be studied further, as do the specific long-term effects of investment in education.

- The concept of 'the democratic school' has to be further developed, meaning that methods must be developed for students to learn about and to practise democracy. The democratic school is a school that recognizes the rights of students, teachers and parents to be part of decision-making processes.
- The need to consult the stakeholders (teachers, parents, students, etc.) about educational policies has to be recognized. There should be machinery for consultations between school authorities/governments and stakeholders in each country. Information should be provided on a continuous basis. Sufficient time, transparent procedures and effective communication with all interested parties are key factors for ensuring that such consultations achieve their objectives.
- Teacher education has to be reformed with emphasis on the need to organize teacher education as a process of life-long learning. There is a need to find a new concept of a high-quality pre-service education that gives future teachers a sound foundation in theory and practice. There is a need to provide continuous in-service training that will allow professional development of teachers and provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills to meet new challenges.

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**OPEN FILE**

**CHILDREN'S RIGHTS  
IN EDUCATION**

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# AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AND AN OPEN FILE

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*Cynthia Price Cohen, Martha Farrell Erickson,  
Målfrid Grude Flekkøy and Stuart Hart*

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The articles included in the Open File of this edition of *Prospects* were selected to communicate some of the important themes, issues and trends that were considered at the recent International Conference on Children's Rights in Education. The conference was held in Copenhagen, Denmark, from 26 to 30 April 1998. The major purpose of the conference was to advance respect and support for children's rights and the full development of children through education. This article introduces the Open File by providing some information about the conference and the articles that follow and it also summarizes and clarifies sixteen guiding themes that both emerged from the conference and are emphasized in these articles.

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*Original language: English*

*Cynthia Price Cohen (United States of America)*

Ph.D. Founder and Executive Director of ChildRights International Research Institute. As the representative of a non-governmental organization, Dr. Price Cohen participated in the drafting of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and she systematically follows international activities relating to the rights of the child. She teaches international child rights law at the Washington College of Law of the American University and the University of Tulsa College of Law. She is a popular lecturer, and frequent contributor to scholarly journals.

*Martha Farrell Erickson (United States of America)*

Ph.D. A developmental psychologist specializing in parent/child attachment, child abuse prevention, and community-based approaches to strengthening families. She directs the University of Minnesota's Children, Youth and Family Consortium. Dr. Farrell developed STEEP (Steps Toward Effective, Enjoyable Parenting), and carries out training and consultation with professionals in the United States and abroad. Author of many journal articles and book chapters, and regularly appears on television. Dr. Farrell works closely with U.S. Vice President Al Gore as co-sponsor of his annual family policy conference.



The conference provided a structured exchange among international and national experts on theory, research, policy and practices relating children's rights to education. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly Articles 28 and 29 on education, and Article 23 on children with disabilities, provided the fundamental framework for the exchange. (The convention is included with this edition of *Prospects*.) The Danish Ministry of Education was the primary organizer and sponsor of the conference. In presenting the conference, the Ministry had the co-operative involvement of the International Bureau of Education, Education International, the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International School Psychology Association and the Office for the Study of the Psychological Rights of the Child (School of Education of Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis), as well as numerous Danish national organizations. Approximately 200 participants registered for the conference, including individuals from forty-nine countries spanning all major regions of the world and representing ministries of education, professional educators, educational psychologists, child advocates, parents and children. The conference venue was the Royal Danish School of Educational Studies.

The opening address of the conference was by Sandra Prunella Mason, Chair of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, which oversees the compliance throughout the world in implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Her lecture on children's rights in education included an overview of the convention and the manner in which the Committee on the Rights of the Child works with national governments to encourage the convention's full implementation. The conference programme was divided into three major themes:

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*Målfrid Grude Flekkøy (Norway)*

Ph.D. A clinical child psychologist and specialist in child and adolescent psychology. She was the first Ombudsman for Children in Norway, 1981–89, the first position of this kind in the world. As Senior Fellow for UNICEF 1989–91 she authored *A voice for children: speaking out as their Ombudsman* (1991) and as Visiting Fellow at the Institute for Families in Society, University of South Carolina, she authored *The participation rights of the child: rights and responsibilities in family and society* (1997). She is currently Chief Psychologist at Nic Waals Institute, Oslo.

*Stuart N. Hart (United States of America)*

Ph.D. Professor of Counseling and Educational Psychology and Director of the Office for the Study of the Psychological Rights of the Child in the School of Education of Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis. He is Chair of the Children's Rights Committee of the International School Psychology Association and its representative to the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Geneva. He is the immediate Past-President of the National Committee for the Rights of the Child. He conducts research, lectures, and has written extensively on children's rights.

- the progress made thus far in achieving children's rights in education;
- the rights of children with special needs; and
- the directions for advancing children's rights through education.

Each theme was introduced by a keynote plenary presentation and followed by four simultaneously run presentations and working group sessions, each dealing with a major dimension of the overall theme. The keynote theme presentations on the topics (in the order indicated above) were by Gerison Lansdown (Director of the Children's Rights Office in the United Kingdom), Lena Saleh (Chief of Special Needs Education, UNESCO, Paris) and Brent Parfitt (Deputy Ombudsman for Children of British Columbia). Twelve internationally respected experts from ten countries presented and facilitated presentations/working groups on the following topics: cultural issues; models for reporting on progress; possibilities for agreement among legislation, political decisions and practices; home and school co-operation; children's experiences of their rights; inclusion and integration in education for students with special needs; rights of students and parents when receiving special needs support; financial considerations for special needs education; curricular guides and practices fostering rights and full development; education towards democracy; ways for students to express their views and achieve influence; and expectations and demands for teachers and parents. Selected youth from four countries participated throughout the conference, and presented their views in a final plenary session and in an eight-page newspaper they produced for the conference. Time was provided and well used for informal discussions among participants. In addition to the more traditional presentations and discussion processes of the conference, approximately two-thirds of one day was devoted to visits to Danish schools. This allowed for opportunities both to observe school programmes and to interact with and interview students, faculty, administrators and school-community representatives.

Conference keynote speakers Sandra Mason, Gerison Lansdown and Lena Saleh have each provided an article on their presentation topics for this Open File. Numerous conference presenters contributed articles on their conference themes. Ulf Fredriksson, in the previous 'Viewpoints/Controversies' section of this edition, clarifies the legislative, political and economic conditions which must be addressed if their relationships with everyday practice are to advance children's rights in education. F. Clark Power presents an orientation to education that can prepare children for full participation in democratic societies. Eugene Verhellen challenges us to make schools and communities truly 'child friendly' through full inclusion in society and decision-making, legal protection, systematic children's rights education policy, and the education of parents and teachers. Two articles are included that are not authored by conference presenters. Muju Zhu describes historical and present trends in the orientations and involvement of Chinese parents in their children's education, giving attention to the relevance for children's rights. Juvenal Bazilashe Balegamire clarifies the strong commitment of parents to their children's education in the South Kivu region of the Democratic Republic of Congo and the multiple and powerful factors that frustrate efforts to assure children's rights to and through education in that region. The Open File closes with an epilogue on the relationships

between education and self-respect by conference presenter Uazuvara E. Katjivena.

The conference was a genuine success. It achieved its major purposes—to advance respect and support for children's rights and the full development of children through education. Participants considered a substantial amount of information about targeted issues. This led to the formation of a wide variety of formal and informal alliances between participants for the purpose of pursuing joint educational projects. Genuine interest in and plans for advancing children's rights to, in and through education were in evidence in the comments and work of participants. It is expected that the national leaders who attended the conference will apply the ideas, models and strategies relevant to the educational conditions and needs in their countries.

Because the conference offered a good base for guiding progress in children's rights in education and made it clear that much more needs to be deliberated and accomplished, there exists a strong rationale for considering this conference to be the first in a continuing series. Initial steps in planning for a second International Conference on Children's Rights in Education are currently underway. Brazil has been proposed for the site of this conference and negotiations have started to select a venue and date.

Those interested in the conference report should direct their requests to: Joergen Hansen, Danish Ministry of Education, H.C. Andersens Boulevard 45, 1553 Copenhagen V, Denmark; tel: 45 33 92 5038, fax: 45 33 95 5411, e-mail: joergen.hansen@uvm.dk

## **Some major guiding themes on children's rights**

The authors of this article were the rapporteurs for the International Conference on Children's Rights. In this role, they collectively had the responsibility for attending each session and for being the careful listeners, interpreters and reporters of the conference. Their experiences enabled them to identify sixteen themes that were repeatedly given attention in conference presentations and discussions. The sixteen themes are:

- Each child is a bearer of rights;
- Education is a right of each child and not a privilege;
- Society is obligated specifically and generally to fulfil all rights of the child in and through education;
- The purposes of education embodied in Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child can and must be operationalized;
- The child's participation and full development must be supported in all educational goals, settings and practices;
- Respect for the rights of the child should promote the present and future quality of life of the child;
- Schools must respect the human rights of all persons in order to effectively achieve the rights of the child;
- Education and learning must be pursued in and beyond school settings in deliberate, co-ordinated ways;

- Existing identifiable barriers to implementation of the child's rights to education can be overcome;
- Education and learning need to be reconstructed—better ways are emerging;
- Education must respect individual, contextual and cultural differences;
- Special needs and 'inclusive' schooling embody moral principles, realities and fantasies that must be understood;
- Long-term cost-benefit analyses of education must be applied by governments in prioritizing resource use;
- Teacher preparation, parent education and the ability of children to educate must be strengthened;
- Accountability must be ensured in translating words into deeds, use of allocated resources and progress reports; and
- Rights require more than legal support—a moral imperative must be manifest at all levels of society (Denmark, 1998).

These themes might be considered to provide fundamental principles to guide future theory, research, policy and practice to advance children's rights. Each theme is presented here with comment to clarify its meaning and significance. In some cases, the name of the conference presenter who emphasized a particular concept is identified.

## **Each child is a bearer of rights**

This overarching theme recognizes the following points. Children are competent beings and curious researchers who need to be welcomed as full partners in governing schools and shaping their own education (Trond Waage). They should be considered as subjects, not objects, and as 'already human beings' entitled to full human rights, rather than 'not-yets' (Eugeen Verhellen). Given the opportunity, children provide striking examples through their insightful comments and actions that they are bearers of rights (Brent Parfitt), not simply recipients of rights. They should be viewed at least as full partners in this enterprise, and in many cases the children are the teachers. Perhaps that is the greatest lesson to be learned.

## **Education is a right**

International standards, beginning with those in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and continuing with subsequent human rights treaties, and the activities of international bodies combine to establish the right to education as a universal norm. Nearly all of the countries in the world have pledged to uphold the child's right to education under Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. At the World Summit for Children in 1990, Heads of State from approximately eighty countries signed the World Summit Declaration, which emphasizes the child's right to education. Education has come to be recognized as the key economic resource and determinant for social and economic inequalities between individuals and nations (Lena Saleh). The right to education has achieved universal support through legal instruments. Now it requires fulfilment through international, national and local practices.

## **Society's obligation**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, as international law, specifically obligates governments to provide a free primary school education for their young citizens, to make secondary and higher education available, to provide vocational information, to take measures to encourage school attendance, to ensure that school discipline is administered 'in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity', and to fully develop each child's potential. These and the other standards specific to education are included in the education articles of the convention (28 and 29). Additionally, all the other rights included in the convention are to be respected in and through education. For example, in accordance with Article 2, a child should not be subjected to unfair discrimination while being educated, and simultaneously, the child should learn to deal with others similar to and different from him- or herself in ways that are not unfairly discriminatory. National, local school system, individual school and classroom policy and practice should apply the standards of the convention explicitly and implicitly.

## **The purposes of education (Article 29)**

Article 29 provides the basic and long-range vision for the development of persons through education. It is the clearest statement in the convention defining the 'best interests of the child' and, in truth, of society, in terms of child development outcomes. Among the goals of Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child are development of: the child's personality; respect for human rights; respect for the child's parents, culture and others; respect for the natural environment; and preparation for life in a free society. All of these are susceptible to culturally meaningful and internationally credible operational forms. There is room for cultural interpretation and values. While some cultures place a high value on team action, others value independence of spirit, but all cultures view education as the medium for ensuring responsible citizenship. School curricula need to reflect community goals. It is essential that operational definitions for Article 29, including all strongly influencing cultural interpretations and applications, be developed and communicated openly so that they can be subjected to debate and their effects monitored.

## **Support for the child's participation and full development**

Children have participation rights from birth. They need to learn how, when, where and in relation to whom these rights can be expressed. Research on the social competencies of children has indicated, in general, that their capabilities have been underestimated. They can make choices, express opinions and understand relevant information at a tender age. Long-term, comprehensive perspectives are needed that support the learning of democratic principles and practices with applications begin-

ning before the child starts grade school. Nursery schools and kindergartens have been able to establish basic democratic decision-making principles for children by the age of 3 or 4. Both formal and informal groups of young children have learned to take responsibility important to the group, enhancing their own feeling of being worthwhile. However, these competencies are often lost by the time children reach age 10 because they are not enhanced or used in elementary or secondary school systems. This may be because pre-school teachers generally learn about and emphasize the development of children, while secondary school teachers generally learn more about subjects to be taught and how to teach them. Teacher preparation will have to change to provide continuity in the development of participation and democratic process competencies.

### **Promoting the child's present and future quality of life**

The meaning and fullness of life as a child should not be totally or even substantially sacrificed to the possibilities of a future state of development. A new child-image must be established that recognizes children as subjects, not objects. Research in developed countries has shown that when adolescence is treated as a holding or waiting period—a preparation period for the ‘real’ life to come later—the experience is closely related to youth culture problems. Children need the opportunity and richness of play, exploration, experimentation, fantasy and work meaningful to them. According to Buscaglia (1978):

Maturity is not a goal but rather a process ... each stage of maturity is complete in itself and can be actualized independently of every other stage ... life is always both an active state of being, and an ever-changing state of becoming.

Full actualization of each period of development must be ensured if full development and maturity are to occur in later stages. Every moment of life is ‘real’ life. Children have a right to the present.

### **Schools must respect the human rights of all persons**

Children's rights are important, but their importance must not be exaggerated to the point of suggesting that they are the only rights of significance, more important than anyone else's rights, or that they can be achieved regardless of whether the rights of others are respected (John Bennett). The ‘golden rule’, that we should treat others as we would like to be treated, continues to ring true. In the slang of today, the phrase ‘what goes around comes around’ expresses the wisdom of informed self-interest. Schools and the broader formal and informal educational environments for children should be places where there is respect for the rights of all persons—children, teachers, aides, clerks, administrators and parents. This will produce inter-

personal learning environments composed of people who value themselves and each other and that will promote learning and growth for all.

## **Education and learning in and beyond school settings**

School is not synonymous with education. A child's rights to, in and through education extend well beyond the walls of the school building. Children can go to school and not necessarily get an education. They are also educated in settings other than school, such as in the family, peer groups, organizations, the local community, and both local and national media contexts. Some values and skills can only be learned within the close-knit, long-lasting relationships of a family where children belong regardless of how they behave. For example, this is where children learn how to solve or live with conflicts between people they need and love and who love them. Some other skills can only be gained in relationships with peers. The influence of peers is increased for children living in small families with both parents working. In peer groups void of adult interference, children learn the ground rules for making democratic rules and decisions, and the conditions for being included in or excluded from a group where membership is not guaranteed. In the broader community, health, education and social services, and the wide range of child-focused organizations and community resources should be formulated and integrated in ways that protect the rights and serve the formal and informal education needs of the developing child.

## **Overcoming existing barriers to implementation**

The most important factor in the failure to implement the child's right to education may be inadequate funding. Sometimes this failure is the result of government policy in which budgetary allocations place education at the bottom of the list of priorities. At other times, failures may be subtler. For example, there may be an adequate number of schools and teachers, but not enough supplies or, in cases where children must supply their own books, parents may be too poor to buy them, thereby leaving children unable to study properly. Other interfering factors may include such things as individual teacher or institutional 'gender bias'; the competing need for some children to earn money or resources through work to survive and/or help support their family; undiagnosed disabilities of children; and inadequate teacher training. Successful strategies are being used in various parts of the world to help overcome each of these and other barriers. The relative priority of education among other national agenda issues must be raised to require governments to be accountable to seek and apply strategies that will improve education.

## **Education and learning need to be reconstructed**

The whole approach to learning and education needs to be reconsidered in the light of social, economic, technological and child development changes. Emphasis may

have to shift to learning more about where and how to find relevant information when needed rather than acquiring facts that may be obsolete by the time children leave school. Evidence indicates that traditional compulsory schooling might be successfully completed by 14 or 15 years of age, thereby enabling students to choose paths combining identified interests and talents for continuing education. Creative thinking, flexibility and positive interpersonal skills and attitudes (e.g. tolerance) deserve more support as basics of education for all children. Numerous elements or components deserve serious consideration for incorporation in educational designs for the future, including the following: 'constructivist theory', pro-social skills and moral/ethical character programmes, peers as teachers, experiential and/or apprenticeship models, life-long learning approaches, and the Danish 'class teacher' model that fosters long-term relationships between children and adults in ways assuring that children have experience of trust, advocacy and mentoring. A more holistic perspective on school, education and learning should include closer collaboration between schools and parents, schools and community, schools and organizations for children and youth, and various arenas for learning. Such changes will bring win-win outcomes for all persons and their societies.

## **Education must respect differences**

There is no one right way to honour the educational rights of all children. Differences in individuals, cultures and contexts must be considered in choosing among the substantial range of good and effective educational conditions and strategies to be applied. Many examples exist of situations in which disrespect or misunderstandings regarding cultural differences have limited educational opportunity. Children whose religions require that they keep their arms and legs clothed have been erroneously excluded from physical education and sports activities when all that was necessary to allow participation was good communication and tolerance for optional dress. Poor school attendance has been misunderstood to mean lack of interest or disrespect for authority when children were simply following a traditional pattern of apprenticeship in their parent's occupation, a misunderstanding that could be reconciled through home-school co-operation.

Even within homogeneous ethnic, geographical or religious contexts, families and professional educators face great 'cultural' challenges in supporting children's rights. For example, in both developed and developing nations, the needs of the 'dropout' or 'pushed out' student population must be addressed by co-operation between parents and educators. However, many parents are reluctant to even enter a school and talk to a teacher because of the negative experiences they had as students. Clearly, what is needed are new and better ways to build partnerships with these children and families, beginning by working with people in ways that emphasize points of agreement and existing strengths.



## **Understanding the moral principles, realities and fantasies**

The most common conception of the special needs child is the child that has an obvious physical or mental handicap. In a broader sense, special needs can also be applied to those children for whom circumstances have made school impossible: children who work in sweat shops, children who are sexually exploited, or children who are living in extreme poverty or in a state of war.

Any child may have special needs, short-term or long-term, at one time or another. Refugee children who cannot speak the local language and hospitalized children while they are ill have special needs until these conditions change. Special needs can also vary in severity. A very short-sighted child will be helped with glasses and being seated close to the teacher, while a blind child will need special education and technical aids.

Many children with special needs can get what they need in an ordinary classroom, on condition that the necessary human and technical resources are provided. But inclusive schooling may not be the best option for all children. For example, deaf children will need to learn to communicate by lip reading or signing before they can learn in an ordinary classroom. Totally inclusive schools may be a disservice to some children, failing to support the individual child's development or right to learn. Respect for the parents' and child's right to choose is a related factor. If there is no choice, rights may be infringed. The best interests of the child must be the main consideration, requiring creative ideas, participation in decision-making and flexible solutions to provide properly balanced developmental conditions for each and every child.

## **Long-term cost-benefit analyses for setting goals and prioritizing resource use**

Education is the best long-term investment that can be made in the life of a child and in the quality of life for a society. This maxim, broadly supported in the words of governmental leaders and societal planners, is rarely translated into action when priorities for expenditures are set. In a world of competing interests for financial resources, it is of critical importance that preferences and beliefs be translated into hard facts about costs and benefits. Education leaders and economic experts should collaborate to research and determine cost-benefit relationships between financial support at various levels for education and the economic impact on individuals and society. The available, though sparse, history of similar or related research indicates it can make a difference to policy setters and will be used to guide decisions about the allocation of resources. This kind of research is likely to provide strong justification to increase funding to education and to reduce ill-advised cost-cutting, which ignores a long, predictable future of negative results. Good information, which provides accurate predictions about the short- and long-term costs and benefits to soci-

eties for educating their children, must be produced and applied in decisions to allocate resources.

## **Teacher preparation, parent education and the ability of the child to educate**

Rarely are parents engaged as full partners in the education of their children. Children are usually absent from the power base of schools. Although both teachers and parents communicate to students, the voices of children are seldom heard in a meaningful way. Schools will be more effective if parents and children, as appropriate to their evolving capacities, become the second and third legs of the 'tripod partnership' of effective schools (Trond Waage).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child mandates that we educate children and adults about human rights. Needless to say, that is a huge and ongoing task, demanding multiple strategies for multiple audiences. There is both an immediate and a long-term need to incorporate human rights education (and specifically children's rights education) into the preparation of teachers and school administrators. For educators already in service, this requires an immediate large-scale effort to make high-quality continuing education materials and programmes available, drawing on the latest technology for distance education. To meet the needs of future teachers, colleges and universities must incorporate into their degree programmes both coursework and guided practicum experience designed to prepare teachers to teach human rights and to implement human rights in their classrooms and schools.

Given the primacy of parents in the education and development of children, rights education efforts should be focused on parents and parents-to-be. The growing body of research attesting to the importance of a child's relationships and learning experiences in the first three years of life demands this. New or prospective parents need solid, evidence-based information about how experiences even in the first months of life provide the foundation that allows a child to become a motivated, confident, persistent learner and a caring, responsible citizen.

To accomplish these advances, all available media should be used to inform parents about and involve them in the ongoing workings of the school. Personal outreach should occur through home visits or neighbourhood meetings, and student-produced newsletters should go to parents. Additionally, families should be drawn into the school by transforming schools into the focal point of community life. A related but separate supportive strategy is to maintain a focus on lifelong learning, based on the understanding that everyone has something to learn and everyone has something to teach. This affords an especially rich opportunity for children to become the teachers of their parents and elders.

Finally, with a long-term view to building a society that honours the human rights of each citizen, children should become full partners in educating themselves and others. In schools, we need to engage children as early as possible in being responsible for advocating their own rights and honouring the rights of their peers.

We need to look for opportunities to engage older and same-age children as educators and mentors for their schoolmates.

## **Accountability must be ensured**

Nations, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), special interest groups and the general citizenry should assume that ratification of the convention requires full implementation of the rights it includes. The good intentions expressed in words through ratification must be translated into actions that are sufficiently well designed and supported by the necessary resources. Monitoring and reporting of associated efforts and results are required in order to ensure accountability.

Information should be available about the nature, level and source of resources, their application and effects. Funds originating from within or outside a nation should be allocated for specific designated purposes and their use should be closely monitored and reported to ensure accountability (Joshua Malinga).

In a more general sense, accountability can be increased through establishing accurate, comprehensive, open and 'user-friendly' information systems for the reports prepared by governments and NGOs for submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. At the international level, the networks and services of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNICEF, UNESCO and a few other agencies and organizations provide some of the required information. Instruments for organizing and reporting data specific to education should be strengthened. The rapidly developing systems of technologically supported communication must be increasingly applied to meet this need. Ministries or offices of education and NGOs within each nation should have web sites that provide all relevant information about their reports on the education standards of the convention at both formative and summative levels.

## **Rights require more than legal support**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international legal instrument. Nations which ratify the convention either automatically include all its standards within the laws of their lands, or move through some process that progressively adjusts and adds to existing law to achieve the equivalent of the convention's standards. Laws at the international, national and local levels help make clear the formal commitments of governments to the rights of the child and set forth the essential interpretations, provisions of support, criteria and accountability mechanisms necessary for implementation.

However, laws are not enough to satisfy the spirit of intent inherent in the convention or the broader vision for children's rights that led to its creation and nearly universal adoption, and which will shape future evolving standards and their interpretations. Examples abound of the inadequacy of law in achieving its intended goals. The driver of a car exceeds the speed limit and ignores a red light at an intersection. A friend brags about cheating the government by not paying the required

taxes. A very real discrepancy exists in many cases between standards of law and actual human behaviour, usually because prerequisite values or moral commitments are lacking. The spirit of the law will not be realized until such commitments are made.

The convention sets a 'positive ideology of the child' in front of the people of each nation and the world by establishing that children are rights-bearing persons and by guiding associated values, attitudes and actions. To achieve the rights proclaimed by the convention, organizations, agencies and people at each level of human development must progressively understand, accept, appreciate, commit themselves to and act in support of those rights. The cognitive, affective and volitional capacities of persons must be activated to respect the rights of children.

Particular attention should be given to ensuring that the interpersonal environments of schools manifest and foster a shared sense of 'moral imperative' to advance the human rights of children. School personnel are a society's institutionalized child rearers who complement and supplement the roles of parents and who are expected to act in the best interests of society at large. Schools should be expected to champion the human rights and welfare of children in order to be true to their human development purposes and to counterbalance the denial of freedom of choice inherent in compulsory school attendance. Human rights values and practices learned and lived in school can contribute significantly towards better human rights conditions in society.

#### GUEST EDITOR'S NOTE OF APPRECIATION

The concept and much of the material for this Open File resulted from the International Conference on Children's Rights in Education, which was held in Copenhagen in April 1998 and sponsored by the Danish Ministry of Education. The development of the Open File was strengthened significantly by the planning and editorial support of Cynthia Price Cohen, Martha Farrell Erickson, and Målfrid Grude Flekkøy. The staff of *Prospects* were very helpful throughout the development of the Open File and instrumental in ensuring that the complete set of articles would meet the high standards of the journal. All of these contributions are greatly appreciated.

STUART N. HART

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# CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

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## IN EDUCATION

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*Sandra Prunella Mason*

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### Introduction

Traditionally, children have not been perceived as the subjects of rights but rather as the objects of legal protection. Adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the United Nations General Assembly<sup>1</sup> has effectively and appropriately moved the child, and the concept of his/her rights, from the periphery of national and international thinking to centre stage, resulting in a change of attitude and perception of who a child really is. The convention has been considered innovative. It envisages the rights of the child not as being in conflict with the rights of the adult, nor as an alternative to or an abrogation of the rights of parents, but as an integral part of human rights. It recognizes the child as an individual with needs that evolve with age and maturity. Accordingly, it goes beyond existing treaties by seeking to balance the rights of the child with the duties of parents and others responsible for the child's survival, development and protection, by giving the child the right to participate in decisions affecting the child's life.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is not, and was not meant to be, a mere grouping of articles embodying divergent or independent principles. In fact, the convention's strength lies in the concept of the indivisibility and interdependence of all the rights enshrined therein, rights that are inherent to the human dignity of the child and are necessary for the full and harmonious development of the child's

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*Original language: English*

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personality, including the child's civil and political rights and cultural, social and economic rights. In other words, by ratifying the convention, States have committed themselves to providing a better life for all children under their jurisdiction by taking the necessary measures (legislative, administrative and other measures) for its implementation.

## **The historical perspective of education as a right**

The principle of education as a fundamental right did not have its inception with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. By its resolution 217A (III) of 10 December 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This document was conceived as a 'common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations' and thus became the yardstick by which to measure the degree of respect for and compliance with international human rights standards.

The Universal Declaration proclaimed education as a fundamental right in its Article 26, which states:

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Since then, various international human rights instruments have reiterated and reinforced this principle.<sup>2</sup> For example, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,<sup>3</sup> one of two treaties that were drafted to make the Universal Declaration's principles legally binding, recognized the right of everyone to education. The text of its Article 13, which calls for different levels of education, also defines the purpose of education and the role of parents in the education process.<sup>4</sup> Article 13 provided the foundation for Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In 1990, the year that the Convention on the Rights of the Child went into force, world leaders met at United Nations Headquarters in New York to hold the World Summit for Children. The World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, which was agreed to at the summit, recognized that the provision of basic education and literacy for all are among the most important contributions that can be made to the development of the world's children. The accom-

panying Plan of Action for implementing the World Summit Declaration stated, *inter alia*:

Besides its intrinsic value for human development and improving the quality of life, progress in education and literacy can contribute significantly to improvement in maternal and child health, to protection of the environment in sustainable development. As such, investment in basic education must be accorded a high priority in national action as well as international co-operation.

It is ironic, therefore, that fifty years after the initial acceptance of education as a fundamental right, the story is told that:

- more that 100 million children, including 60 million girls, have no access to primary schooling;
- more than 960 million adults, two-thirds of whom are women, are illiterate, and functional illiteracy is a significant problem in all countries, industrialized and developing;
- more than one-third of the world's adults have no access to the printed knowledge, new skills and technologies that could improve the quality of their lives and help them shape and adapt to social and cultural change; and
- more than 100 million children and countless adults fail to complete basic education programmes and millions more satisfy the attendance requirements but do not acquire essential knowledge and skills.<sup>5</sup>

## Definition of education

Education is usually viewed as the imparting of academic instruction within the school system. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, while not definitively proffering a definition, appears to infer a more all-encompassing connotation. Article 28 makes mention of primary education, secondary education (including vocational education), higher education, attendance at school and reduction of dropout rates. Article 29 speaks to the kind of education that would prepare the child for an active adult life in a free society and foster respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, and for the cultural background and values of others, and involve the:

- development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities;
- development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- inculcation of the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of the sexes, and friendship among all peoples; and
- development of respect for the material environment.

Education thus involves a complete process and as UNESCO puts it:

The word 'education' implies the entire process of social life by means of which individuals and social groups learn to develop consciously within, and for the benefit of, the national and international communities, the whole of their personal capacities, attitudes, aptitudes and knowledge. This process is not limited to any specific activities.<sup>6</sup>

This therefore is the standard to which each State should aspire on behalf of its children to fulfil the obligation of the right to education.

## **Interrelatedness of the convention**

Article 18 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the primacy of parents in the upbringing and development of the child. The State, however, has the obligation to render appropriate assistance to parents in the performance of their child-raising responsibilities and to ensure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care and development of children. The responsibility of the State is further underscored by Article 4, which indicates that with regard to economic, social and cultural rights, the State must undertake measures for their implementation to the maximum extent of available resources and where needed within the framework of international co-operation. Implementation of these rights therefore usually requires financial investments, and the State's obligation to use available resources to the maximum extent possible in certain cases requires budgetary reallocations. Thus, responsibility for the child's education does not rest solely with the family since it is incumbent upon the State to ensure its provision.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child spells out a number of rights that touch upon education, educational opportunity and the quality of education. Underpinning and permeating all the interrelated principles of the convention are such concepts as: non-discrimination (Art. 2); the best interests of the child (Art. 3); the right to survival and development (Art. 6); and the right of the child to express his or her views (Art. 12).

First, the State must ensure to the maximum extent of its available resources (Art. 4): the survival and development of the child (Art. 6), who is a person under 18 years of age (Art. 1); without discrimination (Art. 2) and with the best interests of the child as a primary consideration (Art. 3); while affording the child the opportunity to express his or her views in all matters affecting the child (Art. 12).

Second, the State must guarantee: freedom of expression (Art. 13); freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Art. 14); and freedom of association (Art. 15); as well as protection of privacy (Art. 16); while ensuring accessibility to information and materials from diverse sources (Art. 17).

Third, the State must take all appropriate measures to: protect the child from all forms of physical and mental violence (Art. 19); prohibit the child's illicit use of narcotic drugs and the child's participation in drug trafficking (Art. 33); eradicate child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (Art. 34); prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children (Art. 35) and all other forms of exploitation (Art. 36).

Fourth, the State must recognize the special needs of the disabled child and ensure access to education, services and to a full and decent life and special care, and promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community (Art. 23).



Fifth, the State must recognize and ensure the right of the child to protection from economic exploitation and from performing work that is likely to be hazardous to or interfere with the child's education and to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, normal or social development (Art. 32).

Sixth, the State must recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, play and recreational activities, and to participate in cultural life (Art. 31). The State must also ensure that a child belonging to a minority or indigenous group is not denied the right to enjoy and practise his or her culture, religion or language (Art. 30).

Seventh, the right of the child to an adequate standard of living, material assistance, nutrition, clothing and housing must be guaranteed by the State (Art. 27), as well as the right to the highest attainable standard of health (Art. 24), including health education.

Eighth, the State must provide special protection for a child deprived of the family environment and ensure that appropriate alternative family care or institutional placement is available in such cases (Art. 20). The State is also obliged to ensure that a refugee child, or a child seeking refuge status, receives appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance (Art. 22). For those children placed in care for their protection and treatment, the State must periodically review and evaluate such placement (Art. 25).

Ninth, the State must ensure that no child is subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and that neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment without possibility of release is meted out to a child (Art. 37). In the case of a child in conflict with the law, the State must ensure that the rules of natural justice apply (Art. 40).

Finally, the State must recognize the right of the child to education on the basis of equal opportunity, provide compulsory and free primary education to all, and access to different forms of secondary education, to educational and vocational information and guidance and to higher education according to capacity, take measures to promote regular school attendance and the reduction of dropout rates and to ensure school discipline that is consistent with human dignity (Art. 28). Significantly, the education provided must promote personality development, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, cultural identity and national values and prepare the child for responsible life in a free society, as well as allow the development of respect for the environment (Art. 29).

In addition to all of the above obligations, a State that ratifies the Convention on the Rights of the Child must ensure that its principles and provisions are disseminated as widely as possible by appropriate means to adults and children alike (Art. 42).

## **Implementation of the right to education**

In accordance with Article 44 of the convention, States Parties must report regularly (initially two years after the convention comes into force in the country and thereafter every five years) to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, detailing the measures adopted to give effect to the rights enshrined in the convention and

the progress made in the enjoyment of these rights. Included in these reports, which are to be made widely available to the public in the country concerned, must be an indication of any factors and difficulties affecting the fulfilment of the State's obligations.

The process of reporting by States to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and the examination of reports, signals the only external accountability that States encounter for the way they treat their children. The committee is committed to making the process one that has a lasting impact on the quality of children's lives. Crucial to that process is the issue of practical implementation with regard to the obligations enshrined in the convention.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child constantly reminds States Parties of the principle of the 'first call for children' promoted at the World Summit for Children and of the convention's Article 4, both of which emphasize that the general lack of financial resources cannot be used as a justification for neglecting to establish social programmes to protect the most vulnerable groups of children. Accordingly, the committee suggests in some cases that a review should be undertaken to determine the consistency of the economic and social policies being developed with the State Party's obligations under the convention or improvement of social security programmes and other social protection.<sup>7</sup>

To assist States in the preparation of reports, guidelines for the submission of both initial and periodic reports have been drawn up by the committee. States are required to indicate the measures adopted, including those of a legislative, administrative and budgetary nature, to recognize and ensure the right of the child to education and to achieve that right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunities.

In keeping with the overarching nature of the general principles of the convention, namely the best interests of the child, the right of the child to life, survival and development, respect for the views of the child and non-discrimination, reports must contain an analytical application of these general principles to the right of the child in education. Reports must reflect:

- the proportion of the overall budget at the central, regional and local (and where appropriate at the federal and provincial) levels devoted to children and allocated to the various divisions of education;
- the consideration given to the real cost to the family of the child's education and the appropriate support provided;
- the measures adopted to ensure that children may be taught in local, indigenous or minority languages;
- mechanisms developed to ensure access by all children, including girls, children with special needs and children in especially difficult circumstances, to quality education adapted to the child's age and maturity;
- the steps taken to ensure that there are sufficient teachers in the school system, to enhance their competence, and to ensure and assess the quality of teaching;
- the measures adopted to provide educational facilities, accessible to all children;

- the rate of illiteracy below and over 18 years of age, and the rate of enrolment in literacy classes, including organization by age, gender, region, rural/urban area, and social and ethnic origin;
- any system of non-formal education;
- any system or extensive initiatives by the State to provide early development and education services for young children, especially for young children from disadvantaged social groups;
- the changes that have occurred in the education system (including with regard to legislation, policies, facilities, budgetary allocation, quality of education, enrolment, dropout and literacy);
- any monitoring mechanism developed, factors and difficulties encountered and targets identified for the future; and
- other relevant disaggregated data on the children concerned, including education outcomes *inter alia* by gender, age, region, rural/urban area and national, ethnic and social origin.

Reports should indicate: the particular measures adopted, as well as indicating the activities and programmes developed, including at the bilateral and regional levels; the target groups identified, including by age, gender and national, social and ethnic origin; the financial assistance provided and/or received and the priorities established; and the consideration given to the aims of education as identified by Article 29 of the convention, including any evaluation made of the progress achieved and of the difficulties encountered. Mention should be made, whenever appropriate, of the involvement of United Nations organs and specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations in the State's education process.

## List of issues

Before the committee meets in public session with States Parties to formally consider and discuss their reports, it meets in private in presessional meetings<sup>8</sup> to analyse the reports to determine whether they fulfil the requirements of the reporting guidelines. On completion of the analysis, the committee draws up a list of issues which, for example, need to be clarified, or of which rights might have been omitted from the report.

On the basis of over eighty reports that have already been considered by the committee, it is safe to say that the sections on education (as well as the section on basic health and welfare) are usually better documented than those on other topics. In spite of the depth of information provided, some issues that the country has not considered surface. For example, in the case of New Zealand, the committee needed to ask: 'Has any evaluation process of the system of education, including the decision-making powers of schools, sought the views of the students?' Similar additional education questions were put to Uruguay, Panama, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ethiopia and Colombia, among others.

## Observations

At the end of the formal discussions with the States Parties, the committee draws up its concluding observations detailing the positive indicators, the factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the convention, and the concerns of the committee regarding the status of implementation, and proffering suggestions and recommendations for remediation, including international co-operation.

This document, which therefore represents an assessment of the State's performance and compliance with the convention, tends to have a catalytic effect in that it informs the next steps to be taken by the State in the performance of its obligations in ensuring/guaranteeing the rights of the child. It is assumed also that concerns expressed by the committee in its concluding observations will be addressed by the State Party in its next report. One lingering concern regarding the requirements of Article 28 is that education is to be implemented on the basis of equal opportunity and non-discrimination and that special measures are to be adopted regarding special categories of children, such as those in rural or remote areas, children from minority groups, disabled children in detention or under special health or mental care, and children involved in unusual conflicts. Also regularly included in the committee's concluding observations are comments about a number of matters that impinge upon the child's education – for example such as: the girl child and general discrimination on the basis of gender (e.g. early marriage, teenage pregnancy, domestic labour, school dropout, boy child preference, etc.); children in rural or remote areas (lack of specific allocation of human, economic and organization resources); the importance of specific training for teachers and adaptation of the school curriculum to cater to their specific requirements, especially in the case of time schedules; and children from minority groups who need bilingual educational services (e.g. special training for teachers; need for an awareness-raising campaign on diversity).

## Conclusions

The key to the development of any nation is through the educating of its people. No civilized, humane or progressive society can ignore that right to schooling and education of its citizens, particularly its children. Therefore, to implement the right of the child to a development-oriented education is a fundamental condition for improving the child's quality of life, including spiritual and moral dimensions, and his/her ability to function fully as a constructive member of society. The child needs supportive conditions, not only to survive, but also to develop into a responsible human adult. Education must make the present and future well-being of the young generation as its ultimate goal, of which one of the most important conditions is to ensure the full realization of its rights as stipulated by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, for education in the broadest sense continues beyond school and throughout life in a myriad of social contexts.

## Notes

1. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989.
2. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child of 1959 stipulated that every child is entitled to receive education (Article 28).
3. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is the companion of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
4. Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights reads:
  1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to education. They agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They further agree that education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
  2. The States parties to the present Covenant recognize that, with a view to achieving the full realization of this right:
    - (a) Primary education shall be compulsory and available free to all;
    - (b) Secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational secondary education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education;
    - (c) Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education;
    - (d) Fundamental education shall be encouraged or intensified as far as possible for those persons who have not received or completed the whole period of their primary education;
    - (e) The development of a system of schools at all levels shall be actively pursued, an adequate fellowship system shall be established, and the material conditions of teaching staff shall be continuously improved.
  3. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to choose for their children schools other than those established by the public authorities, which conform to such minimum educational standards as may be laid down or approved by the State and to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.
  4. No part of this article shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principles set forth in paragraph 1 of this article and to the requirement that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.
5. Preamble, World Declaration on Education for All, 1990.
6. Recommendation Concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education Relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1974).

7. See Concluding Observation re the report of Nigeria.
8. The Committee on the Rights of the Child meets at the Palais des Nations in Geneva for four weeks, three times a year. The first three weeks of each session are devoted to examination of State Party reports. The final week, known as the 'presessional week', is devoted to preparation for the next session's review of States.

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# PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD: FACTORS HELPING AND HINDERING THAT PROCESS

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*Gerison Lansdown*

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The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified by 191 nations—a record unparalleled by any other human rights treaty. Access to education, long recognized as a universal human right, is reaffirmed in the convention. It requires the provision of basic education and much more; and it places three key obligations on governments with regard to education:

- to recognize education as a human right for all children;
- to respect the human rights of children within the education system;
- to provide human rights education.

There is, however, a huge discrepancy between the principles and intent of the convention and the day-to-day realities of life for children. For example, more than 100 million children of school age still have no access to any kind of basic

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education, and millions of children who do enter the education system fail to complete the basic programmes.

## **Barriers to children's rights in education**

There are huge barriers to be overcome before internationally recognized rights begin to be respected for all children in and through education. Those barriers are political, economic and cultural. Behind the rights rhetoric, there are many competing agendas in the provision of education systems. Education is both a right of individuals and a necessity for society. For governments, there are two major goals in funding education: to develop the economic workforce and the potential wealth of the future, and to promote social cohesion and integration (Brown, 1994). For parents, there are two demands on the education system: for their children to have an education which will equip them for a successful future life, and for transmission of their values, culture and language. There is recognition in international law of the right of parents to educate their children according to their beliefs (e.g. in Article 26(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18(4) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 to the European Convention on Human Rights). It reflects the need to introduce limits on the exercise of power by a State to impose its political and religious agenda on children.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child introduces an additional perspective. It imposes limits not only on the State but also on parents by insisting that the child's views must be given serious consideration and that respect must be accorded to the child's evolving capacities. This places significant and often competing demands on the education system—from governments, which are providing the legal and administrative framework and funding; from parents, who are responsible for their children's upbringing; and from children, who are the recipients of education. In analysing the progress made in meeting the obligations undertaken by governments in respect of education rights, it is important to bear in mind these political and social realities and the inevitable tensions that they produce.

## **Education as a human right**

Article 28 of the Convention sets out the basic principle of entitlement to education, which should be provided progressively and on the basis of equality of opportunity. It requires that primary education be compulsory and available free, and that secondary education for all children be developed.

Many of the poorest countries in the world have profound difficulties in finding the resources to provide adequately for children's education. However, investment in education has been shown to have significant cultural and economic implications for both individual and national development. In many of the least developed countries the greatest source of wealth lies in the untapped capacities of



the people (Dall, 1995). It must be realized that the goal of universal access to education is not a pipe dream.

It has been estimated that the cost of putting every child in school by the year 2000 would be US\$60 billion. Compare that with the US\$780 billion spent annually on weapons, or the US\$50 billion spent in Europe alone on cigarettes (UNDP, 1998). What is needed is a massive shift in political priorities at national and international level. Remarkable progress has been made by many developing countries in providing access to basic education. For example, among countries with a per capita gross national product below US\$300, Bangladesh, Kenya, Malawi and Viet Nam have rates of enrolment of over 80%, about 20 percentage points above what could be expected at their income level. In a similar income range, however, Ethiopia, Haiti, Mali and Niger enrol less than 30% of children (UNICEF, 1997). In other words, it is possible to make significant progress towards the achievement of the right to basic education even in the poorest of countries if the political will exists.

## **Equality of opportunity and access**

The Convention unequivocally requires governments to take active measures to ensure that education is accessible to all children without discrimination. Therefore, Article 28, which requires the provision of education on the basis of equality of opportunity, should be read alongside Article 2, which provides that all rights in the convention must apply to all children without discrimination on any grounds. The problem of access to education is not merely one of national availability of resources. It is also about how those resources are distributed. It is not acceptable, therefore, on grounds of resources, to give priority to boys over girls or to deny disabled children access to education. The only discrimination permitted would be positive discrimination to ensure greater educational opportunities for groups of children traditionally denied access.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has criticized a number of governments, including those of Madagascar, Mexico, the Philippines, Portugal and the United Kingdom (Hodgkin & Newell, 1998, p. 369–89), for failing to take sufficient action to protect these rights for minority children. An example will clarify this. Throughout Europe, by law, all children are entitled, and indeed compelled, to attend school; however, those living in gypsy and traveller communities often fail to do so. In 1989 primary school enrolment rates for those children in the countries of the European Union were only about 35% and completion rates were worse. Transition rates from primary to secondary school are extremely low or non-existent.

## **Children in poverty**

Child poverty is one of the most formidable barriers to children's access to education. For many families the costs of education (e.g. school fees, uniforms,

educational materials, books, transportation) are simply beyond their reach. Even where the education is provided completely free, the loss of the child's potential earnings whilst at school might make it uneconomic for the child to attend. But the impact of poverty extends beyond restricting opportunities for children to have access to formal schooling. It also determines the quality of the environment in which children grow up and is likely to have a devastating impact on their early development and subsequent potential for physical, intellectual and emotional growth (Dall, 1995). The right to an adequate standard of living for their proper development, the right to the best possible health and access to health care, and the right to play are all fundamental entitlements embodied in the convention, each dealing with factors that directly influence a child's capacity to take advantage of education. Unless and until these macro issues of poverty and economic injustice are tackled, the right to education for very poor children is unlikely to become a reality.

## **Gender bias against girls**

The principle of equal rights of access to education for boys and girls remains a distant goal. All world indicators show a continuing disparity. In 1990, girls accounted for 70% of those children who had no access to either primary or secondary education. This disparity is particularly great in Africa, South Asia and the Middle East (UNICEF, 1992). In terms of literacy, the evidence is even more damning. Of the 960 million people who are illiterate, 700 million are women. The causes are multiple (UNICEF, 1991):

- Customary attitudes fail to recognize the importance of education for girls.
- There are expectations that girls will take on a large share of household tasks from an early age.
- There is a shortage of women teachers, which can inhibit the enrolment of girls.
- There is resistance to allowing girls to be educated with boys.
- The distance between school and home, particularly in rural areas, gives rise to fears that the journey will expose girls to possible molestation or abuse.
- School is too often a negative experience for girls. The teachers are frequently male, the culture of school is aggressive and dominated by boys, and the syllabus is male-focused.
- There is a lack of flexibility in schedules to enable girls to combine schooling and household tasks.

The challenge ahead then is considerable. A commitment to developing strategies and mobilizing resources to achieve objectives was made at the Ougadougou Conference on the Education of Girls in 1993 (Hammarberg, forthcoming). Needs identified included the needs to:

- locate schools nearer to communities;
- make schools safer learning environments;
- make more efforts to ensure that facilities are culturally appropriate;

- develop rural water, roads and electricity to ease the workloads of women and therefore girls;
- recruit more women as teachers;
- increase community participation in the management and improvement of local schools;
- design systems to cater for the needs of female students, such as installation of water and sanitation facilities, flexible schedules, gender-based monitoring and specially designed instruction which introduces topics that are of interest to girls and meet their aspirations.

## Children with disabilities

Article 23 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child stresses that children with disabilities have the right to education in a manner conducive to the achievement of the fullest possible social integration and individual development. Considered in conjunction with Articles 28 and 2, this emphasizes unequivocally that children with disabilities are entitled to education and that education should be provided, wherever possible, in the mainstream alongside other children.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has expressed concern about the low proportion of disabled children enrolled in schools world-wide. In most developing countries, it is estimated that only 2% of such children have access to education. Furthermore, the committee has stressed the importance of recognizing the right of children with disabilities to full inclusion in mainstream schools, and in its scrutiny of States Parties to the convention it encourages the development of further measures to promote inclusion (Hodgkin & Newell, 1998, p. 293–314). In 1996, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Disability undertook a survey of educational provision for disabled people. He found that, of eighty countries providing information, ten gave no guarantees in law with regard to education for children with disabilities (United Nations, CSD, 1996). Other surveys, carried out by UNESCO, confirm these depressing findings. A review of sixty-five countries found that (a) only forty-four had reported that general legislation applied to children with special educational needs; (b) thirty-four reported that children with severe disabilities were excluded from education; and (c) in eighteen of those thirty-four countries, children with disabilities were actually precluded by law from the public educational system.

In 1997, the Committee on the Rights of the Child devoted its General Discussion day to the rights of children with disabilities. A central theme of the day was the child's right to inclusion and participation, with particular emphasis on education. Participants in the discussion identified a number of factors impeding disabled children's access to inclusive education (United Nations, CRC, 1997):

- deep-seated prejudice and fear in many societies regarding disability;
- the failure to understand the potential of *all* children to develop if provided with a responsive environment;
- the prevalence of discriminatory laws which deny equal rights of access to disabled children;

- the persistence of the medical rather than the social model of disability;
- the failure to recognize the positive economic and social consequences of inclusive education.

Overcoming these obstacles represents a formidable challenge. However, there have been a number of important recent developments supporting improvements. The World Conference on Special Needs Education in 1994 produced the Salamanca Statement, which was signed by the representatives of ninety-two countries. It stressed that children with special educational needs must have access to regular schools and urged governments to give the highest priority to improving their national education system so as to include *all* children (UNESCO, 1994). The UN Special Rapporteur on Disability is pursuing the principle of inclusion in all forms of development, and in so doing is collaborating with UNESCO, ILO, UNICEF and WHO (Lindquist, 1997). The Committee on the Rights of the Child at its General Discussion day set out fourteen recommendations designed to enhance the rights of children with disabilities, and established a working party to further those recommendations. At a national level, initiatives in many countries to promote inclusive education are being developed and can be disseminated as models of good practice. More needs to be done, however. Unless and until we begin to break down the barriers of prejudice and ignorance associated with disability, we will not begin to see real change. There is a need in most countries throughout the world for:

- legal reform to enshrine rights in law;
- public education to challenge attitudes;
- reallocation of resources to promote inclusion;
- support for families in promoting education for disabled children;
- training of teachers to enable them to work with disabled children;
- a commitment to policies for de-institutionalizing children and providing community care.

## Minority groups

Article 30 of the Convention places obligations on governments to respect the rights of minority and indigenous groups to enjoy their own language, culture and religion. Many, if not most societies in the world, include such communities—for example, Australian Aborigines, the Catholics in Northern Ireland, the Mayas of Guatemala and the Tibetans in China. They usually have a separate language and culture, which isolate them from the mainstream education system. This poses three challenges to governments. How are their rights to education to be secured? How will governments ensure that in providing that education the rights of those peoples to respect for their language, culture and religion are protected? And finally, in protecting those rights, how will they ensure that children are not excluded from opportunities to participate in employment, training and higher education?

Efforts to protect the rights of minorities to education, whilst preserving their

cultural rights, have prompted considerable debate about the alternatives of segregated or integrated provision. Segregated education provides opportunities for children to be educated in their own language, according to their parents' own beliefs. However, segregation can also serve the cause of inequality and perpetuation of prejudice and stereotypes. The segregated schools of minority groups are too often characterized by poorer teaching and fewer resources. In Israel, for example, there have been two educational strategies—integration for all Jews of whatever ethnic origin, and separate education for Arabs. This has resulted in significant inequality for the Arab community. Its education is chronically underfunded, Arab teachers are often inadequately trained, and children have become disadvantaged with regard to jobs and higher education because of their poor command of Hebrew (Brown, 1994).

On the other hand, integration brings its own problems. It often serves and is viewed as a strategy by the dominant culture to impose its values on children, as a weapon in cultural repression. By forcing them to learn in the national language, and adopt its political and social values, integration can erode either deliberately or by default the culture of minority communities. Children in many countries are forced to learn in schools that disregard their history, their language, their religion and their culture. In Turkey, for example, Kurds are not permitted to use their language in schools and are punished if they do so. Teachers are dismissed for allowing the language to be spoken (Dall, 1995).

Protecting the rights of minorities to education is a complex and challenging task. The existence of 5,000 languages in the world poses logistical problems and has enormous resource implications if the rights of all minorities to be taught in their own language are to be respected. International human rights law provides us with a framework for addressing these issues, but offers no easy solutions. It requires that governments evolve education systems which seek to promote social integration whilst respecting diversity of culture. It requires also that children be recognized as being subjects of rights and that their wishes and feelings with regard to education be given consideration. There are no simple solutions. However, it could be argued that the best solution would be to provide integrated, secular education for all children while also providing opportunities for minority children to be taught in their own language and to develop an understanding of their own culture and religion. This model, properly implemented, could promote the goals of society as a whole while protecting the cultural and educational rights of individuals.

## **Respect for human rights in the education system**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child formulates a philosophy with regard to children which is respectful of them as human beings and recognizes each child as unique in terms of characteristics, interests and needs (Hammarberg, 1997). It needs to be reflected in the organization, curriculum and ethos of schools. This

philosophy, however, is significantly at odds with the cultural traditions of education in most countries throughout the world, where schools are characterized by authoritarianism and the child is expected to be the passive recipient of adult wisdom. It is still the case that, in too many schools, children sit in rows, learn by rote and are punished by beating or other forms of humiliation for minor misdemeanours or difficulties in learning. The importance of explicit recognition of the human rights of children within school takes on an added significance in view of the compulsory nature of education. Children do not have the freedom to opt out if their rights are violated. It is therefore imperative that these rights be explicitly recognized, embodied in legislation and clearly promoted and enforced within the school.

The spirit of the convention encourages the creation of schools that are child-friendly. It implies that schools should be places where children are listened to, respected, and encouraged to be curious, argue, challenge, be creative, explore, and construct meaning. These challenging demands on educational orthodoxy bring sharply into relief the tensions described earlier between the goals of governments, parents and children. If governments intend to promote social cohesion, is not the traditional approach to education more likely to be effective in eliminating conflict and challenges to the status quo? If parents want children to acquire greater understanding of and respect for their cultural traditions, will not legitimating the right to question those values threaten that process?

Nevertheless, governments have obligations under international law to comply with the convention. Also, there are powerful practical arguments in favour of the philosophy promoted by it. Ultimately, its implementation in schools will be of benefit not only to the individual but also to society as a whole in the following ways:

- *Enhancing the skills necessary for the world of work.* It is through learning to question, express views and have opinions taken seriously that children acquire the skills and the competence to exercise judgement as they approach adulthood. Respecting these rights of individual children is entirely consistent with the broader agenda of governments to produce an economically viable workforce. In a world where the skills needed at work are increasingly those of communication, conflict resolution and negotiation, schools must provide children with the opportunities to develop those competencies.
- *Promoting democracy.* In both well-established and newly formed democracies, the education system must play a part in helping children understand the principles and practices of democratic decision-making. Children need to learn through experience what their rights and duties are and how their freedom is limited by the rights and freedoms of others. They need opportunities to become involved in decision-making processes within the school, and have to abide by decisions that emerge from that process. Only by experiencing respect for their views will they acquire the capacity and willingness to listen to others and so begin to understand the processes and value of democracy.

- *Creating effective schools.* There is a significant body of evidence which indicates that schools which do involve children and which introduce more democratic structures are likely to be more harmonious, and to have better staff–pupil relationships and a more effective learning environment (Lansdown, 1995). Children who feel valued, who believe that there are systems for dealing with injustices and who are consulted about the development of school policies are far more likely to respect the school environment.

However, despite these compelling arguments in favour of a commitment to a more participative model of education, many countries have not yet begun to address adequately the changes needed to reflect the philosophy of the convention. This is not surprising. Children generally are not viewed as individuals with rights to express themselves and be taken seriously. Prevailing cultural attitudes towards children throughout the world persist in constructing them as the property of the adults who have responsibility for them. Children are discouraged from asking questions and expressing curiosity. Education is seen as a one-way process of passively receiving information and knowledge, rather than as an interactive process.

Central to the creation of schools rooted in a philosophy of respect for children is the need to end the habitual violence against and humiliation of pupils so widespread in education. The convention demands not only that children be protected from all forms of violence, but also that school discipline be administered in a manner consistent with the child's dignity. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has consistently challenged governments that continue to permit the use of physical force as a form of discipline in schools (Hodgkin & Newell, 1998, p. 369–89). In spite of this, corporal punishment continues to be condoned in schools throughout many countries in the world and too few governments have taken measures against its use. However, change is occurring. All European countries have now banned corporal punishment in schools. Other countries, such as Ethiopia, Namibia, the Republic of Korea and South Africa, are also banning all use of corporal punishment and seeking to construct a more positive approach to discipline in schools.

Much violence in schools is perpetrated by children against children. Bullying, whether it consists of physical assaults, verbal abuse and tormenting or deliberate social exclusion, can cause children untold misery and despair. Schools need to develop an active commitment to non-violent conflict resolution. They need to create opportunities in school for children to acquire the skills for this through participation in decision-making and negotiation. Also, they need to develop whole school policies drawn up by all members of the school community and in which everyone takes responsibility for prevention. Provision of counselling, appropriate sanctions, positive peer group pressure, increased playground supervision and redesigning of playgrounds to provide more activity areas have contributed to combating bullying.

## Education to promote human rights

Article 29 of the convention creates a framework of principles for education rooted in a commitment to the development of the child's potential; promotion of respect for fundamental human rights; respect for parents, one's own culture and other cultures; and respect for diversity and the equality of the sexes. The Committee on the Rights of the Child consistently presses governments to incorporate human rights education into the school curriculum, but the failure of education systems throughout the world to do so is evident in reading the committee's concluding observations on reports by States Parties to the convention. Belgium, Colombia, Finland, Guatemala, Iceland, Italy, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Norway, Portugal, Ukraine and the United Kingdom, among other countries, have all been criticized for failing to teach human rights (Hodgkin & Newell, 1998, p. 391–406). There are a number of barriers impeding progress which need to be addressed:

- Promoting respect for human rights is not a matter simply or even primarily of the curriculum. You cannot teach democracy in an undemocratic environment. Its principles must also permeate the ethos of the school.
- Human rights need to be incorporated across the curriculum, thus necessitating the development of materials to help teachers in this work. For example, geography can be used to explore the issue of unequal access to resources, biology can focus on issues related to genetic testing and disabled babies' right to life, and chemistry can deal with the impact of environmental pollution and the right to health.
- Teachers need training in human rights and how to teach their pupils about those rights. They need encouragement in understanding how their behaviour at school needs to be consistent with respect for the rights which are being taught. Abusive and violent attitudes towards children cannot be accepted in a school seeking to promote tolerance, understanding and respect for others.

## Conclusion

Paper commitments by governments to the convention are not enough. This brief overview of the current state of children's education rights highlights the limits of the progress made so far. The convention provides us with a tool, a philosophy and a framework of standards against which to monitor progress. The challenge is to use it to develop concrete plans of action for implementing its principles in the lives of all children. At the present time, many schools fall far below its standards.

Change is urgently needed not only to improve enrolment and reduce the number of dropouts but also to promote the rights of children to participate, to respect for their dignity, to an education directed at promoting fulfilment of potential, to freedom from violence and to a culture of respect for human rights. Respect for these rights will benefit not only individual children but also society as a whole. Children will be less disaffected if the curriculum is relevant to their needs.



They will learn more effectively if they are valued as individuals. They will become socially responsible if they learn principles of respect for human rights through their treatment at school. Change will take time and will require more resources. But the outcome is win-win. There can be no excuse for failing to make an active commitment to the fullest possible implementation of the convention. We owe it to the world's children.

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# THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

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## WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:

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## FROM RIGHTS TO OBLIGATIONS

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## AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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*Lena Saleh*

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### **Introduction**

The rights of the sizeable group of children with special needs of many different sorts require attention. These rights can be defined as just claims that are legally and morally binding on others. It is useful and necessary to consider upon whom each right in question places a claim or imposes an obligation. This helps to ensure that the 'rights of the child' will not be reduced to a popular and appealing slogan, when what must obviously be done is to transform this powerful idea into a programme of action on behalf of children.

Nobody is against the rights of the child in the abstract. This was demonstrated by the record speed with which governments adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, action to ensure the enjoyment of the rights guaranteed in international conventions and covenants, especially as regards children who for whatever reason are difficult to reach or serve, usually falls short—often far short—of official rhetoric. The rights of children in education are willingly acknowledged, but the obligations that these rights impose upon governments, societies, communities, families and individuals often tend to be ignored or minimized.

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In many countries, a large number of children are still excluded from school and in other countries and communities they are inadequately served by overburdened institutions that have mastered the rhetoric of inclusion, but not its content, meaning and spirit. In this article emphasis will be given not only to the rights of the child, but also—and particularly—to the obligations and responsibilities that such rights impose upon individuals, institutions and society as a whole. Particular reference will be made here to the situation of all children who continue to face barriers to learning, whether because they are unreached by educational provision, inadequately served, marginalized or excluded. This population is substantial and its needs indeed are diverse. The number of out-of-school children of primary-school age alone exceeds 100 million. If we include older children or those enrolled in school, but inadequately served by the institutions they attend, the number would be several times greater. Thus, the issue this article addresses is highly significant both for the children involved and for society as a whole because, if it does not take prompt corrective action, it will be denied the economic and social benefits that would derive from providing these hundreds of millions of children and young people with an adequate education.

## **Terminology and definitions**

The terminology used in the field of special needs education tends to be problematic and subject to change. Indeed, although carefully selected to avoid misunderstandings, these problems tend to arise as soon as the terminology comes into general use. Furthermore, a change in terminology does not necessarily mean that meanings, concepts and practices are changing. However, the use of terminology has and continues to have an impact on educators, educational personnel and society at large. Language influences values and attitudes in both negative but also positive ways—facilitating change and bringing about new attitudes. Therefore, it is important to work towards a common understanding of the language and terminology used, especially in this age where ideas and words travel fast.

In regard to children, no one supports the idea that there are two different definable groups, 'regular' and 'special'. It can be agreed that there is infinite diversity among children and among the environments in which they live and learn. The more facilitating and accommodating the environment is to the needs of children, the fewer barriers there will be to children's development and learning. The essential message is that human differences are normal and that their range is extensive. Every human being is unique. This diversity imposes a need to suit education to the needs of the individual child.

Traditionally, special needs education has included—and has been largely limited to—those children with a range of physical, sensory, intellectual or emotional difficulties. Today, this has considerably widened to include all children who, for whatever reason, continue to face barriers to learning. This is evidently a sizeable population comprising, in most countries, 10–15% or more of the school-age population.

The current vision is based on a recognition, supported by empirical research, that difficulties which impair and impede learning reside not only within students, but also within the environments in which they are living and endeavouring to learn. In many cases, especially in developing countries, the problems of affected children are the consequences of difficult conditions. Poverty, chronic malnutrition, child labour, homelessness, institutionalization, violence and abuse continue to affect hundreds of millions of children. For some children, other difficulties represent major obstacles to learning, such as situations where the language of the home is different from, sometimes even unrelated to, the medium of instruction used in the school or where, for a variety of reasons, the home and community environments provide little support for schooling. Often the most significant barriers to inclusive education are the negative attitudes and habits that prevail within schools and in the education system as a whole. The continuing use of ability grouping and the unfounded negative attitudes concerning inclusive policies are often pervasive and difficult to overcome.

It is critically important to recognize that this era is witnessing a profound transformation, the emergence of a knowledge society: a society in which knowledge more than capital or raw materials will become the key economic resource and a social order in which inequalities based on knowledge will play a growing role in determining social and economic inequalities. In this context, it becomes especially vital to provide all children with an appropriate education as a means for effective participation in society. Indeed, education becomes society's first line of defence against exclusion. Unless effective measures are taken to address the learning needs of all children at an early age, there is a clear danger that learning challenges will be converted into long-term social and economic disadvantages for the individuals concerned as well as for society as a whole. This is essential for any society that wishes to become or remain democratic, participatory and inclusive.

## **Inclusion—a right, not a privilege**

The right to an inclusive education is not set out as such in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is nonetheless implicit in the provisions of the convention. While the right of the child with a disability to the 'fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development' is made explicit in Article 23, its purpose is to reinforce, not to replace, other provisions of the convention. The Preamble, by recognizing the right of children 'in exceptionally difficult conditions' to receive 'special consideration', emphasizes that Article 23 is intended to provide additional protection, above and beyond the rights ensured to all children, and does not stand alone as a separate provision or charter for children with disabilities. Thus, to comprehend the rights of children with special needs, one must examine the provisions of the convention as a whole and not become focused on Article 23 alone.

Support of inclusion is readily apparent in many articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 2 prohibits discrimination based on

disability, Article 6 requires assurance of development of the child to the maximum extent, Article 3 states that the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children, Articles 9, 10 and 18 emphasize that children should not be separated from their parents, and Article 30 recognizes the right of the child to participate fully in the culture of the community. Articles 28 and 29, which are specific to education, imply clear support for inclusion in education through requiring that States make 'primary education compulsory and available free to all', and that different forms of secondary education be 'accessible to every child', and set as the purpose of education 'the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential'.

The convention, in brief, insists that children must be seen as individuals with rights, views and feelings of their own. Every child has a right to respect, dignity and consideration of his/her views and best interests. Taken together, its provisions concerning the family, the community, the right to social integration and personal development constitute and justify a right to inclusive education, including, *inter alia*:

- the right of the child to attend his or her community school;
- the right to live and study with peers of his or her own age;
- the right to have access to the same curriculum;
- the right to participate in leisure and extracurricular activities;
- the right to make choices concerning his or her learning, such as the selection of the learning environment best adapted to his or her needs;
- the right to have access to available support, of whatever form, if and when needed; and
- the right to live within his or her family.

The Salamanca Statement, issued by the World Conference on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994), provides further support to this human rights perspective. It asserts that inclusion and participation are essential to human dignity and the enjoyment and exercise of human rights. Both the convention and the statement thus give international authority to endorsing the principle of inclusion as a human right.

The spirit guiding the convention is that children with disabilities are, first and foremost, children like all other children. Logically, as recognized in the Preamble, the more vulnerable the child, the greater is his or her claim to protection. At a minimum, a child with a disability or other special condition has a right to a treatment equal to that accorded to other children, including the right to attend the community school and participate in all its programmes and activities. And in fact, he or she may make a valid claim to additional services and resources in order to promote a greater equality of educational and social outcomes.

## The evolution of special needs education

It is useful to distinguish between the situation in industrialized and developing countries. While the experience of the former has had an impact on the latter, the differences in prevailing attitudes, circumstances and practices remain significant.

### INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES

In industrialized countries early efforts at providing for disabled people focused on care and protection, which were very medically dominated, and usually overseen by the medical and social services. Special institutions, separating individuals completely from their families and communities, from which education was absent were created. The emphasis was on diagnosing, sorting and labelling individuals with different types and degrees of disabilities. For a long time the focus of service planning, provision and staff training remained on the individual, his or her deficiencies, while relatively little attention was given to obstacles imposed by social institutions and attitudes. The involvement of the regular school system in the education of those with recognized disabilities was generally quite limited. In fact, many 'progressive' countries prided themselves on sparing children with disabilities the stress of competing with 'normal' children in regular schools. Equally, parents were left out of this equation.

Thinking began to change in the late 1960s and 1970s. This was prompted by both social and educational factors, including the mobilization of parents demanding equal rights to education for their children, support for the normalization movement originating in Sweden, the civil rights movement in the United States and the anti-institutionalization movement in Italy.

By the 1980s new legislation emerged entrusting education authorities with responsibility for educating children with various forms of disabilities, and the doors of the regular school slowly began to open to them. Moreover, persons with disabilities drew inspiration from the climate of protest that spread through societies at the end of the 1960s, and began to demand a dominant voice in the decisions that society made concerning them. They did not want sympathy or charity; they wanted to be heard and, above all, to be included. Education and other programmes were no longer to be judged on how successfully they sheltered people, but on the opportunities they provided for participation, empowerment and full inclusion in society.

### DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

In developing countries the situation was both different and in many ways more favourable. Indigenous societies never adopted the Western practice of excluding persons with disabilities by bundling them into asylums and later into specialized schools. Kisanji (1998) argues that indigenous customary education 'was based on strong family ties, the value of the individual person, co-existence and survival'. It

was a pervasive form of education available and accessible to all community members without distinction. It took place throughout the community and throughout the day: the life of the community was, in fact, its curriculum. Anyone present was included. Through colonial relations, Western practices inevitably had an impact on non-Western societies. Specialized schools were established in most countries, but their coverage was limited by both the strength of tradition and the low levels of educational investment prior to independence. However, in the first years of their independence, many developing countries copied Western models and drew upon Western expertise and technical assistance to establish such institutions. Fortunately, as the lessons learned in the West travelled, this trend has now been arrested in most countries and the principle of inclusion is reasserting itself in education.

Currently, the major problem in providing inclusive education of quality in the developing world is a serious shortage of resources—teachers, learning materials and adequate buildings—and, in many countries, there is a complete absence of support systems of any kind. The extreme shortage of trained teachers poses a serious problem for all students, and especially for those who require special attention of any type. Many teachers have less than a secondary education. Classes of fifty or sixty students are common and classes of over eighty or more students are not unknown.

Thus, while the developing world has fewer psychological barriers to inclusive education, and has lessons to teach in regard to the use of students as peer teachers and the practices of learning by doing, it has extremely serious resource constraints that make it difficult to cater for individual needs. The developed world must give priority to the development of its overall education systems with special attention to the education and training of teachers. Within teacher education, attention should be given to ways of managing learning in large classes made up of highly diverse students that permit a higher degree of individual attention and help.

#### TOWARDS INCLUSION

Inclusive education has grown in influence in an increasing number of countries. It involves a fundamental rethinking of the meaning and purpose of education for all children and young people, and the part that schools play in the life of the community. Inclusive education is about a school for all, a school where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school community.

The orientation towards inclusion is clearly presented as the guiding principle of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994). Article 2 of the statement stipulates that regular schools with an inclusive orientation are:

... the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all: moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the entire education system.

Inclusive schools have to operate supportive classrooms and programmes that include and meet the needs of everybody; the biggest challenge is to maximize the participation of all learners. However, to do so requires genuine changes in all aspects of the school's programmes—curriculum, pedagogy, organization, assessment, staffing, school ethos and school support.

#### ECONOMIC ASPECT

From an economic point of view, the inclusive school has everything to recommend it. Unit costs are far lower than in specialized institutions and by facilitating the integration of people with special needs into society, these schools can achieve long-term economies on social costs. While these potentials exist, the actual social benefits and economies will depend on how successfully the school fulfils its role in providing effective education and good educational management.

### **From rights to obligations and responsibilities**

#### OBLIGATIONS OF PARENTS

The active involvement of parents is at the heart of efforts to achieve schools that are effective and inclusive. Both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child recognize the rights of parents to guide and be involved in the education of their children (see particularly the Preamble and Article 2). Thus, the rights of parents are well established both in international instruments and in the national laws that inspired those instruments or were derived from them.

What are the obligations that accompany these rights? Among them is the duty of the parent to care for, protect and promote the well-being and development of the child entrusted to them, thereby making them the partner of the school. To fulfil this role, the parent needs honest, accurate information and positive suggestions for action. Additionally, the parent should be an important source of information and insights about the child, including his/her needs and aspirations, hopes and fears, abilities and challenges. The parent, in brief, has to be a full and respected partner in the education of the child.

To ensure a successful partnership between a parent and the school, the parent must be involved at all stages of the planning, implementation and evaluation of the education of their child. This could be facilitated through helping parents develop their capacities for wider participation in their child's education and for asserting their rights and their responsibilities. For parents of children with special needs, the obligation to be well informed and, where needed, guided by professional opinion in the decisions they make concerning their children assumes particular importance.

Parents also have an obligation to be effective advocates of the interests of their



child. This may mean making the child's interests known to others and, in some cases, mobilizing the support that the child requires. Additionally, parents should consider participating in the development and activities of parent associations and advocacy groups of those with similar interests to work towards improving the education of their children and children in general.

#### OBLIGATIONS OF TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS

The challenge now is to formulate requirements of a 'school for all'. All children and young people of the world ... have the right to education. It is not our education systems that have a right to certain types of children. It is the school systems of a country that must be adjusted to meet the needs of all children. (Lindqvist, 1994)

This quotation expresses the prevailing thought and philosophy that inform the quest for inclusive education, yet most of the world's schools are still inadequately prepared to successfully meet the challenge of adapting education to the needs of all children. What, then, must be done to correct this situation and who must do it? There are a number of factors and patterns associated with successful inclusive schools that suggest the steps that need to be taken. They are related particularly to the characteristics and conditions of teachers, the organization and leadership of the school, including the role of the head teacher, and the curriculum of the school.

#### TEACHERS

The success of inclusive schools depends, above all else, on the attitudes, commitment and competence of teachers. One factor contributing to the slow development towards inclusive schooling has been and continues to be the belief on the part of teachers that the education of children with special needs is 'special'. The terms 'special education' and 'special teachers' have made this area so 'special' that it has been seen as a field only for very qualified specialists, of whom there are very few in developing countries, and perhaps an excess in industrialized countries. There is too much mystification concerning the skills required and who can acquire them. What is needed is for all teachers in all classrooms to feel confident in working with all children, no matter in what shapes or conditions they come.

The role assigned to resource teachers with expertise in special needs education is also important, but inclusive education cannot be built on their efforts alone. Their help and encouragement can be of critical importance if they are used as resources for assisting and advising classroom teachers. However, if they are given primary responsibility in or outside integrated classes for a group of children considered to have special needs, experience suggests that it will impede progress towards authentic inclusion. One set of barriers, segregated classes, will simply have been replaced with another subtler set of barriers, segregation within classrooms. Avoiding this pretence at inclusion requires knowledge of how to address and respond to the

diversity of needs, not only knowledge of 'traditional special education' but also knowledge of how to manage diverse classrooms, how to encourage and nurture participation, and how to adjust the curriculum and allow individual students to have the time each needs to master particular learning tasks. The success of inclusive schools depends upon the involvement of all teachers and staff working with a sense of common purpose to support the learning needs of all children. This must be supported by the conviction that special needs education incorporates proven principles of sound pedagogy from which all children may benefit and the assumption that a considerable range of human differences are normal, thus requiring that teaching be adapted to the needs of the child.

An essential underlying assumption of this vision is that child-centred schools are a training ground for a people-oriented society that respects the differences and dignity of all human beings. To implement this perspective, teachers must achieve supportive professional development, such as mastery of new and/or improved methods and practices, an awareness of the issues at stake, and a moral and social commitment to the education of all children as an essential step in the development of an inclusive and participatory society. To establish these conditions, there is a continuing need for effective pre-service and in-service training of teachers to enable them to view student differences positively, manage diverse classrooms, assess needs, individualize teaching procedures, adapt subject matter, use developing technology, and ensure relevance to child and societal interests. Additionally, inclusive schools call for a stronger sense of teamwork and partnership among teachers, parents and the community, which must be supported by teacher education and facilitating school conditions.

#### SCHOOL ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP

Schools will be most successful if the entire institution is defined to support and assist all students and teachers in meeting established goals for learning and teaching effectiveness. The organization of support services plays a critical role in achieving successful operation through inclusive schools. Today, special education support is defined not as a placement or separate programme, but as a system of support provided to address the learning needs of some students. Successful inclusive schools provide both supportive services for children with special needs and the opportunity to have full membership in the social and learning context of their peers.

In achieving these inclusive and supportive conditions, it is the quality more than the quantity of services that requires priority. Rather than directly aiding one or two students with special needs, emphasis should be given to having specialized teachers work with classroom teachers to develop approaches that will enable such students to be included in normal classroom activities. Additionally, services should be organized so that school managers, including teachers, will make flexible use of personnel and resources, develop new resources, apply child-to-child help and increase the involvement of parents in serving student development and learning.

The role of the head or supervising teacher is fundamental to this process. They

have an important influence on the culture of the school through the management strategies they use and the values and beliefs their action encourages. It is essential that those selected for this role be committed to, and explicitly and implicitly behave in support of, a philosophy and policies that facilitate the necessary climate herein described.

Achieving the goals of inclusive education calls for leadership of a high order. This is expected in the head teacher, but it requires more than direction by a single individual. The collective will of the school community and the system must be applied to make inclusive education work. Indeed, the most essential skills of leadership are team building and the development of a shared set of purposes and values that enables communities to come together and strive to achieve common goals. In the case of inclusive schools, the unifying goals and beliefs are: that every child can learn; a commitment to enabling every child to do so; an openness to new approaches, even if they run the risk of failure; an awareness that it is not only students who must learn, but also teachers and the system as a whole; and a commitment to excellence and to continuing improvement through staff development and participation.

#### CURRICULUM

A curriculum and system of instruction to meet the challenges of inclusive education allow for:

- students with extraordinary gifts and talents to move at their natural learning rate;
- students who progress slower than the average to move at the best of their ability (while still being part of the exciting content of the themes and lessons); and
- students with specific learning challenges to receive creative and effective support to maximize their success.

Various additional supportive elements deserve consideration. Continuous assessment of learning with appropriate student and parent involvement is one. It may be strengthened in some cases by use of student portfolios rather than traditional exams because they demonstrate the progress of each child towards the goals that have been set for him or her, rather than sorting students. Porter (1995) suggests a number of other dimensions that characterize inclusive schools:

- special educators as resources serving all students and teachers within a school;
- multi-level instruction to provide greater flexibility in matching learning tasks to student abilities and needs;
- co-operative learning, peer tutoring and support groups to provide greater assistance and encouragement to students;
- collaborative problem-solving; and
- continuing staff development.

## OBLIGATIONS OF THE COMMUNITY

Inclusive schooling has to concern, be valued by and draw upon the good will and resources of the entire community. Even when school is in session, students spend the majority of their time in their homes or elsewhere in the community. They also seek their futures in the community. The community, if it truly seeks to promote an inclusive society, has a moral obligation to support inclusive schools, to believe in and celebrate diversity and equality.

Support calls not only for silent approval but also for the active participation of NGOs and other forms of voluntary organizations, which can be effective in promoting community support. They possess specialized knowledge, which they can individually and collectively apply to action aimed at achieving the inclusion and participation of all.

Advocating and promoting the rights of children, especially those with special needs, is a civic duty and obligation incumbent upon all citizens and the community as a whole. Furthermore, community-based programmes, which are designed and run by community participation and support, provide proof that communities can be effectively mobilized to support children's rights and development. Decentralization and local area-based planning enhance greater involvement of communities in development that affects children's everyday lives and allows for resources to be used more effectively at the community level. Successful community mobilization and participation can be an important source of moral and material support for inclusive education.

## OBLIGATIONS OF GOVERNMENT

The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) calls upon governments, *inter alia*, to:

give the highest policy and budgetary priority to improve their education systems to enable them to include all children regardless of individual differences or difficulties; adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise; establish decentralized and participatory mechanisms for planning, monitoring and evaluating educational provision for children and adults with special educational needs; and encourage and facilitate the participation of parents, communities and organizations of persons with disabilities in the planning and decision-making processes concerning provision.

These recommendations are intended to establish interlinked systems of support upon which inclusive community schools can be established and thrive. Government—the organ through which the collective will of the people is expressed—has an obligation to ensure that effective support systems are available to assist and sustain the institutions that serve the people, including the necessary overall policy framework and financial support. Governments must ensure that adequate means are available to support teachers in their professional development and that the education system as a whole is in harmony with the aims of that training.

The favourable worldwide trend towards decentralization does not change the essential and inherent responsibility of governments to ensure, directly or indirectly, that all citizens have access to education suited to their particular requirements and needs. Government policy speaks to a wide range of important issues and concerns in education: the design of school buildings, the levels of equipment and learning supplies, staffing levels and qualifications, the availability of technical aids (such as Braille) and much else. Some of these requirements and services have a direct impact on schools. Others are less apparent but also important: the provision of expertise in a wide range of professional and management skills, research and development support, policy formulation and review, and public information services. The critical point is that essential support services must be made conveniently available to all schools. Equally, schools and communities should have an active voice in defining the types of assistance needed and evaluating their effectiveness and impact. Government can render an important service to schools through policies that encourage their autonomy and promote the active participation of parents and community organizations in their educational processes.

#### RESOURCES

Resources are crucial to the development of education and to its becoming more inclusive. Where resources are placed and how they are allocated must be considered in this context. If resources are targeted to specific children, the responsibility of the school as well as the classroom teacher is blocked, but more importantly the child will tend to be isolated. The channelling of funds for separate committees and specific agencies, earmarked for specific children, is one way of maintaining the present rupture within the system. If we believe that schools can and should serve a heterogeneous population of students, provision will have to be made for support services at the district and local levels.

#### OBLIGATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The international challenge to education is only partially understood by knowing that nearly all of the more than 100 million out-of-school children in the 6–12 age group live in developing countries; and that millions of them are children with special needs. Even more dramatic are the facts that in developing countries enrolment in schools is concentrated in the first or second primary grades with high rates of grade repetition, with many children probably deriving little benefit from that experience; schools are over-crowded and under-equipped; untrained or under-trained teachers must often cope with sixty or more students per class; and basic equipment and supplies are in critically short supply. It is evident that the first priority for inclusive education is to ensure that all children have a school to attend and a good chance of obtaining at least a basic education. The countries with the highest number of out-of-school children tend to be the poorest. There is clearly an enormous need for the international community to accept its obligation to provide assistance in a man-

ner that reaches those in greatest need and supports their efforts to build a sustainable future. The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) makes a strongly justified appeal to the international community, including a call for an exchange of experience among countries—and especially with and among developing countries—to ensure that lessons learned and progress gained in one country in the struggle to achieve inclusive education may benefit all countries.

## **A societal commitment**

The required response to the challenges and needs described herein is not to be found in a set of technical tasks left to the professionals. Indeed, nothing could be further from the mark. As UNESCO's Director-General, Mr. Federico Mayor, has rightly noted:

Special needs education cannot advance in isolation. It must be part of an overall educational strategy and, indeed, of new social and economic policies. [...] What is required is a commitment and political will to bring about change—change in human attitudes and behaviour and the modification of development strategies. Through Education for All, it should be possible to enable all human beings—including the disabled—to develop their full potential, to contribute to society and, above all, to be enriched by their difference and not devalued. In our world constituted of differences of all kinds, it is not the disabled but society at large that needs special education in order to become a genuine society for all.

## **Inclusion—a question of values**

Inclusive education needs to be seen within the broad, ever-changing social, political and cultural context. Inclusive education is ultimately a question of values and beliefs. In a democratic society, policy is to some extent a reflection of what the majority of the people value and want, and the compromises they are prepared to make. Equally, education is dependent on values, traditions and existing organizational settings and cannot be understood solely in terms of the structural changes or resource allocations made to schools. The issue of inclusive education provides an opportunity for raising serious questions about the kind of society we desire and the nature and role of schooling within such a society. The choice for inclusive schools is a choice for communities and societies that accept, respect and welcome all persons.

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# EDUCATION TOWARD

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## DEMOCRACY:

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### HOW CAN

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### IT BE ACCOMPLISHED?

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*F. Clark Power*

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Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that education should prepare the child 'for responsible life in a free society'. Other articles note that children have a right to express their views on matters that affect them (Article 12) and that children have a right to assemble, raise questions and voice opinions (Articles 15 and 13). These articles suggest that children ought to be educated to participate in a democratic society.

A practical approach to democratic education must begin with an understanding of what a democracy entails for its citizens. The word *democracy* means 'rule by the people'. As Aristotle pointed out in *Politics*, 'Democracy is plural.' We can see the many manifestations of democracy throughout the world—from representative government in the United States to direct participatory democracy in Switzerland. The majority (61%) of the countries in the world are now democratic, compared with a minority (42%) only a decade ago. The major shift, of course, has occurred in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

The criteria used to classify countries as democratic—free elections and majority rule—are purely descriptive. Yet democracy is more than a particular form of government—democracy represents an ideal of popular participation; we can and do speak of countries as being more or less democratic. Two key criteria for evaluating a particular democracy are the extent of popular participation and the quality of popular participation.

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## **Education for democracy**

Given this rough sketch of what democracy entails, the next question is what kind of education should a democracy provide for its citizens. At the very least, citizens need to be literate. Basic literacy is necessary for voting and for acquiring information. E.D. Hirsch (1987) argues that cultural literacy is also important if citizens are to make informed decisions. Language, whether it is used to preserve the status quo or to foment revolution, draws its power and persuasiveness from a cultural heritage, or more accurately from a multicultural heritage. This means not only that students know how to read and write, but also that they have acquired a core of knowledge that helps them to understand their present situation, to envision future possibilities and to communicate effectively.

In addition to linguistic and cultural literacy, education should and generally does provide students with factual information about local and national democratic institutions. Such information makes up the content of the common 'civic education' course.

Typically, schools do little more than has been described above to prepare students for democratic citizenship. We seem to assume that if our students are literate and sufficiently informed, they will become good, democratic citizens. Yet the evidence suggests otherwise. In the United States, almost half of those eligible do not vote in presidential elections. Voting for public officials is a minimal form of democratic participation. Ideally, democratic participation should involve public deliberation about social justice and the common good. Yet many students in democratic societies lack confidence in and/or feel estranged from the democratic institutions of their society.

If we wish to educate citizens for democracy in this ideal sense, then we must ask much more of our schools. Schools ought to provide an opportunity for children to learn how to deliberate in common. Children must learn to grasp in a profound sense their common dignity as free and equal persons, and they must learn how to make decisions together that reflect that dignity, freedom and equality (see supportive standards in Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child). In this way they will come to value democracy as a 'way of life', as John Dewey (1916) put it.

Education for participation offers students an apprenticeship in democracy (Power, 1992). This idea was first put forward by Horace Mann (1957), the father of the American public school:

In order that men may be prepared for self-government their apprenticeship must begin in childhood [...]. He who has been a serf until the day before he is twenty-one years of age cannot be an independent citizen after; and it makes no difference whether he has been a serf in Austria or America. As the fitting apprenticeship for despotism consists in being trained for despotism, so the fitting apprenticeship for democracy consists in being trained for self-government.

An apprenticeship involves learning through practice under the guidance of a master. An apprenticeship in democracy entails giving students the opportunity to learn the skills of democratic deliberation in classroom settings with help from their teachers.

## The just community approach

The just community approach exemplifies the apprenticeship model of democratic education and the spirit of Articles 12, 13, 15 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Although it refers to a specific theoretically based model developed by Lawrence Kohlberg in 1971, it incorporates features that, arguably, are essential to any serious attempt at democratic education. In *Lawrence Kohlberg's approach to moral education*, Power, Higgins and Kohlberg (1989) describe in great detail how the just community approach developed and how it influences students' socio-moral development and attitudes towards democratic participation. Since the pioneering efforts of Kohlberg and his colleagues, there have been a small but growing number of projects based on the just community approach in Canada, Colombia, Mexico, Germany, Japan and Switzerland, as well as the United States.

The just community approach involves students and teachers in making and enforcing rules and policies concerning student life and discipline. Rules and policies are established through direct participatory democracy: one person—one vote. The direct participatory democracy of the just community approach differs from the practice common in many high schools and junior high schools of having students elect representatives to a school-wide council. Representative democracy only grants a select group of students the invaluable experience of deliberating in common. Moreover, the students who win elections are often those who are committed to the school and who have relatively well-developed social skills, not the alienated students most in need of the benefits that can accrue through democratic participation.

The democracy established in a just community school differs from the democracy established in the typical student council in one other important respect: the responsibilities given to the governing body. Such student councils generally limit student responsibility to planning social events. In the just community approach, students share responsibility for maintaining discipline and a sense of community, and do so in ways consistent with the intent of Articles 12 to 15 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Many teachers and school administrators commonly think of discipline as keeping order or maintaining social control. In fact, in the typical teacher education curriculum, discipline is subsumed under the topic of behaviour management. Yet the word 'discipline' is derived from the Latin *discipulus*, meaning 'disciple' or 'learner'. Teachers and administrators sell discipline short by failing to recognize its potential as a means of civic and moral education. Emile Durkheim (1925, p. 148 in 1973 edition) made this point in arguing for his group-oriented approach to moral education:

Too often, it is true, people conceive of school discipline so as to preclude endowing it with an important moral function. Some people see in it a simple way of guaranteeing superficial peace and order in the class. Under such conditions, one can come to view these imperative requirements as barbarous—as a tyranny of complicated rules [...] In reality, however, the nature and function of discipline is something altogether different [...] It is the morality of the classroom.

The just community approach is based, in part, on Durkheim's insight that discipline involves building shared norms and a shared commitment to a classroom community. The teachers in the just community approach represent the rules and expectations of the classroom in the first person plural, as 'our rules'. The democratic process provides an effective way of constructing such shared expectations and mobilizing peer pressure towards positive ends. The democratic approach also seems to embody the concern expressed in Article 28 of the convention, which states that 'school discipline should be administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention'. Respecting the dignity of the child entails not only refraining from certain kinds of disciplinary practices, such as corporal punishment, but also engaging in practices that give children a voice in making and enforcing school and classroom rules.

In just communities, the democratic process of deliberation and voting takes place in a weekly community meeting in which all faculty and students gather. Kohlberg's theory of moral development and its educational application in moral discussion classes provide a helpful framework for teachers to think about their role in community meeting deliberations. According to the just community approach, teachers should function as advocates in community meetings, modelling democratic behaviour by considering the perspectives of others, giving reasons for their positions and demonstrating a concern for advancing the common good. The role of advocate includes that of facilitating student participation in the meetings, but allows teachers to go further in arguing for proposals that support the shared norms and sense of community.

The key to a successful just community is winning the confidence of the students, who are not accustomed to democratic deliberation or to being responsible for each other's behaviour. Students must acquire a faith in democracy by discovering that the democratic process is a fair and effective way of governance. In research on student participation in the democratic process, Power, Higgins and Kohlberg have identified three stages of understanding the democratic ideal. Students advance through these stages as a result of their experiences in democratic decision-making.

- Stage 1: The democratic ideal is one in which all individuals feel free to exercise their concrete right to speak their mind and express their private interests.
- Stage 2: The democratic ideal entails listening to, taking the perspective of and having respect for other individuals. Individuals are encouraged to think about what is best for the majority.

- Stage 3: The democratic ideal requires an open dialogue with special concern for the perspective of minorities and of the community as a whole.

Students advance through these stages as a result of their experiences in democratic decision-making. Experiments with the just community approach have demonstrated that learning to become a democratic citizen by practising democracy is both possible and beneficial. Nevertheless, relatively few teachers and administrators have sought to employ the just community approach or other participatory approaches to discipline in their classrooms and schools. The hesitancy in applying participatory approaches seems rooted to a large extent in the fear that such approaches are far too permissive. Many educators fail to appreciate the extent to which a democratic approach to discipline takes a middle path between authoritarianism and *laissez faire* neglect. The research on just community programmes (Power, Higgins & Kohlberg, 1989; Power & Power, 1992) shows that democratic participation can be a very effective way of establishing and maintaining high standards for student conduct.

It will readily be noted that the Convention on the Rights of the Child encourages States parties to respect and support conditions that will enable individuals and their social communities to understand and achieve the democratic ideal. The convention specifically requires freedom of expression on matters affecting the child (Article 12); freedom to seek, receive and impart information (Article 13); freedom from discrimination (Article 2); the progressive exercise of rights in a manner consistent with evolving capacities (Articles 5, 12 and 14); and preparation for a responsible life in a free society (Article 29).

Two structural obstacles also stand in the way of the implementation of the just community approach: school size and time constraints on the curriculum. The problem of size can be addressed by establishing living/learning sub-units within large schools, as has been done in 'schools-within-schools' that group approximately seventy-five students and four or five teachers and provide a core curriculum. There is a growing consensus among administrators that such sub-units are necessary for combating the alienation and depersonalization brought about in large schools. The problem of time may be more difficult to address because it involves a shared recognition that an apprenticeship in democracy is a worthwhile endeavour.

## Extracurricular activities

Because of constraints of time and space as well as fears about empowering students, more attention should be given to extracurricular activities as a locus for democratic education. Extracurricular activities generally allow for more student initiative and responsibility than the classroom curriculum. Perhaps the most significant extracurricular activity for promoting the development of democratic attitudes and values is community service (see Barber, 1992, and Youniss, 1997). Power and Khmelkov's (in press) longitudinal analysis of a representative sample of American high school students shows that community service influences students' commitment to help others and to combat social inequality.

Sports provide another opportunity for democratic education in extracurricular activities. A recent book by Shields and Bredemeir (1995) makes a compelling case for the character-building potential of sports. Much depends, of course, on children's coaches and the emphasis that they give to promoting fairness, co-operation and self-direction as they work with their teams.

There are many possibilities for democratic education in the curriculum and in extracurricular activities. The examples presented here suggest ways of involving children in making decisions that are meaningful and that entail responsibility for building community and helping others. There are other related examples that could be provided from the Scandinavian countries, which have made democratic education a priority at the national level.

The recognition by the United Nations of children's rights in a world that is becoming increasingly democratic demands a concerted effort to provide an education that not only respects children's dignity, but also nurtures their development as autonomous persons. A complete education today requires that schools provide children with an apprenticeship in democracy. That apprenticeship is necessary not only to respect children's human rights, but also to enable them to become responsible citizens in an international community of nations that is becoming increasingly more democratic.

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# FACILITATING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

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## IN EDUCATION:

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### EXPECTATIONS AND DEMANDS

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### ON TEACHERS AND PARENTS

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*Eugeen Verhellen*

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This paper addresses several basic issues concerning children's rights in education, which have serious implications for attitude changes, as well as development of strategies and methods.

#### **Changing the image of the child and human rights<sup>1</sup>**

For important historical reasons, children have been seen as future performers in a prospective 'enlightened society'. This powerful definition, this social construct, of childhood had and still has enormous consequences for children and for those who relate to them.

This construction means that children are seen as 'not yet's' (not yet knowing, not yet competent, not yet being). By strongly defining childhood as a preparation period, a transition period, we have locked children in a limbo in which they must wait and prepare themselves to be future performers.

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In recent decades, this adult-centric and adult-constructed child image has come under discussion and attack through the advocacy of a child's right to well-being based on human dignity. Respect for children as human beings means that they are no longer perceived as mere objects of protection but as subjects, bearers of human rights, just as it should be for every human being. This new perception applies to the child as an individual (psychological) as well as to children as a social category: childhood as a permanent social class (sociological).

This conceptual switch in the child image is not that easy to implement and practise in daily life. In some ways, this challenge is new since we are not accustomed to treating children from a human rights standpoint. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) strongly promotes this human rights approach. Hereafter, three basic characteristics of the CRC are discussed: comprehensiveness, binding force and universality.

## The Convention on the Rights of the Child

### COMPREHENSIVENESS

Comprehensiveness is a feature that defines the CRC as a unique and even revolutionary instrument. Even the preamble, which does not give binding principles, shows us the terms of reference for how to interpret the binding articles, emphasizing that the CRC is an integral part of the general 'human rights project' (i.e. the human rights movement).

The first generation of human rights is about traditional civil and political rights; the second generation deals with economic, social and cultural rights. For adults two separate covenants exist, while the CRC contains both generations in a single instrument. This convention very clearly combines both civil and political rights with social, economic and cultural rights to make them inseparable and without any hierarchical distinction. All rights are equally important and even interdependent—none can stand alone. This would be in breach of the spirit of the CRC.

This is a unique and unusual approach for governments, lawyers and other experts because they are used to reading and interpreting a convention article by article. In other words, the CRC enforces an active interpretation, a comprehensive and interactive reading.

Following this new approach, the CRC shows us a potential direction for the overall human rights movement. Making standards for children's rights a reality, therefore, is a strong catalyst for a democracy of quality, based on respect for human dignity.

For heuristic reasons, while keeping in mind the indivisibility of the document, we can subdivide the CRC for a closer examination. For example, looking at the CRC through the so-called 3-Ps (provision, protection and participation) is a very useful exercise.<sup>2</sup> Again, interdependence must be safeguarded—every right must be seen as inclusive.

*Protection* of the vulnerability and the dependence of children is guaranteed by the right to be protected from the choices and power of others: the right to life,

survival and development (Art. 6); the right to protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation (Art. 19); etc. The basic idea behind these protective rights is that children have the right to be shielded from individual and structural harmful acts and practices.

The right to access to *provisions* includes information (Art. 17), social security (Art. 26), the highest level of health (Art. 24) and education (Art. 29).

However, the most revolutionary part of the CRC is found among the articles on *participation* rights, which recognize the right of children to make certain choices themselves and to bring them into dialogue with others: the right to express an opinion; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of association; protection of privacy (Arts. 12–16). These participation rights bring children back into society by recognizing them as meaning-makers, by recognizing their citizenship.

### LEGALLY BINDING<sup>1</sup>

By ratifying the CRC, States accept the legal obligation to implement the provisions of the convention (the *pacta sunt servanda* principle).

We speak about 'self-executing force' when domestic constitutional rules allow a treaty to have direct domestic effect. By ratifying the treaty, it becomes part of the legal system (monism). Magistrates can apply treaties directly in the court. In a 'dualistic system', a clear distinction is made between domestic law and international law. This means that an obligation undertaken under international law (for example, the ratification of an international treaty, such as the CRC) takes effect in the domestic legal system only after it has been transposed into national law.

At the domestic level, States parties that dispose of the constitutional provision of the 'self-executing force' are, therefore, bound via their courts to apply this strong provision for the CRC too. Hesitations in this regard can weaken the CRC since amending laws does not always guarantee that they are strengthened.

Countries that have a clear dualistic system have to transpose the CRC into national laws.

At the international level, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (Art. 43) monitors compliance with the CRC during the initial period after ratification and then via periodic reports (Art. 44) by the States parties. States parties are to make their reports and the observations of the committee widely available to the public in their countries (Art. 44, para. 6). This provision is a consequence of Article 42, which obliges States parties to make the rights contained in the CRC widely known to both adults and children. The great importance of this binding duty, both to report and to inform for an effective legal protection of children's rights, is obvious. And because of its periodicity, it is not just a single act but a sustainable process.

### UNIVERSAL RATIFICATION

In itself, and in the context of internationalization of the human rights project, the CRC has quite a long history. On 20 November 1989, after ten years of prepara-



tion, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the CRC without a dissenting vote. The CRC contains fifty-four articles, of which forty-one substantive articles define the rights of the child and the obligations of States parties ratifying the convention. Unlike former human rights instruments, the CRC is a legally binding convention for the ratifying States.

The minimum number of ratifications (twenty) was reached in less than a year, and the CRC entered into force on 2 September 1990. The speedy and massive response of the international community to the CRC is unique in the history of human rights. And this response has continued. Today, 191 States have ratified the CRC. Only Somalia and the United States have not! We have almost reached the stage of universal ratification, which again is a unique accomplishment in the field of human rights.

In conclusion, it may be argued strongly that by its comprehensiveness, binding character and near universality, the CRC is currently challenging the world with a geopolitical social contract. However, we are only speaking about the very important phase of standard setting. Implementation and monitoring are the challenges before us now and they will not occur automatically. Since the CRC is a legally binding convention, children have the right to legal protection of their rights. As described in the next section, legal protection of children's rights is more than just a judicial process.

#### LEGAL PROTECTION OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The CRC irrevocably closed the period of the mere protection of children and opened the period of legal protection of the rights of children. In other words, the CRC underlined the evolution of the child as a legal object to the child as a legal subject.

When speaking about legal protection of rights, one has to take into account more than just judicial procedures. There are some very basic requirements, including:<sup>4</sup>

- One must *have* rights;
- One must be *informed* about one's rights;
- One must be able *to exercise* one's rights;
- If necessary one must be able *to enforce* one's rights; and
- There must be an interested community *to advocate* one's rights.

All of these requirements are interdependent. If one of them is not met, or is poorly met, legal protection is seriously jeopardized. As our child image is in transition, going through a process of deconstruction and reconstruction, these requirements are not self-evident when we discuss the legal protection of children's rights.

#### CHILDREN'S RIGHTS EDUCATION POLICY

Among the interrelated requirements for an effective legal protection of rights, children's rights education is key. Education cannot be restricted only to the area of school teaching. It covers a broad scope of activities in a much wider field of application.<sup>5</sup> Articles 17 and 42 are very clear in this regard.

Nonetheless, much of a child's learning takes place in the organized, formal school system. Consequently, education within the school system, as it is state-organized or state-supported, plays a key role in children's rights education policy.

Children spend a considerable part of their existence at school. School, as a socialization instrument, is therefore expected to be an adequate reflection of developments in society. Recent global social developments have created new needs. Education has to take these new developments into account or, at the very least, be aware of them. In ideal circumstances, education can even provide the stimulus for such developments (the proactive approach).

Developments in the concept of human rights go a long way towards explaining why the law is now a hot topic in education. Surveys and an increasing number of court rulings show that in many countries pupils are going to court to resolve disputes arising at school. This is a remarkable development given that until recently education remained untouched by the law, since it was traditionally based on the absolute power of the teaching staff. A century ago, it would have been unthinkable for a pupil to appeal the decision of a headmaster.

Because of the nature of the rights it confers, the CRC in many cases imposes obligations on States parties. It also grants a number of general human rights to children. This impetus for children's self-determination demands new, important tasks of education.

Describing the relationship between education and the rights of the child is not easy. It is a relationship with many facets and problems, not always immediately obvious. When a State ratifies the CRC, its implementation has very serious consequences for the school system. Through ratification three important tasks are imposed on schools.<sup>6</sup> These tasks exist side by side but, given the comprehensive nature of the CRC, are obviously interwoven. In daily school life they are experienced as inter-related by children.

### *The right to education*

In various national and international legal instruments the right to education is recognized as a universal fundamental right in society. As mentioned before, the right to education was stated in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). This document, however, was not binding. Afterwards, the right to education was repeatedly confirmed in legally binding international instruments. Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1966, imposes an obligation on States parties to recognize the 'right of every person to education'. In its Articles 4 and 5, the UNESCO Convention (1960) further develops this right and deals more particularly with the principle of non-discrimination in education. Article 2 of the first Additional Protocol (1952) to the European Convention on Human Rights also reaffirms this right by stating that 'No person shall be denied the right to education'.

The CRC obviously reconfirms this right. Article 28 provides the means of enforcing it. The principles of non-discrimination, free access to education and the

introduction of compulsory primary education are examples of subjects covered by this right to education. Article 29 contains detailed provisions concerning the aims and values involved: the development of the child's personality to its fullest potential, the preparation of the child for a responsible role in society, the development of respect for nature, mutual understanding and friendship among all peoples, and especially the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Both articles therefore impose the obligation on States parties to directly implement the CRC through their education policy.

At first glance, most Western industrialized countries seem to live up to the obligations imposed by the above-mentioned international instruments. And yet a considerable number of problems regarding the right to education have arisen and the number of court cases at the domestic and international (European) levels is on the increase. It would be impossible to deal with all these problem areas within the confines of this article, but a few examples will illustrate their complexity.

First of all, many doubts have been expressed about the concept of 'every person', which can be regarded either as a negative reference to the principle of non-discrimination, or as a positive reference to the democratization role that can be played by education. Various studies have demonstrated the existence of inequality in educational opportunity for certain categories of people. Access to education may be free, but that is not the end of it. Although free access means there are no school fees, it does not mean there are no other (sometimes quite substantial) expenses for all kinds of compulsory or optional activities. These extra costs may indirectly cause problems for certain people in asserting their right to education.

Moreover, there is a rather strange grants system (in itself an indirect recognition of the extra study expenses) in which the 'Matthew effect'<sup>7</sup> plays an even greater part. Recent surveys have demonstrated that democratization in education is stagnating. There are far fewer children from the lower social classes in secondary and tertiary education. Phenomena such as dropout, truancy and unsuitable curricula are related to the content and formal quality of education. All of this is directly connected with the real aim of education, which may be regarded as in conflict with Article 29 of the CRC ('the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential').

The expulsion of children subject to compulsory schooling, or the refusal to enrol them at all, is also a focus of debate. These are incidents that occur regularly and have far-reaching consequences for children who cannot fight these decisions. The growing number of court cases involving pupils/students and the education authorities clearly demonstrates that the former have very little protection.

### *Rights in education*

The fundamental human right to education must be guaranteed directly. However, the rights enshrined in the CRC also must be implemented indirectly by the school system. In other words, one of the first tasks for States parties will be to clarify children's legal position in education to prevent breaches of children's rights (the reac-

tive approach). In this regard one can think about the rules of discipline, the debate on corporal punishment and so on.

But there is much more to do from a proactive point of view. In Articles 12–16, the CRC sets out important fundamental freedoms: the right to express an opinion; freedom of expression; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of association; protection of privacy. This clearly implies the introduction of the right to self-determination, which must also be implemented in the concrete daily school culture—human rights *in* education. Far too little thinking has been done on this subject, and that work (i.e. respect for children) has yet to begin in schools.

To illustrate this statement let us quote Article. 12, paragraph 2:

For this purpose [to implement the right to freedom of opinion and to freedom of expression], the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child.

This is a clear reference to participation in school life.

### *Rights through education*

The UNESCO Convention (Art. 5) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966, Art. 13) clearly indicate that education in States parties must aim at promoting respect for human rights. This is also in line with the spirit of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 26, para. 2), in that familiarity with human rights is the best protection against their infringement.

The Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers has adopted recommendation R(85)7, in which it urges Member States to firmly encourage education on human rights and their promotion and asks Member States to draw its recommendations to the attention of those involved in education. The recommendation contains many detailed suggestions to this end. The United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education has already been mentioned in this regard.

It is not surprising that we should encounter the same idea in the CRC (Art. 29, para. 1, b). It even goes a step further. Article 42 imposes the obligation on States parties to make the principles and provisions of the CRC widely known to adults and children alike. Moreover, Article 44, paragraph 6, requests States parties to make the periodic reports and comments of the committee widely available to the public in their own countries. It goes without saying that a permanent, large-scale information campaign on the CRC and its content is essential if it is to be implemented effectively.

It is equally obvious that education has a major responsibility in this respect. Spending an occasional hour or two at school on the subject of children's rights would obviously fall short of the obligations States parties have taken upon themselves. Essentially, there has to be a shift in fundamental attitudes towards a respect for children's rights. Theoretical teaching on the value of human rights and democ-

racy serves very little purpose if those values are not also put into practice at the same time.

Apart from this shift in attitudes, we need changes in existing school curricula. Respect for human rights can be taught not only in history lessons, but in practically every subject. Teacher training will have to be adapted to this new task. There might also be specific training for regional press and information officers and the setting up of a specific information system. Finally, all kinds of educational aids could be designed (texts, audio-visual aids, educational games, exhibitions, etc.).

## Expectations and demands

It must be obvious that the human rights project and the binding provisions in its instruments make demands on all actors in the school culture. Since we are now leaving the phase of standard-setting and entering the phase of implementation, it is not surprising that almost no intentional, systematic, comprehensive programmes have been set up. Some governments, schools, teachers, parents and children are occasionally and partially dealing with it. However, these isolated actions are characterized by a dramatically high commitment.

Publications such as this issue of *Prospects*, and events like the International Conference on Children's Rights in Education, are showing us that we must go beyond simply supporting these good practices. The challenge before us now is to set up intentional and systematic policy.

## Notes

1. For a more comprehensive explanation, see E. Verhellen, *Convention on the Rights of the Child: Background, motivation, strategies, main themes*, Garant, Leuven, 1997.
2. P.A. Heilo, E. Lawronen and M. Bardy, eds., *Politics of childhood and children at risk. Provision — protection — participation*, Kellokoski, Finland, Eurosocial Report Series, no. 45, Vienna, 1998.
3. E. Verhellen, ed., *Monitoring children's rights*, The Hague, Kluwer Law International, 1996.
4. E. Verhellen, *Legal protection of children's rights: a framework for 'to be informed strategies'*, Luxembourg, European Forum for Child Welfare, Luxembourg Conference 'The rights of the child in Europe. Make them known—make them happen', 1995, p. 26–34.
5. See also *Plan of Action for the UN Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995–2004*, Geneva, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d., p. 7; N. Tarrow, Human rights education: alternative conceptions, in: J. Lynch, C. Modgil and S. Modgil, eds., *Cultural diversity and the schools*, London, Falmer Press, 1992, p. 21 (vol. 4 of *Human rights, education and global responsibilities*); J. Lynch, *Education for citizenship in a multicultural society*, London, Cassell, 1992; B. Brock-Utne, Education about peace, in: D. Ray, ed., *Education for human rights: an international perspective*, Paris, UNESCO, 1994; R. Richardson, A visitor yet a part of everybody: the tasks and

goals of human rights education, in: H. Starkey, ed., *The challenge of human rights education*, Norwich, Page Bros, 1991, p. 5–10.

6. E. Verhellen, Children's rights and education: a three-track legally binding imperative, *School psychology international* (London), vol. 14, 1993, p. 199–208.
7. The 'Matthew effect' is a metaphor derived from a Biblical reference. It means that those people who already have a lot (e.g. money, honour, etc.) get more and, as a negative effect, those who have little get less.

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# THE VIEWS AND INVOLVEMENT OF CHINESE PARENTS IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

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*Muju Zhu*

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In the last twenty years, a series of reforms and open-door policies have profoundly affected all aspects of life in China, greatly increasing social and economic development. Substantive development has been taking place, both in theory and in practice, in terms of social democracy, the legal system and the protection and promotion of the rights of the individual. The philosophy proposed at the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990) has received much attention from the government. The concept that the rights of the child deserve protection has been widely disseminated in China, so much so that it has become an integral part of social awareness and action. When, as in today's China, almost every family has but a single child, parents' concern for and involvement in their children's education and future reach unparalleled levels. Parents are torn between rational and irrational ideas, and utilitarian and utopian views.

## **Traditional culture**

From a historical and cultural point of view, China is a country with a long-standing Confucian culture. Confucian philosophy has had a long and profound influence on education. The ideas and content behind family education have their ori-

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gins in an agricultural society dependent on the natural cycle. From a social studies perspective, a society with its economic and social activity based on farming is bound to have families as its basic unit. Individuals relied on the family for survival; family interests came foremost, especially under a feudal system, where strict observance of caste and family status meant that the success of the children was of vital interest to the family. Thus were the concept and the conduct of the 'family unit' established. Parents paid great attention to their children's character, competence and career, but their interest in their offspring's education was more for family honour than for the benefit of the child.

One of the most notable features of traditional Chinese family education was its emphasis on moral instruction. Children were taught to be upright, polite, modest, honest, loyal, industrious, studious, determined and helpful; they were told not to rely on the position and property of their ancestors, but to work for their own future. 'The father is supreme' is the message of Confucian doctrine, teaching children that the essential way to conduct oneself is to show great respect and obedience to one's elders. Children were also required to be frugal. Traditional family teachings—with the exception of some points which smack too much of feudal concepts and have been rejected—contain universally acknowledged moral truths and are still widely practised in Chinese households.

In the early 1990s, experts at the Nanjing Teacher-Training School carried out some research on the views held by parents of small children on the value of education. Of the twenty items on the questionnaire, the five most commonly selected items collectively reflected the importance that parents placed on education. These five were: health; striving to improve oneself and to achieve success; honesty; intelligence; and curiosity and love of exploration (Huang, 1996).

## After the Cultural Revolution

As society grows and becomes less rigid, with increased commercial and social services assuming greater importance in family life, and with a multitude of cultures and values challenging narrow entrenched outlooks—coupled with the effects of the one-child policy—family education concepts and content are changing.

Ten catastrophic years of the Cultural Revolution ended in 1978. The most striking change for the family was, without doubt, the reintroduction of entrance examinations for higher education institutions. At that time there were tens of millions of young people who had been deprived of their right to education during these ten years. Many of them had persisted in their search for knowledge, their search for utopia, and maintained their interest in advanced learning, even in the direst of circumstances. When the senior high-school entrance examinations were reinstated, these were the students who came to the fore, and then triumphed again in the subsequent 'ascent' to university degrees.

In the next twenty years, they and later successive generations of graduates, who attained their degrees amid fierce competition, became the backbone of all professional life and were the pool from which important members of the government



were drawn. Their success stories showed the public how university degrees could improve social standing. The lesson was clear: if your children were to have a bright future, they had to have a good education. Indeed, fast economic growth created a desperate need for people possessing all kinds of talents, and the only fair and effective way to evaluate and choose employees, given the vast pool of labour and pressing deadlines, was to look at school records and qualifications.

Thus academic qualifications established the criterion on the basis of which people were hired, and once this had become the norm, these qualifications influenced the views and actions of parents and teachers alike. In China, the competition for places in higher education is fierce. Only some 5 or 6% of each age-group will have the opportunity to enter higher education.

In these circumstances, parents are looking for more from education than character building. 'Receiving a higher education', 'studying abroad' and 'becoming rich' have already become the most evident utilitarian objectives. According to one study, 90% of households want their offspring to enter higher education, and 19% want their children to earn a Ph.D. (*The Beijing Youth*, 1997). Even in remote and impoverished regions, farming families are prepared to cut down on food and clothing to support their children at university. We cannot deny that the concept of 'Wanting a dragon, not a mouse for a son' is deeply rooted in most parents' psyche. This brings an intense personal commitment to their notions of education, especially among parents born between 1947 and 1952.

The decade-long Cultural Revolution cost most of them their chance of receiving higher education, placing them at a disadvantage in today's fiercely competitive economy. Many have become unemployed as economic reforms have led to redundancy. These parents, after experiencing the vicissitudes of life, have come to the painful realization that their children must study hard in order not to suffer the same fate—to avoid hardship they must go to university, even if success means facing fierce competition. Therefore, their determination to promote their children's education, and the sacrifices they are prepared to make, are without parallel.

## Fierce competition

Limited educational facilities mean that competition, initially for higher education, has now spread down to the junior high-school stage. In 1993, the former National Education Commission issued *An outline of Chinese education reform and development*, encouraging the development of vocational schools. It was planned that these schools should enrol 60% of the student body, while the secondary schools absorbed the other 40%. Because of the difference in the courses offered, this effectively meant that vocational school graduates had almost no opportunity of entering university, while only one-third of secondary school graduates themselves would go on to higher education. Furthermore, this third often came almost entirely from certain elite secondary schools. Therefore, the competition for college admission already began at the junior high-school stage; more specifically, it was competition for grades.

Parents set their sights on the entrance scores for entering the elite schools in their area, and frantically urged their children to study. Parents recognized 'entering a higher education institution' as the unique path to success, and high grades as crucial to taking this path. Therefore, whether their children do or do not receive good grades has become the parents' own yardstick for measuring success or failure.

The home has become the children's 'second classroom'. At home, besides finishing school assignments, children also have to complete work set by parents. Thus, many children have become studying machines, only stopping when they go to bed. Children no longer experience the joy of learning, but view it as a heavy burden. According to one survey, among 10-15-year-old children in urban areas, only 33.2% 'often felt the joy of learning', while the majority did not enjoy it at all (*The Beijing Youth*, 1997).

In order to encourage the all-round development of students, some education departments have allowed a few elite schools—even some universities—to lower the entry marks in order to admit a fixed ratio of students with an artistic or athletic bent. This sort of regulation has not escaped the attention of parents. During holidays, weekends or even weekday evenings, they send their children—even very small ones—to various art and crafts schools to learn a musical instrument or a particular skill, so that these children will have some advantage in the competition for higher education. In cities at the weekends it is quite common to see parents helping their children to carry violin cases and other instruments as they hurry along the pavements. In big and moderate-sized cities, the piano is entering the homes of ordinary families. The outpouring of sounds from the piano in the house speaks volumes about the pains that the parents have taken—and the children's helplessness, since many of them are forced to practise on the instrument.

However, we should also see that many well-educated parents, who have benefited from economic development and are seeking to perfect their children's development, believe that certain types of artistic education can exert a favourable influence on their human character. I was once fortunate enough to hear a superb performance by an orchestra composed of 12- to 16-year-olds at the People's University Affiliated Middle School. When you see what parents, teachers and students are capable of accomplishing, you can only be lost in admiration. China's new generation is growing up in this situation of conflict between rational and irrational choices, and between parents' contradictory and painful decisions and actions.

## Moral values

Some people think that if parents place too much emphasis on achieving utilitarian goals, they will overlook the moral education of their children. Actually there is a report (Hu, 1996) describing the order of priority for parents of 'one-child' families. They care most about their child's grades, next about his or her health, and then about his or her moral character. However, another research paper showed that 76% of parents advocate the all-round development of their children, according to the needs of the country. Since China opened up to the outside world, the

country has benefited from the influx of a multitude of cultures and values, as well as from a wide range of information coming from all corners of the world.

Nevertheless, Chinese moral values still hold fast. The vast majority of parents, while seeking education according to specifically utilitarian goals, are not opposed to traditional moral teachings.

A most vivid example is that of those parents who, when they were young, had no choice but to toil in the countryside being 're-educated', some for as long as a decade. They believe that these hardships and the independent way of life forged their characters, and tempered their indomitable spirits. The year 1968 saw millions of students settle down in the countryside or in mountainous regions. Today, thirty years later, it is exactly these students, now parents, that are spontaneously taking their sons and daughters back to the places where they were sent to work in production teams in the North-East, in Yunnan and Shaanxi provinces. Together with their children, they visit the simple peasants who took care of them and the places that hold memories for them. They look on this as a lesson. Using their tumultuous experiences and understanding of life as teaching material, they tell their children how they trained themselves to become strong and independent, and how kind and generous the local farmers were. They teach their children never to give up ideals and to set themselves goals even in the worst situations. They tell their children that no matter how poor their country is, they are Chinese, and therefore they should do their utmost to love their country and to develop its potential.

In 1998, when television stations broadcast a programme featuring large numbers of parents taking their children back to visit the countryside where they once lived, these reminiscences stirred the hearts of millions of parents and awakened their deeply rooted moral feelings.

A second vivid example was the Central Committee of the Chinese Youth League's 'Hope Project'. This sought to help children living in destitute regions, who had been obliged to drop out of formal education because of financial problems, so that they could return to school. The 'Hand in Hand Project' organized donations to help the families of these children. Tens of millions of families, full of enthusiasm, took part in this noble endeavour. Parents encouraged their children to donate their pocket money and the parents themselves also gave eagerly. Through certain organizations, some people have stayed in touch with the students they have adopted and given long-term aid to them and their families. They also urge their own children to write regularly to their less-fortunate counterparts. Some have even invited those children, who have never previously been away from their homes, far less to a city, to spend time with them and enjoy a taste of urban life during the holidays. When the media reported these moving stories, people saw once again how great, steady and immutable the moral mainstream of Chinese society was, and how strong an influence it could have on their children's upbringing.

## **Children's rights in the household**

The way parents participate in their children's education varies with their educa-

tional backgrounds. Normally, parents with a good education will take a more democratic approach and have a better understanding of the child's basic rights. Observing the various demands that are likely to arise in future societies—such as for independence, the ability to work in a team, the ability to handle information, environmental friendliness and active participation in social life—they make efforts to inculcate these attitudes at home for the benefit of their child.

Many households have purchased computers and are linked to the Internet, encouraging their children to search the Web, fostering notions and skills that will be needed in the world of information technology. They will be more concerned about their child's emotional state, needs and frustrations, at the same time eagerly participating in school activities and maintaining regular communication with the teachers.

At present, this sort of family is not in the majority in China. Many more families have a 'dictatorial' attitude. Parents expect children to be 'obedient' and 'studious'. One research study showed that 65% of parents state that they promote the development of their children's personality, respect their dignity, consult them and listen to their opinion. However, in reality in most households it is still the parents who have the 'last word'. It cannot be denied that a few parents resort to 'force' in an attempt to regulate their children's problems. The promulgation of the Law for Protection of Minors has effectively stopped a significant amount of household violence. China's media devoted much effort to exposing and criticizing these repulsive acts; the police, the department for the protection of the rights of the child, women's association, schools, etc. are all working hard to eradicate violence in the family.

To guide and help parents to participate in their children's education in an appropriate manner, the government has established over 200,000 schools for parents and set up 55,000 family education consultation centres. Throughout the country, twenty-eight provinces, autonomous areas and municipalities under the responsibility of the Central Government, as well as most cities and districts, have their own household education research centres. There are 160 newspapers and publications devoted to family education throughout China. Television and radio broadcasts, which are important avenues for directing parents in the correct way of educating their child, as well as for making known the latest ideas and methods arising from educational research, carry regular programmes on family education.

With the democratization and legal institutionalization of Chinese society, parents' awareness of children's rights and child education rights will eventually affect every family and grow into an accepted way of life.

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# CHILDREN, CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

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## AND THE CONTEXT

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### OF THEIR EDUCATION

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#### IN SOUTH KIVU

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#### IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

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#### OF THE CONGO

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*Juvénal Bazilashe Balegamire*

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### Introduction

South Kivu is a province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo consisting of two parts: a mountainous area and a forested area. The mountainous part of South Kivu belongs to one of the most populous regions of Africa, with densities of around 150 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> and concentrated points such as the island of Idjwi in Lake Kivu, with a population density of up to 450 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>. In this rural setting, that is both spectacular and disquieting.

Children are such an important value in this region that composed the song *Omwana Akwira* (The child is a miracle). This ballad is highly popular in Bukavu

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and in lakeside Kivu because it helps enliven countless marriage and birth celebrations! Although the Havu' proverb that *when you give birth you do not know the child's future* is true, it is nonetheless interesting to note that after the travails of childbirth the mother is radiant, and that those who love her and share in her joy formulate this unanimous wish: 'Do it again—you won't find any thorns!' This is as much as to say: 'No matter how great the suffering, let's forget these thorns and just keep hold of the rose.' In corroboration of this wish, Bahavu wise folk state bluntly: 'To have just one child is not to have any at all.' The strength of the family lies in having as many descendants as possible. Not to have any children is the worst ill that there is. Thus, for example, you say to someone that you hate: 'May you die without leaving behind any children, like a banana tree with no buds.' For, as the Bashi say, 'A home without children is like a day without sun' (Kagaragu, 1976, p. 110)

South Kivu also has a part that is quite rightly described as forested. Here the population density is often lower than ten inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>. Children are equally miraculous here, this time by virtue of their scarcity. As the adage says, that which is scarce is dear, in other words precious.

The present paper<sup>2</sup> articulates an argument based on the four main themes in the Convention on the Rights of the Child: survival, development, participation and protection. It compares these rights with the conditions of daily life for the children of South Kivu, which have an impact on their education. Knowledge of these conditions is a prerequisite for any proposal for the improvement of this education.

## The right to survival and the right to health

The contrast between the two parts of South Kivu may lead one to contemplate a double appeal to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly Articles 6 and 24, which concern the life and health of children. The child who has good physical, mental and social health has plenty of opportunity to benefit from parental and school education. This good health is all the more important as patterns of schooling become increasingly restrictive, even for very young children. Consequently, it is necessary to look into the health conditions of the children of South Kivu, as this is one of the prerequisites for a sound education.

### THE FOUR PLAGUES

Children and adults alike in South Kivu suffer regularly from four plagues: malaria, various forms of diarrhoea, respiratory infections and malnutrition. In certain districts, many experience famine, and this is true even in the urban centres of mountainous and lakeside South Kivu, where food supplies are insufficient and very costly. One day in June 1998, Patrice, aged 4, told his mother about the situation he had just experienced at a cousin's house in the district of Ibanda, the middle-class area of Bukavu:

Mama, they're starving at Pierrot's house! One day I was round there and I saw Hunger stealing along the wall for a long time: it took time. I was given a tiny little piece of maize as big as this to eat. But it didn't satisfy me. Hunger continued on his way and went out through the window!

Many children suffer permanently from kwashiorkor, despite numerous attempts to combat this disease. When one thinks about what has been done in the fight against this form of severe malnutrition—via the Anti-*bwaki* Committee<sup>3</sup> which has existed since the 1960s, or Dr Rau's Medical Foundation which was set up in Bukavu some fifteen years ago—one even gets the impression that the harder we fight against kwashiorkor, the more ground it gains! This fight has always been difficult to conduct in a country which has been irretrievably stuck in economic stagnation, to the point where aid has been translated into emergency assistance and not into support for self-promotion initiatives for the populations concerned.

Malaria, respiratory infections and diarrhoeal sicknesses are found in South Kivu, whose average temperature of 20° has in recent years gone up by about another two degrees. This has caused the areas of propagation of anopheles—the mosquitoes that carry malaria—to be extended to an altitude of more than 1,500 m. Furthermore, although South Kivu has a rainfall of around 1,500 mm, the swamps in the rural areas are rarely drained or correctly cultivated. The roads and paths play host to numerous pools of water, because they are almost entirely made of earth, and never receive any maintenance worth speaking of, either in the cities or in the countryside. Water sources have still not been tapped and equipped in sufficient number to distribute drinking water everywhere. As a consequence, the majority of the population continues to draw water from the rivers. Even in our towns, the *Regideso* (Régie des eaux—water authority) is not capable of ensuring the correct daily distribution of drinking water to all of its many customers.

#### THE ABSENCE OF VACCINATION COVER

The other key problem is the absence of health cover by means of a regular provincial vaccination campaign for children from 0 to 5 years. If we consider the vaccination cover against measles, we find a provincial average of 44% in 1996 and 42% in 1997, with huge differences between different health districts. Bukavu attained 107% and 84% for the two years in question, whereas Bunyakiri attained only 23% and 18%. As for the Fizi and Shabunda health districts, they had a vaccination cover of 8% and 10% respectively in 1996 and did not supply any information for 1997 (see Table 1). The vaccination cover in 1997 may have helped prevent a catastrophe in Bukavu, where 66 cases of measles were reported, of which just one was fatal. By contrast, Bunyakiri and Idjwi, with rates of vaccination cover of 18% and 36% respectively, had 264 and 226 cases of measles respectively, of which thirty-three and two resulted in death.<sup>4</sup>

TABLE 1. Evolution of anti-measles vaccination cover of 1-year-old children in the health districts of South Kivu

Health district	Health centre		Anti-measles vaccination cover in %							
	Planned	With PEV	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
1. Bukavu	26	22	86	89	99	97	103	122	107	84
2. Bunyakiri	28	20	44	23	12	17	17	36	23	18
3. Fizi	22	15	43	18	10	-	18	15	8	-
4. Idjwi	15	12	36	13	9	19	14	38	36	36
5. Kabare	12	9	30	17	18	51	53	68	87	112
6. Katana	31	28	86	67	81	68	49	65	86	97
7. Kaziba	15	14	74	62	35	-	48	60	51	83
8. Lemera	14	12	62	81	85	82	133	94	29	19
9. Mwenga	24	18	32	61	19	29	17	31	40	18
10. Nundu	18	14	88	59	22	39	26	39	26	3
11. Nyangezi	14	13	31	17	39	27	29	42	44	39
12. Uvira	24	18	65	49	35	55	59	73	29	26
13. Walungu	35	25	63	48	80	75	46	54	57	69
14. Shabunda	27	10	-	-	-	-	3	6	10	-
Totals			61	48	45	52	42	52	4	42

*Source:* Programme élargi de vaccination et de lutte contre les maladies transmissibles de l'enfance [Extended programme of vaccination and of measures to combat contagious children's diseases], Bukavu, March 1998.

In war-time, when it is impossible to ensure vaccination cover, many children who have escaped injury from bullets are nonetheless in danger of dying young or of suffering the consequences of lack of vaccination. By way of example, 18, 19 and 20 August 1998 and 22, 23 and 24 September 1998 were planned as national days of vaccination against poliomyelitis, which should have reached 10 million children aged between 0 and 5 years. It was not possible for these days to take place in the province of South Kivu, because Bukavu, its capital, was one of the departure points for the armed anti-Kabila struggle from the beginning of August. By missing this nation-wide opportunity for preventive action, South Kivu is likely to continue to be a favourite territory for poliomyelitis.

#### WHY SHOULD YOU HAVE MANY CHILDREN?

The likelihood of losing one's child at a very young age represents another major concern for parents, who do everything they can to have as many children as possible. People feel that these children are a means of averting fate, and that even though some children die young, others will survive.



Ntakalamo, however, was not able to avert the fate of death. Fate carried her off, just as it regularly carries off numerous other women who are victims of high-risk pregnancies, sometimes despite preventive medical measures. This married mother of three was expecting her fourth child, although the doctor had already warned her that there was a high risk she would die during her next pregnancy. Did she ignore this medical injunction, or was she taken by surprise by this pregnancy, one of the many women and men of South Kivu who are not familiar with or do not have the money to buy contraceptives? Or, rather, did she submit herself to the will of her husband, or of her God, who gives life and takes it away as he deems fit? In any case, on 4 August 1998 she was at a private clinic in Bukavu. The bullets of our country's second 'war of liberation' started flying while she was trying to give birth. She could not breathe and was unable to push her baby out. As the bullets were coming thick and fast, it was impossible to evacuate her to the Bukavu general hospital, where they could have carried out a caesarian section. Mother and child died a few moments later.

Children are also regarded as an investment for the future and a demonstration of power against any malefactors. For the Balega

the child is a tree that grows tall. It will turn into an adult and where it goes, there life will be. The child is hope and true wealth. A tree does not always have a thick trunk, and the space it occupies, the shade it gives and the territory which is its own come from its branches and its leaves... Similarly, a family's importance is measured by the number of its children, even if it is poor or comes from common stock. (Defour, n.d., p. 22-23)

## The right to development

Improvement in health conditions should have reduced the death rate and infant mortality. Ultimately, parents, concerned to ensure the education of their offspring, would have tended to have the number of children that they were capable of putting through school until the point where they had learnt a trade. Alas, this is not the case in South Kivu. Moreover, it may be wondered whether a province with such a chronically precarious health situation can satisfy the rights of the child to development, particularly the right to education (see Article 28 of the Convention).

### THE PARENTS: MILK COWS OF THE CONGOLESE SCHOOLS?

During the colonial period and the first decade of independence, Congolese schools were almost entirely managed by the churches. Their nationalization in the early 1970s was an unhappy experience, and in 1976 the State of Zaire negotiated with the legal representatives of these churches to share the responsibility for managing the primary and secondary schools. Under the convention signed in 1977, the State took on the duty of constructing, renovating and equipping the schools of the Republic, as well as of paying their staff.

Twenty years later, it has to be said that the authorities of the Mobutu era did not honour their commitments. Nor has the government set up in Kinshasa after the war of 1996–97 put the crisis in the school system among the priority problems requiring resolution. What is more, the state of war that started in August 1998 has plunged all those involved in this sector into despair about ever emerging from the tunnel. For decades, the schools have been built and equipped willy-nilly by the pupils' parents (Tshiala, 1995, p. 91–121). Most are built in the well-known wooden-wall style or of unfired bricks. This has been the fashion in our country for the last twenty-five years. Other schools hold classes beneath the mango trees, without any equipment or any teaching aids. The buildings of the few schools that were built in the colonial era are deteriorating through lack of maintenance, where they have not been pillaged, sacked or even destroyed in the course of the various Congolese wars. The Mwangaza de Kamangala secondary school in the parish of Burhale, which belongs to the archdiocese of Bukavu, experienced this fate: in November 1998, uniformed men carried off the doors, the windows, the mattresses and other equipment belonging to the school, which was one of the few rural schools reserved for the girls of South Kivu.

The pupils' parents have not contented themselves with building schools. In 1992–93, realizing that the State was no longer paying its teachers correctly or regularly, they decided to offer them a bonus as an incentive. Thanks to this strategy, some pupils are managing to receive an education, albeit one whose quality leaves everything to be desired. The group *Justice et Libération* in Kisangani<sup>5</sup> is quite right in stating that 'the current system of bonuses paid by the parents to the teachers is fundamentally bad; it absolves the State of its responsibilities, makes the teachers dependent on the parents, imposes an undue burden on the parents, condemns the pupils and students to a mediocre education, and closes school to those who cannot pay, thus perpetuating social inequality'.

The absence of remuneration has affected all sectors of the civil service, and has ended up by blocking the system of bonuses. This is because the pupils' parents who have to pay the school fees are themselves civil servants, and therefore have not received a proper salary for a long, long time. A larger number of others are farmers, craftsmen or small traders; but their farm produce or their wares are not bought because the civil servants are unpaid. As a result of this vicious and vitiating circle, the schools, which rely on fees paid by the parents, are obliged to send home pupils whose parents are insolvent. The reduction in the number of pupils reduces the amount the schools can earn, cuts down on the bonus promised to teachers, causes them to be discontented and lowers the quality of their work and of their pupils' knowledge.

Those running some schools, both public and private, get round this obstacle by regarding the pupils as a form of prey to be lured by the best baits and not to be released for any reason, for fear of losing revenue. They lower the school fees and the fees intended for the payment of the teachers' bonuses; moreover, they demand that the teachers pass as many pupils as possible, with inflated percentages. These pupils go up from one class to another, to the great satisfaction of their parents,

who are unaware of these manoeuvres. Only the provincial examinations at the end of primary school, the State examinations at the end of the long secondary cycle or the entrance examinations for a new school bring their academic weaknesses to light. Their parents, who have sometimes been fooled for years, are then bitterly disappointed, and no longer know which saint to pray to or what new school or professional career to propose to their children.

#### THE EXODUS FROM THE SCHOOLS

This rampant desertion of the schools has for some years been turning into a veritable mass exodus, which is added to the customary rural exodus. The towns are filling up with all sorts of children who have got out of the school system, which hitherto had been regarded as their normal environment. The Balega say: 'You are sowing without sowing; you are growing groundnuts and you will be empty-handed at harvest time.' Defour's commentary on this is as follows: 'You may beget children, but if you do not educate them well, if they are good-for-nothings, it is as if you have no children: your harvest has failed!' (Defour, n.d., p. 19).

Thus, despite a rate of school attendance of around 70% in Bukavu in 1995 and a proportion of girls attending primary school that is only slightly lower than that of boys, there are enormous numbers of pupils who give up in mid-year or who fail at the end of the year. This can be seen in two primary schools in Kadut—Ntwali and Ulindi (Tables 2 and 3)—both of which are girls' schools. Their respective enrolments are over 1,000 pupils every year, with an average class size of fifty-six at the start of the year and fifty at the end. Those who give up and those who are failed are so numerous that they alone are equivalent to the enrolments of many primary schools in Kadut and its surrounding area.

We shall also consider the case of the Malinde primary school on the island of Idjwi (Table 4), a mixed school in very poor condition. It has two buildings made of unfired bricks which house eight classrooms covered with corrugated iron and one classroom covered with a makeshift canvas cover of the kind used to cover makeshift shelters for Rwandan refugees between 1994 and 1996. The pupils carried on attending courses there in 1997–98 even though the wall of one of the buildings collapsed! This school had practically no basic equipment in terms of a library, books, textbooks, desks or tables in good condition. Its teaching equipment was confined to a map of Zaire, a globe, a compass, a pipe, a machete, a hoe, a spade and some pictures. Those giving up during the year were numerous—160 pupils in 1996 and 50 in 1997. However, there were a large number of pupils enrolled in the school, despite the mediocrity of its infrastructure and equipment. The parents appreciated the discipline imposed on the teachers by the headmaster and were doing everything they could to ensure that their children escaped the rampant illiteracy of young people on the island.

TABLE 2. School population at Ntwali primary school in 1995/96 and 1996/97

Start of the year			End of the year	
Year	Total	Passes	Failures	Gave up
1995/96	1,516	910	442	154
1996/97	1,591	771	506	274

*Source:* Management of Ntwali primary school, 1998.

TABLE 3. School population at Ulindi primary school in 1995/96 and 1996/97

Start of the year			End of the year	
Year	Total	Passes	Failures	Gave up
1995/96	1401	910	370	121
1996/97	1490	825	394	271

*Source:* Management of Ulindi primary school, 1998.

TABLE 4. School population at Malinde primary school in 1995/96 and 1996/97

Start of the year			End of the year	
Year	Total	Passes	Failures	Gave up
1995/96	515	315	40	160
1996/97	575	488	35	50

*Source:* Management of Malinde primary school, 1998.

TABLE 5. Potential school population in the territory of Idjwi (1996 and 1997)

Year	1996			1997		
Age	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
4-9 years	7,605	8,006	15,611	7,494	8,046	15,540
10-14 years	5,679	6,071	11,750	5,721	6,022	11,743
15-19 years	6,475	6,783	13,258	6,532	7,086	13,618
Total	19,759	20,860	40,619	19,747	21,154	40,901

*Source:* State Registration Office of the territory of Idjwi in Bugarula, 1998.

TABLE 6. Actual school population in the territory of Idjwi (1995/96 and 1996/97)

Year	1996			1997		
School	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Primary	6,542	3,108	9,650	8,013	3,957	11,970
Secondary	1,255	246	1,501	870	162	1,032
Total	7,797	3,354	11,151	8,883	4,119	13,002

*Source:* D. Ntibanyura, inspector of schools of Idjwi, Bugarula, 1998.

If one compares the number of those in Idjwi of school age with those actually in school (Tables 5 and 6), one finds that in 1997 the overall rate of school attendance there was around 31.8%, with that of girls being around 19.4% and that of boys around 45%. Yet the majority of schools attended by these pupils are no better off than the Malinde primary school in terms of infrastructure and equipment, or even as regards the teachers, whose qualifications ill conceal poor skills. Moreover, Idjwi, which is basically a farming island, has just opened its first agricultural school, and does not offer a solid vocational education to the many young people who always exist on the margins of the school system or who are very quickly and increasingly expelled there.

#### THE SCHOOL: A BANKRUPT ENTERPRISE

Today, the rate of school attendance has dropped sharply in both South Kivu and the rest of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This is particularly true in the countryside and for girls. In fact, there is every reason to regard the country's schools as bankrupt enterprises. If they have not closed their doors, this is only because parents have decided to make immense sacrifices in order to ensure their survival and give them a reprieve! They are so determined to get their children a school education that nothing is baulked at when it comes to finding them places and paying the fees that are asked. A child at school is regarded as a guaranteed future, both for himself and for his parents, who consider him to be their life insurance policy. In this connection, popular wisdom says: 'Anyone who has suffered to give birth and to get an education for their child deserves to rest.'

Unfortunately, the generosity of parents has not prevented the conditions of education from continuing to deteriorate, leading large numbers of skilled and qualified teachers to desert the Congolese schools. Since the 1970s, some of these teachers have left for neighbouring countries, which guarantee them a salary that corresponds to the minimum subsistence level, despite the tragic events which have occurred there and the continuing lack of security. The consequences of the war of 1996-97 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo were fatal for other teachers and for many pupils: they died, having been abducted, having disappeared or simply having enlist-

ed, the former as soldiers or militiamen, the latter as *Kadogo*, the famous child warriors.

The impasse in the school system this time appears to be total in Bukavu, following the second war, the so-called war of liberation. This war, which began in August 1998, prevented the normal start of the school year, which was set for 8 September. The authorities of the *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie* (Congolese Union for Democracy), the political wing of the anti-Kabila forces, insisted that the school year finally begin on 5 October 1998. Parents did not send their children to school; they seem to have been deterred by the lack of security in the province and by the fear of forced military enlisting of pupils at their schools. Moreover, as the customary resourceful means of earning an income have been paralysed, parents have been finding it difficult to feed their families and are thus unable to raise the extra money needed to pay school fees in connection with the new year. Finally, they were almost certain that one year after the first liberation of their country, the so-called government of public salvation would at least lighten their burden by paying the teachers decently and regularly from the start of the 1998/99 school year, thereby honouring one of its many promises.

## **The right to protection**

Children appeal to their right to protection whether they are in school or not—in other words, to whichever category they belong. Articles 19, 32, 38 and 39 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child seek to protect them against all forms of exploitation in times of peace and in times of armed conflict alike. They aim to ensure that society shows particular concern for children who suffer from any form of neglect, exploitation or abuse, from torture, from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, or from armed conflict.

### **CHILDREN CONTRIBUTE TO THE SURVIVAL OF THEIR FAMILIES**

In reality, many children have to contribute every day to the survival of their families. Some help to finance their studies themselves, and if they do not do this they are taken out of school. Others contribute to the studies of their brothers and sisters, even though they themselves no longer go to school. In town centres, we find numerous young street vendors, with various items of daily consumption on their heads or even on the ground, such as groundnuts, cigarettes, bread and sausages; some have kiosks, while others combine their lives as vendors and their status as pupils, even secondary pupils, every day.

Another category of children practise their trades while they are learning them: in the morning, they attend an apprenticeship centre for masonry, carpentry, car mechanics, electricity, fitting or sewing, while in the afternoon or evening they carry out contractual work as masons, carpenters, mechanics, electricians, fitters or tailors. Others learn on the job, with or without proper or even just symbolic training supervisors. This is the case with all the porters, rickshaw drivers, shoe-shiners, assis-

tant carpenters, assistant masons, apprentice mechanics, and the escorts on the lorries and vans which make the trip between the city of Bukavu and the surrounding rural areas, such as Mudaka or Katana in the territory of Kabare, and Mugogo or Nyangezi in the territory of Walungu.

Many children are not always able to attend vocational training centres of a formal or informal nature, or to practise honest trades. The poverty into which their families are plunged has impelled them to leave school and behave like delinquents, specializing in petty theft in the market or from private properties; they even go so far as to commit serious crimes, and sometimes become armed robbers. The labour of extracting precious stones is performed by children in the mines, who are thus exposed to an environment that is physically and morally unhealthy for anyone, and especially for them in view of their tender age. Many girls start working as prostitutes early, without or sometimes with the blessing of their impoverished parents. The risk of pregnancy or of sexually transmitted diseases does not impede the ardour with which they seek out high-paying clients. The clients use all the means at their disposal to attract increasingly young girls, something contrary to local customs.

#### PARENTS AS THEIR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN?

If as a result of his or her early gainful employment, a girl or boy becomes the principal or even the only bread-winner in the family, parental authority and pride are seriously compromised. After all, what is there to be said by the father or mother about the girl who, thanks to her occasional nocturnal sorties, brings home enough money to feed all the family, which is on the verge of abandoning hope? What is to be said about the boy who, attracted by the easy but transient earnings that can be made by speculating on the national currency and on the interruptions in the supply of certain essential items, decides to abandon his studies, which in his view have become useless and are leading nowhere, and to devote himself to commerce?

Some parents abdicate their responsibilities and leave their children to run the ship, at the risk of going off course or even of foundering—in other words, of losing their bearings. After all, as Stéphane wonders, 'How does one confront one's father if he withdraws from the fray? How is one to identify with the father if he himself identifies with the son?' (Stéphane, 1969, p. 54, note 1).<sup>6</sup> Other parents do all they can to guide the new behaviour of their children along certain paths; their capacity to generate these assets may of course be used to the benefit of the family, but one should at the same time preserve the chances of acquiring more definite skills at school and in daily life by gaining the capacity for knowledge, and especially self-knowledge and know-how.

#### THE KADOGO, CHILD WARRIORS

Unfortunately, there are many other situations where there is a partial or even complete break between the child and his parents. Many children became *Kadogo* against the advice and even without the knowledge of their families, as the situation before

the war of 1996–97 became untenable in South Kivu. Certain parents, whether civil servants or otherwise, having been turned into down-and-outs by the Mobutu State, had ceased to be people their children could look to for guidance. Many of these children were thus obliged to do what they could in order to survive: often they turned to day-time or night-time activities in the market or on the street that were on the fringes of legality. Poor management of the massive influx of refugees from Rwanda and Burundi in mountainous North and South Kivu aggravated the chaos which already reigned in the region.

After the war, an attempt was made to demobilize 150 *Kadogo* and reintegrate them into society and into working life during the 1997/98 school year. Aged between 11 and 18 years, most of these child warriors have poor school records and come from humble backgrounds. A total of 12% have no school background, 70% have a primary school education and 18% have reached secondary level; just 38% were attending school before they enlisted, while 60% were practising a trade (UNICEF, 1997, p. 12). Just six out of the 150 demobilized went to school again; thirty-four pursued vocational training to its conclusion. Some rejoined the army, which had been a more effective training environment for them than the streets and a more certain structure than their own families for the satisfaction of their basic needs. Finally, others still abandoned this demobilization programme without rejoining the army.

The initiative of the Bukavu city council to reintegrate these child warriors into society and working life is deserving of praise. This pilot experiment should be followed up and pursued in greater depth to take account of the psychological disturbance undergone by these children, forced to live as fighting soldiers, one of the most perilous professions in the world. Its failure could only be more catastrophic for them and for society.

However, today it has to be acknowledged that this failure is practically complete. Following the new war which began in August 1998, it is difficult to know what has become of the 150 *Kadogo* in the pilot experiment, and those conducting the war on all sides have put an end to the demobilization of minors still fighting. In fact, they have recruited new child warriors (Louyot, 1989) in order to reinforce their battalions, again in contravention of Articles 38 and 39 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

#### WAR IS FUTILE AND HARMFUL, ESPECIALLY FOR CHILDREN

On the eve of the outbreak of this second war, the Catholic bishops of Kivu made the following bitter observation:

As a result of these successive wars, we see nothing but killing, massacres, destruction and the enforced recruitment of minors ... Children from the same family are sent to opposing camps to fight one another. Minors carry and use arms in order to kill indiscriminately. Innocent blood is shed. Death comes to soldiers and civilians, adults and children, Congolese and foreigners. One sometimes has difficulty in distinguishing them from one another. All are victims of this blind, systematically organized violence. Every attempt at dialogue, toler-



ance or fraternity is seriously compromised. Thus nothing good, solid or permanent can be established in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is soon likely to become the battlefield for several nations and powers. Let us remember that war is harmful both to those who organize it and to those who are subjected to it.<sup>7</sup>

This new war is a new and profound trauma for the entire civilian and military population, but particularly for the child warriors. Despite their youth, these children are like all other soldiers in finding themselves divided into two opposing camps, and are therefore obliged to face death; yet only yesterday they were fraternizing with one another, proud of having taken part together in the armed struggle and of having ousted the dictator Mobutu from power. On this subject of trauma, we think of Ombeni, a 14-year-old boy dragged from his home without the knowledge of his parents by men in uniform to whom he had just offered a drink of water, and obliged to go into action as a transporter of munitions boxes from the Kabare plateaus to the town of Kisangani. For two months he saw corpses, long-drawn-out agonies, gaping and bloody wounds; he experienced cold, heat, hunger, thirst, dirt, tiredness, fear, silence and the noise of weapons, mosquito bites and bites from other insects in the equatorial forest; he was present at scenes of killing, rape, theft, tears and despair; he saw bloodthirsty victors massacre the vanquished, and the only feeling he experienced was the desire to know when and how he would get out of this nightmare.

This new war will forever be a tragic moment in the life of Ombeni, as well as of his brothers and sisters, both adolescent and younger, not to mention the lives of their parents and of everyone who has experienced two successive wars in a period of two years. There was thus no rejoicing that pupils did not go to school or that their parents, who had previously endured indescribable sacrifices to ensure the schooling of their offspring, did not send them there on 5 October 1998. This is because, despite its weaknesses, school represents for children a place of learning, of intellectual encounters and of leisure time with friends, and for parents an indispensable opportunity to supplement what they give to their children, in terms of both educational method and the objective of educating the pupils.

#### VIOLENCE IS NOT EDUCATIONAL

As regards educational methods in the family and school settings, it is important to emphasize that in South Kivu, as in many places in the world, violence is still commonplace, for the good of the children, so it is said (Miller, 1984, 1986). Many are the parents who constantly take the rod to their children, and many are the teachers who act the same way towards their pupils, sometimes at the urging of the parents, openly and publicly in front of the school authorities.

As Hacker says: Children are beaten so that they learn not to beat one another. If a boy thrashes his little brother, his father teaches him a good lesson so that he no longer wishes to behave like that. The blows inflicted are supposed to prevent the recipient from dealing out blows in future. Aggression is used to teach him that

he should not use aggression...' Yet, as Hacker continues: 'Whoever has suffered harshness at the hands of another has thereby earned the right to be harsh to others in turn. Unconsciously, he takes revenge for the suffering that he was unable to protest about for fear of being punished even more harshly.' "That's just the way it is." This is what the person says who denies the rights of the imagination (a widespread form of aggression). He immediately adds: "Shut up!"; "Don't ask so many questions"; "Do as you're told, you don't understand!" (Hacker, 1972, p. 161, 174).

The war that South Kivu has experienced is likely to harden into a more aggressive form of behaviour the children who have been subjected to all the violence for which the soldiers have been mainly responsible. Military training is violent by nature, and the soldier at war cannot do otherwise than be violent because, like the child who has earned the right to be harsh, he is not thought fit to receive orders other than: 'Shut up!'; 'Don't ask so many questions'; 'Do as you're told, you don't understand!' But the harder the war, the more the fighting soldier is regarded with contempt in the child's imagination as a violent person, like a killing machine.

On the subject of violence, Havu and Shi wisdom could not be clearer: 'The stick breaks bones, but it does not break habits.' In other words, 'corporal punishment deforms education rather than promoting it' (Kagaragu, 1976, p. 25). The intensity of the physical violence, and also of the psychological, social and moral violence used against children, may lead to numerous very serious psychological and social phenomena. Thus, children in particularly difficult situations have recently appeared in South Kivu in general and in the city of Bukavu in particular to the point where a growing number of social organizations are making efforts to rescue them and to encourage their reintegration into society and the working environment.

The numbers of these children have increased dramatically since 1994, with the massive influx of Rwandan refugees and the appearance of unaccompanied children. The war of 1996–97 turned these realities of the camps of Rwandan refugees into something that was also experienced by numerous Congolese families. Thanks to Save the Children and UNICEF, 171 out of 279 Congolese children were able to rejoin their families during 1997, while numerous others rejoined their families who had already set up home amid the chaos. A total of 1,427 street children were taken in hand by associations such as CRER (Centre de récupération des enfants de la rue—Centre for Recovery of Street Children), ADEJEDA (Action pour le développement et l'encadrement des jeunes désœuvrés et artisans—Action for the Development and Training of Out-of-work Young Craftsmen), AFESD (Association en faveur des enfants en situation difficile—Association for Children in Difficult Circumstances), BVES (Bureau pour le volontariat et l'éducation sanitaire—Bureau for Voluntary Service and Health Education) and les Amis de Jésus (the Friends of Jesus, a programme of training for children in difficult circumstances).

All these initiatives come up against the traditional problem of the psychosocial reintegration of children who are often completely cut off from the socialization structures that family, school, church, and guardians of public order represent. What is one to do with these children who belong to nobody,<sup>8</sup> when they have

created substitute structures for themselves in the streets, which have become for them a place of real struggle for survival among equals? How does one persuade the *Kadogo* that now that the war is over it is in their own interest to learn the trades which can provide them with a better future, when they know that in uniform they are at least guaranteed a subsistence wage as well as social prestige? When they know that young people at their age are far from enjoying as they do the fruits of the war in which they are or have just been participating heroically? And above all, when they realize that those in civilian life continue to have as much trouble as yesterday, if not more trouble, in getting a subsistence wage, whether they have studied, served an apprenticeship or taken their hoes to cultivate the soil?

## The right to participation

The right to participation depends in some measure on the observance of the foregoing rights. It is difficult to assert the child's right to freedom of expression, thought and association (see Articles 13, 14 and 15 of the Convention) if the child and his parents are caught up in a struggle for their lives. *An empty stomach has no ears*, as the saying goes. Accordingly, one has the impression at present that a process of dialogue with and of listening to children will only become possible in the city of Bukavu when they have proved that they are a worthwhile discussion partner, in the sense of being materially attractive. This therefore presupposes that despite their age they have had to work to make a concrete contribution to the family's survival. The stress and the tensions characteristic of war make it even more difficult for adults to engage in dialogue with and listen to children, as everything takes second place to the family's instinct for survival.

### CHILD LABOUR: A FORM OF PARTICIPATION?

Is child labour really a means of encouraging participation, or is it not rather a means, generally brought on by the socio-economic crisis, of making the child partially or totally unavailable for his school work, which ought to have taken up his time and energy more intensively (Article 32 of the Convention)? Mr Michel Hansenne, Director-General of the International Labour Organization, is right to state that 'Childhood is a period of life which should be devoted not to working, but to education and training; child labour, by its nature and by the conditions in which it is practised, often compromises children's chances of becoming adults who are productive and useful to society.' And he goes on to say that 'This practice is not fatal, and progress can be made in eradicating it where there is a political will to oppose it with determination.'

There is no disagreement if a combination of training and work, and hence a mixture of theory and practice, is provided for in the context of an apprenticeship programme; however, this situation should be monitored closely to prevent it from turning into plain exploitation of the apprentice on the pretext that he is serving an apprenticeship and therefore has practically no rights to assert. If this combination

of work and study occurs outside the setting of an apprenticeship, and above all without any spirit of self-promotion, it represents a life apprenticeship, and very likely occurs in a survival situation. In such a case as this, the young person is in danger of becoming ever more deeply involved in makeshift means of making ends meet, to the detriment of his or her school or vocational education.

#### WHAT HAS BECOME OF THE STRUCTURES OF PARTICIPATION?

Is the child likely to enjoy freedom of thought if, at the mercy of the constraints of the struggle for survival, he is obliged to leave school early—school which, despite its current deficiencies, is one of the main places for acquiring a critical spirit where there is a melting pot of viewpoints? Will he experience freedom of association if associative traditions are gradually disappearing from village life and if meeting places specifically intended for young people are becoming rarer both in the city and in the countryside? In a city such as Bukavu, where any vacant space has been sold off, it has become very difficult to organize wholesome leisure activities for children and young people. The football pitches and those of other collective games are under threat from anarchic development, and the theatres and cinemas are being transformed into places of worship or accommodation. As a result, the political viewpoint of children and young people is not taken into consideration, for lack of a forum or structure where they can be expressed.

Since 1965, the year in which the dictator Mobutu came to power, adults and young people have virtually stopped reading anything, apart from *Jua*—the only Bukavu newspaper under the Mobutu dictatorship—and the newsletters of some associations. They have difficulty in expressing their opinions, as the means of communication and telecommunications are tightly controlled by successive governments. In these conditions, young people have little chance of learning any political responsibility from adults, or of appreciating the true meaning of the Havu proverb that *speech is like a fruit*: once it has fallen off, the fruit can no longer return to its tree; it is therefore wise to reflect well before opening one's mouth to speak, for, if what one says is not good, it will be impossible to take it back.

If adults and above all young people in our country today are incapable of speaking out in the position they find themselves in, they should however know that in many other countries young people's parliaments are becoming an increasing reality in parallel to national parliaments. Young people design and manage their own press organs and radio and television broadcasts. Most of them are in a permanent dialogue with their parents and their teachers. This freedom of opinion enables them to confront the many scholastic, professional, emotional and spiritual challenges they are faced with during adolescence. In addition, they succeed in handling confidently the inevitable rough patches they experience among themselves and between themselves and adults.

## Should we conclude?

The actual living conditions of the children of South Kivu are far from good, especially if they are considered, as they have been here, in the light of the four main themes of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The seminar held in Bukavu from 27 to 31 July 1998 for members of the future South Kivu Provincial Council on Children (see note 2) pinpointed the following problems whose solutions ought to figure in the province's emergency programme for children: malnutrition, the under-utilization and inadequacy of services for the protection of mothers and children and of desirable births, the inaccessibility of essential medicines and schooling, children in particularly difficult situations and the lack of involvement of children in the taking of decisions affecting them.

Two days after this seminar was held, war broke out again in our country, starting once more from the provinces of North and South Kivu. This new war has swept away with it all the hopes that had been placed in this Provincial Council on Children, which, despite its consultative nature, had been creating the impression that children were returning to the top of the decision-makers' agenda.

Since then, hunger, malnutrition and under-feeding have made themselves at home with us. The activities of the formal and informal economy have diminished dramatically. Communications and telecommunications as well as intra- and international commercial exchanges have been reduced to a symbolic minimum. Programmes for primary healthcare, hygiene and cleanliness, and the prevention of and struggle against epidemics such as cholera, have been brutally interrupted. Primary and secondary school children have not been back to public school since September: by the end of December 1998, they had lost a term of courses and there was a real danger that they would lose an entire school year. Some pupils—less than half of those expected—are attending private schools, but for how long?

Activities in the fields of teaching reading, training and socio-professional re-integration have all been paralysed, especially those intended for children in particularly difficult situations. Young people, including minors, are being sought for military action, so as to help the adults to kill one another. Those who stay at home are traumatized by permanent insecurity: they have once again become witnesses to violent deaths, and come into close contact with corpses whose only tombs are the bellies of vultures or fish; they are once again witnessing incitements to hatred, armed robberies committed in a climate of impunity, and a cult of media dishonesty to which is added the denial of violence on a daily basis.

What kind of respect for the rights of children can one talk about in a war situation, when war is in reality the greatest enemy of children's rights? As long as this climate exists and persists, the population of South Kivu can be regarded as stuck in a black hole, away from everyone's view, and more particularly, away from the view of the international community, which prefers to assume the ostrich position. This population, increasingly aware of being periodically thrown to the wildcats and vultures here at the end of this millennium, with no forum where they can be

heard or welcomed—will this population apply this recommendation of the Bahavu: ‘If you don’t have an aunt, you must take responsibility for yourself.’ ?

When they emerge from these repeated nightmares, from the bottom of their black hole, will the survivors be quick enough to dress the great gaping social, political and economic wounds together, before they turn gangrenous again thanks to the numerous parasites and foreign bodies which are already hanging around, looking for who they can devour in the next conflict? Will they have sufficient energy to quickly restart activities in the areas of primary healthcare and education of their children, who have become more fragile than ever, above all those in particularly difficult situations? Will they be able to get together and design without delay genuine structures for analysing the origins of these chronic conflicts, and to introduce constraining mechanisms to ensure their lasting resolution?

Will they know how to analyse the responsibilities in the current educational system, given the deterioration of our social, political and economic structures and the unleashing of our armed conflicts? Will they succeed in creating a new educational system, oriented towards peace, dialogue and solidarity, and inspired by our various national cultures and by the contribution of other world cultures? Will they give this new educational system the human and financial resources that will be required in order to practise the teaching of self-promotion for the children of South Kivu, within a Congolese society that is increasingly interdependent and intercultural? Will they understand that this teaching of self-promotion aims at introducing vocational training at an early stage in the school career, and that the qualification that emerges from this training must have internalized the idea that it is necessary to create one’s own enterprise and jobs on the basis of the resources that exist within and around one, rather than wait indefinitely for a hypothetical job or a Messiah from elsewhere?

While we wait, let us listen to the fetish song of South Kivu, one which makes a strong demand for peace; for the people, convinced of the nonsensicality of the war which bedevils its tender offspring, cherish hope and continue to sing:

*The child is a marvel  
 When he is with his folk  
 When he is with his father  
 When he is with his mother  
 When he is with his peers  
 When he is with his friend  
 When he is at school  
 When he goes to work  
 When he goes to draw water  
 When he goes to get wood  
 When he laughs in the yard of the house  
 When he plays with his friends  
 When she is with her husband  
 When he is with his wife...*

## Notes

1. The Bahavu, Bashi and Balega who are referred to in this paper are some of the ethnic groups that live in South Kivu. They also comprise most of the population of the city of Bukavu.
2. I was invited by UNICEF and the South Kivu Provincial Department for the Family to help organize a seminar from 27 to 31 July 1998 on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This was in aid of the members of the South Kivu Provincial Council on Children, which was supposed to be set up following that seminar. On Monday, 27 July 1998, I made the opening speech, which inspired the text of this article.
3. *Bwaki* means 'kwashiorkor' in Mashiki, one of the local languages spoken by more than a million Bashi living in mountainous South Kivu. Kwashiorkor is an extreme form of undernourishment due to protein deficiency.
4. See *Évolution de la couverture vaccinale antirougeoleuse des enfants d'un an dans les zones de santé du South Kivu* [Evolution of anti-measles vaccination cover of 1-year-old children in the health districts of South Kivu], Bukavu, Programme élargi de vaccination et de lutte contre les maladies transmissibles de l'enfance/South Kivu, 1998; and *Évolution des cas de décès de rougeole au South Kivu/1997* [Evolution of measles fatalities in South Kivu, 1997], epidemiological monitoring unit of the South Kivu Provincial Inspectorate of Public Health, Bukavu, 1998.
5. In the special issue of its bulletin *Justitia*, Kisangani, 1995, p. 11.
6. M. Ditisheim talks about *parents who are the 'children' of their children* when families have migrated: the children, who manage to master the language of the host society better and faster than their parents, end up acting as their guides in different situations which call for integration into this new society (see Ditisheim, 1995, p. 21).
7. *Remets ton épée au fourreau* [Put your sword back in its sheath] (John 18.11). Message from the Catholic bishops of Kivu to the faithful and to all men of goodwill. Goma, 1 October 1998, paragraph 6.
8. 'The street is perceived by this category of children and young people as "safer" and more "liberating" than their home environments, which are regarded as frustrating and coercive' (Masiala, 1990, p. 38).
9. See the *Information Note* by the International Labour Organization on the abolition of child labour, February 1994.

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# EPILOGUE:

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## EDUCATION AND

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## SELF-RESPECT

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*Uazuvara E. Katjivena*

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### **Different interpretations and applications**

Education in Western societies is the standard-bearer of those societies' 'universal' ideals. But Western education is aimed at more than just individual achievement, since it also serves society's goals. However, personal relationships, societal relationships and international relationships raise their own moral problems and call for different normative standards for the individual, the society and the State. Education cannot be seen as having one universal standard. It is determined by the goals, desires and aspirations of the State or the society that controls it.

Before colonization, African culture and education were inseparable. With the introduction of the formal Western school system, a transformation took place. African culture was interpreted through the cultural filters of the foreigners who found it to be primitive and a hindrance to 'civilization'. Application of the colonizers' instruction was biased and indoctrinating in approach. Even the medium of instruction was in the language of the colonizers.

Is there a fundamental difference between the African and Western interpretation of education? The *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary* tells us that education is 'a system of training and instruction' (especially of children and young people).

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*Original language: English*

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ple in schools and colleges) and its purpose is 'designed to give knowledge and develop skills'. Further, to educate is to 'train the mind and the character'.<sup>1</sup> By contrast, the African term for the purpose of education is 'to sharpen'—this refers to the 'sharpening' of the mind, the soul and the body and the 'honing' of the skills needed to sustain them.

These definitions may not, on the surface, seem so far apart. In practice, however, they lead to important differences between the African and Western interpretations of children's rights in education. Education in the African sense begins at birth, not at the classroom door. The African child is the responsibility of a larger, extended family and clan. The child is not solely the responsibility of a nuclear family, as in the West. In Africa, there exist many assorted, intricately woven and balanced family and clan relationships. These relationships are there to adjust, to stimulate and to kindle the child's character and thereby to build up the child's own unique personality throughout childhood. The role of the family and the clan in the child's upbringing is twofold: to shape an individual child's character and personality; and to prepare the child to assume a role in society.

These ideas are not unknown to Western philosophy. Bertrand Russell, in his book *Education and the social order*, states the following: 'We shall ultimately be better citizens if we are first aware of all our potentialities as individuals before we descend to the compromises and practical acquiescences of the political life.'<sup>2</sup>

In the West, it seems that a child's 'upbringing', which begins at birth, is the nuclear family's responsibility, while the State is responsible for educating each child as a citizen. Interestingly, Bertrand Russell also observes that 'Citizens, as conceived by governments, are persons who admire the status quo and are prepared to exert themselves for its preservation.'<sup>3</sup> In other words, States want to raise good citizens, but it is left to the parents to raise 'human beings'.

From a global perspective, children's rights to an education cannot exist in a vacuum. Nor can the entire weight of the upbringing of children be left to State institutions. The betterment of the individual, the benefits to society and the co-operation of that society in the international sphere are all legitimate goals for education. However, the way they are to be implemented varies from country to country. It is the overall cultural and political stance of each country that often dictates the direction of its educational policy.

In Africa, the first goal of education is not to serve society, but to develop the individual child's own abilities, moral code and personality. In many of the 'developing' countries, we think of this as building 'self-respect' and 'personal dignity'. In these countries, the individual child is guided into an awareness of both the good and bad sides to be found in each of us. It is believed that knowing this will give the person the possibility to find a workable balance between the two. This is what we call a 'balanced child'.

This is independent of material possibilities and other societal values. This personal balance in each individual gives one the ability to meet the values of the larger society, the State and the world at large with which one has to co-operate, but with a sense of critical judgement. This critical judgement is inculcated into the indi-

vidual child through a complex structure within the family system. Designated 'supporters' and 'detractors' make the child aware of both the good and bad aspects of the individual's character in order to increase self-awareness towards finding the desired balance. This complex structure of 'supporters' and 'detractors' extends outward from the family into the clan system as well. Each clan has a specified role in supporting or correcting the behaviour of the other clans.

This example exemplifies the intricacy of an African social system. However, one should be aware of the many diversities that exist within a single African country and within the continent as a whole.

There were education systems in the traditional African societies, not recognized as such in Western eyes. At the same time, African traditionalists disdain the Western education system as devaluing their own culture and thereby distancing young Africans from their traditional cultural life. There is an African expression that says 'Live in the present with the knowledge of your past because your future is the seed, which grows out of the past and the present.'

When superimposing a Western style government on these traditional African diversities, one meets with a major difficulty. No single system has, so far, embraced the ethnic complexities found within each country. The pressure from above to create a 'national State' leads to the suppression of the ethnic differences. Young Africans are forced to abandon their traditional identities. This means that, in the not too distant future, these traditional cultures and their values will be forgotten and, ultimately, die out. Can we, in the name of modern education, deprive children of the cultural heritage to which they are entitled?

## Possibilities and conditions

The moral code of society or the State demands that an individual conform to its standards. This pressure leaves the individual with few choices in life. An individual moral code may sometimes come into conflict with itself when society decides that new norms (such as Western norms) must take precedent over older, indigenous values. One is taught that killing is wrong—but the State executes criminals; enemies kill each other during a war and people kill one another in self-defence. There is a paradox—killing is accepted as morally defensible in certain circumstances. Here, the individual's ethical dilemma is obvious.

Similar ethical dilemmas arise from contact between moral codes within various cultures in any given country, as well as on an international scale. Modern Western education expects, for example, equality of the sexes and physical exercise for all. The Moslem parent might find this unacceptable. Does the Moslem parent abandon his/her cultural and religious principles in this case or does the modern Westernized education system adapt itself? This is an example of the kind of problem that can arise from this collision of moral, ethical and cultural codes.

When talking about a child's right to education we cannot neglect the traditional aspect. Instead, let us expand the borders of the 'modern Western education' to include those aspects that have been overlooked and ignored in the past.

Arguably, reforms are planned and executed democratically by a society or a government with the intention of satisfying a specified need, correcting a defective system or replacing that system with a 'better' one. In the African situation, education systems were imposed on each country by the European colonizers, or copied from the Western systems by 'modern' African governments. Nevertheless, it is imperative for us to be aware that any education system, old or new, can bring both positive and negative effects to the problem of educating the population. This awareness should be both local and global in scope.

The new world order today demands the acceptance of the principle of the oneness of humankind. At the same time, one must recognize that cultural diversity exists and is being recognized more widely. National borders today do not normally contain a single culture. This variety of cultures demands to be taken into consideration when devising an educational curriculum. This curriculum must be balanced—a blend of traditional values with the modern. Each culture has something to offer that can be combined into a balanced whole. We cannot allow the weight of the present Western dominance in the world to deny children the opportunity to explore the rich cultural diversity that is their natural heritage.

## Children's rights

Children's rights in education cannot be fully realized in a world full of conflicts, hostility and negligence. Poverty, war, displacement, urbanization, the breakdown of the family structure—all of these rob children of the education that is their proclaimed right. Global statistics show food production is sufficient to feed the entire world population, but still children starve every day. Poverty forces young children to abandon the quest for an education and to start work in order to feed their unemployed parents. Wars make soldiers and refugees out of children and deny them even the possibility of an education. Internal ethnic and religious conflicts lead to the displacement of children within their own countries. Urbanization forces children to live in ghettos under appalling sanitary conditions. Divorces and the breakdown of the family structure deny children the stability conducive to learning. The cultural dominance of one power bloc over others robs some children of their cultural heritage.

These are situations where adults are unable to provide children with their right to education. Before we can decide what constitutes a 'good education' we have to deal with the complexities of providing children with the opportunity to receive some kind of education—any kind of education. Then we are obliged to define what educational programme will inculcate children with the ideal of the unity of humankind.

Before the introduction of formal education systems, there were a number of the well-known achievers. Nonetheless, we praise individual achievements without realizing that it is not necessarily the education received in school that is responsible for those achievements. But achievers do not need to feel superior to obtain eminent positions.

Basically, every individual who is balanced and who is gifted with special abilities is a potential achiever, irrespective of whether he or she has received formal schooling or not. Many societies depend on the balance between non-formal and formal education to achieve a fully fledged individual.

Any system that makes children into victims, whatever its assumed self-esteem or its powerbase may be, cannot in any way claim to be just. Children achieve best in an atmosphere of harmony. A victimized child learns nothing but aggression. Such victims live in a vicious circle from which there appears to be no release. This circle is born out of the victim's need for grandeur based on an inferiority complex. A person who feels inferior hungers for superiority, so that the former victim becomes a victimizer. And the tragic circle repeats itself time and time again.

A harmonious individual, who has achieved a balanced personality, has no need to be seen as greater or lesser than he or she actually is.

- A healthy balance in a child starts with learning self-respect.
- A child with self-respect is confident in him/herself.
- A child with self-confidence trusts and respects others.
- Trust and respect for others are the source of love.
- The child who enjoys love is responsible.
- A responsible child is reliable.

The child who possesses all these attributes is balanced—and as such is a harmonious person.

A healthy upbringing starts with learning self-respect, the foundation of a stable personality. A stable personality breeds self-confidence, which embodies trust and respect for others. Trust and respect for others are the source of love. Love is responsibility and reliability.

A child possessing all of these attributes is a balanced and harmonious person who has no need to be greater or lesser than he/she is. A short Norwegian verse by Inger Hagerup, *Mauren* [the ant], expresses the concept:

*Little?  
Me?  
Far from it!  
I am perfectly big enough.  
Fill myself completely  
Lengthways and across.  
From top to bottom.  
Are you bigger than yourself  
Perhaps?  
[A free translation by the author]*

## Notes

1. *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary of current English*, 4th ed., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989.
2. Bertrand Russell, *Education and the social order*, London, Unwin, 1932.
3. *Ibid.*

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## TRENDS/CASES

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# VILLAGE INSTITUTES

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## IN TURKEY

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*Ali Arayici*

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Our country belongs to the peasants, who are the backbone of our society. Hitherto they have been denied the benefits of education. The purpose of the education policy we shall pursue is the elimination of today's prevailing ignorance (Atatürk, 1945).

Thus highlighted, the position adopted by Kemal was to promote the extension of education to all sectors of the population. In proclaiming the Turkish Republic on 29 October 1923, the Kemal Government sought a new national and cultural identity for the country. It therefore introduced a far-reaching reform campaign to deal with a major problem—that of making the population literate. The 1924 Constitution of the Republic specified the development of national education as one of the main tasks of the government. The aim was a new governmental approach to bring about the restoration of State institutions and the adoption of a new legal and social order in all fields, including: abolition of the caliphate; abolition of religious schools; a unified secular education system; dissolution of a number of religious orders standing in the way of the socio-cultural and economic development of the country; disestablishment of Islam as the official religion; prohibition of polygamy; emergence of the concept of the individual citizen and the cause of women's emancipation (women were granted the right to vote in 1934); adoption of the Latin alphabet, the Gregorian calendar and the decimal metric system; nationalization of major foreign

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*Original language: French*

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monopolies (salt, tobacco, alcohol, the railways, textiles, mines, etc.); agrarian reform (albeit very limited) and reforms in trade and industry. All these changes were designed to promote the country's development. The government assigned to education the twin aims of helping to create a modern secular State and furthering the emergence of community awareness among its new citizens.

The Kemalist education policy was set out in 1927 in an address by the Minister of National Education, Mustafa Necati, who described the programme's aims as follows:

All citizens must be entitled to a national democratic, modern and secular education. The word 'national' means that education's main purpose is to form young people in the light of the ideals and organization of Turkish society today, so as to empower them to participate to the full in Turkish society. The word 'modern' implies that education should henceforth be based on current scientific principles, so as to give the individual the maximum possible responsibility in the field of action. 'Secular' education should be understood to imply that education should be free from all kinds of religious influence and superstition. The word 'democratic' means that all citizens, men and women alike, rich and poor, irrespective of their social status, must be given the opportunity to study and have access to all positions commensurate with their abilities (Deny & Marchand, 1933).

## **The importance of rural education**

The literacy campaign conducted from 1928 onwards played a very important part in the creation of a secular State. The new republic sought to achieve the level of contemporary Western civilization by taking the latter as a model. In 1927, when the total population stood at around 13.5 million, over 89% could neither read nor write. In villages, the proportion of illiterates was 94%. Nearly 30,000 of Turkey's 35,000 villages had no school. Rural populations were socially, culturally and economically much more backward than those in towns.

The main difficulties encountered in primary schooling were due to the very widely scattered nature of the rural population, the scarcity of teachers and the almost total lack of facilities (Arayıcı, 1987). All the responsible authorities were unanimous in their opinion that what was required was an education system structured to match national economic and social realities. One of the questions that arose was whether to adopt the same curriculum for town and country schools. Most villages, especially those with fewer than 400 inhabitants, were unable to afford a 'town' type of school. If village education was not to be an inordinate burden on the national budget, it must necessarily aim at customized formulae (Dumont, 1978). But where were the necessary resources to be found to build schools, pay teachers and set up teacher-training centres? Obviously, the aim was not only to make the rural population literate; the peasants must also be guided on the road to economic, social and cultural progress. Programme content thus came up for discussion, and an important line of thought began to emerge in 1923 that produced theoretical answers to these questions.



## Mobilizing for adult education

The old Arabic characters, which did not reflect the specific features of the Turkish language, slowed down the process of achieving literacy. Disheartened pupils completed the four-year compulsory course of primary education without being able to read or write.

A census carried out in 1927 showed that less than 9% of the population was proficient in the use of Arabic characters. The Latin alphabet was adopted in 1928, the same year as an adult literacy campaign was launched. The reader should bear in mind the defects of the old system, in which the Ottomans spoke only Ottoman and the people spoke Turkish. The change from Arabic script to the Latin alphabet was one of Turkey's most fruitful experiments of the time, leading to the undeniable success of the literacy policy. The other decisive reform was the abolition of religious schools and the unification of all education.

Originally, the need for a literacy campaign became urgent for two reasons. The aim was to rescue an entire population from the thrall of illiteracy, and the Kemal Government doubted whether it was possible to educate children without at the same time providing adult education. Obviously, if children were to be brought up on Kemalist principles, their education would have to be provided by adults. Equally evident, adult education must be the starting point for the literacy campaign. Similarly, the Kemalist party considered that it should inculcate its ideology in the peasants by means of political education. The new government needed to bring up a generation of young people inspired by its own ideas. To that end, the Kemalists sought to achieve widespread mobilization for literacy teaching for the rural masses, with assistance from the Turkish centres (Türk Ocaklari, 1913–1931), national schools (Ulus Okullari, 1928), people's classes in the countryside (Halk Odalari, 1932), people's centres in towns (Halk Evleri, 1932) and education in the army.

## Thinking about rural education

One of the first steps towards mass literacy was the recourse to world-famous educationists. But members of foreign committees, educators and teaching specialists had difficulty in ridding themselves of their first superficial impression of an unfamiliar and unknown country, and the theories they evolved were totally unrelated to Turkey's real problems. Dewey (1939) proposed a complete overhaul of the Turkish system on the lines of the Western model in all sectors of education, from head teachers to administrative offices. Subsequent experts (Kühne, Kerschensteiner, Buyse, the Kemerrer mission) (Başgöz & Wilson, 1968) all sang the praises of technical education at all levels of the curriculum, and disparaged book learning.

The 1930s saw a profusion of articles dealing with the problem of education. Ideals flourished chiefly in journals published by the people's centres, glorifying the advantages of inter-village schools, putting forward plans for school buildings, quoting as examples the education systems of Romania, Sweden, Denmark, Japan, Mexico,

Germany, Bulgaria, etc. and discussing syllabuses and timetables. Sometimes there was an original suggestion:

İsmail Hakkî Baltacıoğlu (former Vice-Chancellor of Istanbul University) set out his educational thinking in 1933 in *Sosyal Okul* [The social school]. Convinced that schools should be associated with the economic and social activities of their social environment, he stressed the importance of teaching production techniques and urged direct involvement by schools in economic life. He considered that it should be possible to use or sell the goods produced by school activities (Dumont, 1978).

Baltacıoğlu made the real-life situation central to his education system. The village school should take part in the economic life of the rural community and act as a pilot enterprise. The primary schoolteacher should be a real member of the community, own a house and land in the village and earn part of his livelihood from agriculture and stock-rearing. Hifzîrahman Rasit Oymen, İsmail Hakkî Tonguç and Nusret Kemel, who shared this view, noted that similar systems operated for example in Bulgaria and Romania (Öymen, 1939; Tanel, 1936; Dumont, 1978). As the majority of the Turkish population was rural, a solution was sought in the creation of agricultural schools that would develop the country's agriculture. In the period before 1931, several agricultural schools were set up but subsequently closed for various reasons. It was only towards the end of the 1930s that, thanks to Tonguç, large-scale mobilization for education began.

## **Tonguç and his educational approach**

Not until 1935 did Tonguç, a young teacher who was appointed director-general of primary education, succeed through his enthusiasm and energy in bringing about a genuine educational revolution:

The Turkish village [...] needs heroes. It needs a host of heroic technicians to drain marshes, treat malaria and trachoma, build a school, dress injuries, act as midwives, teach peasants to drive and repair carts, select seeds and sow them, plant shrubs [...]. Villages need heroes, and these heroes must come from villages (Tonguç, 1938).

Under his leadership, villagers began to build schools, and young people went in for teaching. Between August 1935 and September 1946, Tonguç became the most masterly and influential thinker for the new teaching generation. His ideas concurred with those of Kerschensteiner and Pestalozzi. At the practical level, however, he seems to have been guided to a greater extent by experiments in Bulgaria and Romania. For example, in his view, the Bulgarian system of giving the school a leading role in organizing the village economy provided a model much more in keeping with the realities of a Turkish village.

Like socialist educationists, Tonguç stressed the educational value of agricultural and technical work. Yet, while involving children in these adult activities, he also aimed at freeing their creativity by encouraging an interest in the visual arts

and games, on the lines of Pestalozzi and Montessori. In 1935, the most pressing need was to train teachers and gradually to eliminate illiteracy in Anatolia. Aware not only of the huge need for rural primary teachers but also of the impossibility, given the economic situation, of recruiting them in large numbers, he realized that he must seek a solution adapted to the harsh realities of the time.

### **The 'design' for an educator (*Eğitmen Projesi*)**

From the outset, Tonguç saw village institutes as the answer to the problem raised by primary education in villages. With less than forty school-age children in each village, it was impossible to provide each village with a school and a teacher. His 'design' for education was to send educators to villages that did not have enough pupils to justify a teacher. Their task would be both to instruct the children and to give technical advice to the rural community on how to perform their agricultural work. These educators were villagers, chosen by their fellow village inhabitants, and given at least the rank of corporal. Once they had been trained, they went back to their villages and held their classes in schools or farms that had facilities for performing practical agricultural tasks. Two teacher-training sessions were sufficient to prove the worth of this method, even if the method itself could not serve as a basis for a national education policy. It was then decided to create village institutes; the first of them, later known as *Ciftéler*, was set up in 1937.

### **The village institutes, 1940–52**

#### **ESTABLISHMENT**

These institutes were established by the Ministry of National Education on 17 April 1940 with a view to training young villagers to teach children and adults in their own villages. To that end, village institutes were set up in various regions of Turkey (*Köy Enstitüleri*). Concurrently, trainees studied agronomy so as to help the peasants modernize their agriculture. What was involved was a 'conception of education based on production'. As village institutes had aims other than literacy alone, their creation, activities and methods were an innovation on the world educational scene.

Simultaneously with their creation, Law No. 3803 was passed, whose first clause stipulated that 'village institutes shall be opened by the Ministry of National Education in locations where suitable land is available for cultivation, in order to train teachers for the villages and other qualified persons as necessary'. The second clause prescribed entrance requirements as follows:

Applicants for selection to these institutes shall be industrious students in good health who have successfully completed primary schooling in their village school. The duration of the institute course shall be at least five years. Trainees deemed unfit to become teachers shall be directed towards different types of vocational training courses whose duration shall be determined by the Ministry of National Education (Dolay, 1978).

Students admitted to the village institute were required to be at least 16 years of age. The course lasted five years, after which the student became a teacher.

In the cultural and political development of Turkey, village institutes played a leading role. Their founders even harboured the ambition of giving the institutes a long-term economic role by developing a co-operative spirit in villages—incidentally a source of disquiet to large landowners. The institutes trained a whole generation of peasant intellectuals who became rural teachers and frequently teacher-writers. To them Turkey owes the flowering of ‘peasant novels’ that awakened the Turkish intelligentsia to the urgent problems of the countryside. They were also the prime movers in organizing teachers’ unions in Turkey (*Türkiye Öğretmenler Sendikası—TÖS*) from 1960 onwards (Arayıcı, 1987).

#### LOCATION

Given the experiment’s encouraging results, it was decided in 1940 to establish fourteen new institutes, on the same lines as the *Ciftéler* and *Kızılçullu* experiments in the province of Izmir. Tonguç received all the necessary legal backing for organizing the institute movement, in particular co-operation from the Minister of Education, Mr. Yücel, and support from the President of the Republic, Mr. İnönü. The village institutes were strategically sited with the aim of ensuring that future teachers continued to be motivated and aware of the village’s real needs. Since the aim was to bring about change in the village and everyday life, the method to be followed had to be directly applicable to the rural community. Experience showed that primary teachers trained in towns tended to lose touch with the realities of the countryside (Arayıcı, 1987).

Each institute was granted approximately 350 hectares of land suitable for production. The teaching staff, their families and the students lived in a community formed of a residential block, groups for production and agricultural innovation, and educational premises. The teachers formed a self-managed economic unit, financed from the sale of their products and by co-operatives (Gökalp, 1985). Situated at the centre of a vast agricultural area, each institute was designed as an independent economic cell in which teachers and students were economically self-supporting. They were required to build for themselves (classrooms, dormitories and workshops), cultivate the land, bake bread, tend cattle, repair agricultural machinery, plant trees, dig canals, make roads, etc. In 1941, when most government grants had been withdrawn, institutes were required to become self-supporting. On 19 June 1942, in the light of the experience acquired, Law No. 4274 was passed, entitled ‘Law on the organization of village institutes and schools’, which put an end to the so-called experimental period. From then on, the official village establishments providing free compulsory education were as follows: the village schools staffed by educators, those staffed by primary teachers, those staffed by both primary teachers and educators, regional village schools that were either boarding or non-boarding (where the location and arable land available were suitable, such schools were sited preferably in local centres), and the village and regional establishments providing evening classes or vocational courses.

## THE TEACHING

In contrast to the principle formulated by Dewey after the Second World War for the 'open education' system, Turkish studies were geared more to production than to work linked merely to practical training. The duration of the institute course was five years. In 1942, a law set out the programme, oriented on three main lines: cultural disciplines (the Turkish language, history and geography, mathematics, foreign languages, physics, chemistry, composition, teaching methods, civics, military sciences, etc.); practical and theoretical instruction in economics and agricultural techniques (an introduction to co-operation, gardening, technical crops, zoology, animal husbandry, bee-keeping, silkworm breeding, fishing, handicrafts, etc.); and leisure activities (reading, debates, plays and folklore performances) (Dolay, 1978).

Being responsible for the education of the entire rural population and also for narrowing the huge gap between town and country, village institutes could not confine themselves merely to literacy education. They therefore set out to 'train the peasants in their villages. Such education would provide a certain level of general culture while also introducing children to the problems of an agricultural economy and rudimentary industrial methods' (Timur, 1971). From this basis a new type of educator emerged: the primary teacher who was also a peasant and agricultural producer, not a 'State' official distrusted by the villagers. Relations between teaching establishments and peasants were thus made easier, as was also the teacher's adaptation to the pupils.

On graduating from the institutes, teachers undertook twenty years of compulsory service. They received a starting premium to cover their installation costs, and afterwards a 'symbolic' salary paid every three months. They were provided with village accommodation, a plot of land, livestock and seeds, regarded as common village property in the same way as the school. They were expected to run the workshops, cultivate the kitchen gardens and tree nurseries, and see to it that use of the school cowsheds was available to all the villagers, to whom they were expected to teach new production techniques. They were also responsible for counselling villagers on the marketing of their produce through exhibitions or fairs, and for helping them to solve their administrative problems. In addition, they were required to organize conferences, reading sessions and all activities designed to promote the village culture and people's crafts.

## THE VILLAGE HIGHER INSTITUTE

The village higher institute (*Yüksek Köy Enstitüsü*), located at Hasanoglan, provided pre- and in-service training for village institute teachers, divisional inspectors and mobile directors. It was also a research centre on 'village school developments in the light of changing needs, in particular the needs of villages'. Briefly, its role was to be 'the brain and the heart' of the institute system (Tonguç, 1970). Village institute management was largely the responsibility of the village higher institute, with assistance from the primary education directorate. Higher institute students

were selected by their own teachers from among those of village institutes, and they then sat a competitive examination. The duration of the course was three years, and students could choose from among the following disciplines: fine arts, building, metallurgy, veterinary care, animal husbandry, agriculture, rural and manual crafts, and the economics of agricultural firms. Each area of study contained compulsory components relating to general education and the vocational field. It is a fact that from 1943 to 1946 the village higher institute genuinely provided specialized courses rivalling those of other establishments offering the same disciplines. Coming under criticism, since it was seen as seriously competing with traditional higher establishments, the village higher institute was abolished in 1946 just when it was reaching its objectives and beginning to make good the shortcomings of village institutes.

#### DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE HIGHER INSTITUTE

It is worth noting that, for the first time in Turkish education, student participation was effective and took place within the management committee of the higher institute, whose members were elected by a secret ballot. The committee members also selected by secret ballot a chair and a rapporteur from among themselves. The committee took all basic decisions concerning activities and operation, and was also responsible for overseeing and inspecting the institute's affairs. Engin Tonguç, the son of the village institutes' founder, summarized the committee's functions as follows:

Regulating the educational affairs and classes of the village higher institute; supervising those of the other institutes and communicating its findings to the institutes concerned through the intermediary of the Ministry; circulating to the other institutes studies and methods which the committee deemed to be original and positive; correcting mistakes in educational methods; encouraging all institutes to adopt similar methods for all activities of educational value (such as weekend conferences, reading, etc.); attending to the village schools' plans for practical application; arranging for institute graduates to benefit from the satisfactory results obtained in the institutes' application schools; organizing courses and exhibitions; procuring books and periodicals for the vocational training of primary schoolteachers; preparing and presenting to the Ministry new management projects for village institutes and schools; and publicizing the results in a variety of ways (Tonguç, 1970).

The committee consisted of the following members:

- two teachers from the village higher institute, chosen for six months by the teachers of the institute;
- two institute teachers chosen for six months by the teachers of two selected institutes;
- two institute directors and two education officials chosen for three months from institutes by the Ministry of National Education;
- three students from the village higher institute chosen by their fellow students for a six-month period;

- one fourth- or fifth-year institute pupil, chosen for three months by the pupils of a different institute for each period;
- a representative of the Ministry of National Education; and
- a counsellor and an inspector, chosen for a six-month period from different institutes for each period.

## Closure of the village institutes

After the war, there was a rapid succession of changes in the Turkish education system. Turkey opened up to a pluralist democracy. The progressive, secular and democratic orientation adopted by village institutes soon provoked growing hostility from conservative and religious circles, which continued to be powerful in the countryside. The coming to power of the Democratic Party in 1950 and the transition to multiparty democracy were conducive to the rise of a capitalist class. Avcioglu notes that:

Slogans in support of freedom and human rights actually mask an ideology based on the interest of this class [...]. One of the first new slogans of the 1946 libertarians was 'no freedom for the enemies of freedom'. This was used successfully to put down all revolutionaries, from the most extreme to the most moderate, to outlaw the left and to destroy movements such as agrarian reform and village institutes by showing that they were emanations of communism (Avcioglu, 1960).

Gradually drained of what was their specific substance by a series of restrictive measures, the institutes ceased to exist in practice from 1947 onwards. In 1954, the Democratic (i.e. Conservative) Party decided to abolish any kind of special training for rural schoolteachers. The single primary teacher-training college thereafter replaced the two former types of institutions. This was the end of the village institute experiment, and the return to the traditional primary education system. We can state without hesitation that the questions the institutes had tried to answer persisted. Religious instruction, virtually abolished in schools during the Kemalist period, reappeared after 1950—in fact in response to parents' demands. Since the characters of the Koran (*Kuran*) remained Arabic, children were faced with two different kinds of script.

## The institutes' socio-economic and cultural role

When the village institutes were opened in 1940, the enrolment rate was 35%. This rose to 55% in 1950. As regards literacy, there was significant progress in the years between 1935, when the average literacy rate was 19.2% (39.3% men, 9.8% women), 1945 when it reached 29.9% (41.9% men, 16.1% women) and 1950, when it totalled 32.4% (44.8% men, 19.4% women). It was obvious that, thanks to the village institutes, school enrolment and literacy were taking off.

At the end of the 1946 academic year, the number of primary teachers trained by institutes was 5,442. İsmail Hakkı Tonguç (1938) comments that: 'The total

number of teachers and instructors produced by the institutes is 14,298. To think that 108 years of efforts have resulted in training no more than 6,786 teachers for village schools! In addition, for 1938 there are now 17,000 students attending institutes'. Despite the slowdown in the institute movement triggered in 1946 as a consequence of political changes, the number of teachers and instructors graduating from institutes rose still further to 30,987 in 1952 (Tekben, 1974). According to a ten-year plan drawn up in 1945, the minimum requirement for teachers for all villages in Turkey would have been met in 1955, at which date it would have been possible to begin training a large number of qualified technicians to meet the villages' needs (*Tonguç 'a Kitap*, 1961).

Frequently the greatest problem, in industrialized and other countries alike, is how to finance teaching programmes. This is a relatively unprofitable area where results make themselves felt only in the very long term. Particularly in developing countries, extensive provision has to be made in national budgets both to create a whole educational infrastructure and to train the personnel who will teach the population, the great majority of whom are illiterate. With the institutes, these costs were reduced to a minimum by means of the principle of education through work. Most of the working tools and instruments used were produced in the institutes' own workshops, and all the State had to do was provide the necessary raw materials to start activities. Once the institutes began to function, they developed their own resources so as to achieve, and even go beyond, the stage of self-sufficiency. Tekben, an institute director, explains that:

We ourselves produced foodstuffs such as bread, milk, yoghurt, wine, vegetables, fruit, flour, maize and animal feed. We had a flock of 500 sheep, and also cows, poultry, vineyards and a plantation of more than 100,000 poplar trees. We procured very little food from the outside [...]. The calculation was a simple one. We had more than 10,000 apricot trees which, when grown, each produce 70 to 80 kilos of apricots. Though our trees were only five or six years old, we already had a harvest of 10,000 kilos of fruit. At a later stage, this rose to 100,000 kilos, representing 500,000 Turkish pounds. Yet even half this sum was adequate for our subsistence, our annual grant being less than 290,000 Turkish pounds. Building costs, our salaries and all expenditures were covered by this sum (Tekben, 1974).

The institutes' chief economic interest was not only their self-sufficiency: their production also made a direct contribution to the national economy. The institutes operated as production firms, with their production not confined solely to their own needs. They also provided surrounding villages with foodstuffs, agricultural produce, tools, etc. at prices that peasants could afford. Some economists and historians actually argue that the primary purpose of creating the institutes was economic, with a view to boosting production (Timur, 1971). Whatever the real reasons for their creation, their economic contribution developed particularly during the war years, when the country suffered severe deprivation.

This is, however, a controversial issue. For example, Kirby (an American expert on Turkish education) expresses personal reservations and considers that:



During the six-year period for which the institutes' economic objectives were clearly defined, it was not possible for them to achieve a level of economic independence [...]. Firstly, they did not have sufficient capital. Secondly, they had been created at a time of shortage of equipment and economic resources, in an inflationary economy in which only racketeers and illegal profiteers flourished. It was also a time when agricultural farms had difficulty in feeding the peasants and there were even in some cases severe food shortages, which had hitherto been unknown. The institutes' managers, as they admitted themselves, had no experience whatsoever of economic management. However, perhaps most important of all was the fact that the institutes were forced to operate in an economic, administrative and legal system that was totally incompatible with their aims and needs. They were in no position to try to avoid the obstacles of the system, as could be done by heads of private or public firms that were economically autonomous. In fact, it is surprising to see how, given these conditions, the institutes were able to influence their regions during this ten-year period. A still more important point is that their influence increased from the end of the war to the end of 1946 (Kirby, 1962).

Let us now consider the progress achieved in the literary field. In 1947, *Letters from my village*, by M. Makal, was published. This new realism had the effect of a bomb-shell. Other authors followed, including Baykurt, Basaran, Kaftancıoglu, Apaydin, Akçam, Kudar and Burkay. Towns began to take an interest in villages. For the first time, thanks to the primary schoolteachers, the village voice was heard in the corridors of power, in intellectual meeting rooms and in publications forming public opinion; it even reached to the national frontiers, despite prohibition and persecutions. From 1960 onwards, the teachers trained in the institutes began to work increasingly actively within the Turkish National Federation of Teachers' Unions. Even today, these teacher-writers are active in several fields (culture, education, trade unionism, politics, etc.).

## **Influence on education and teacher-training systems throughout the world**

Teacher-training experiments similar to that of the creation of village institutes in Turkey developed in different countries of the world (Spain, Cuba, Nicaragua, Mexico, Chile, the former USSR, Iran, India, Pakistan, Brazil, Indonesia, etc.) (Arayici, 1992). The abolition of religious teaching in schools was a unique event among Muslim countries. It should be noted that this was possible only in Turkey—and then only during the Kemalist period. Praise was lavished above all on the contributions by village institutes to Turkey's economic development, and even today there is an all too frequent tendency to overlook their participation in cultural development, including in particular their active contribution to training a generation of teacher-writers.

Turkey's village institute experiment also changed the theoretical thinking of the most influential education specialists, including American experts on Turkish education such as Dewey and Wofford. Appraising the innovative nature of village institutes, Dewey wrote: 'For years I have been working out an education system in my head, and now that very system has been set up in Turkey. Thanks to village

institutes, Turkey is going to eliminate illiteracy and develop socio-economically and culturally'. Wofford's opinion was that 'Turkey is more advanced than the United States of America in the field of education and teaching, thanks to its village institutes and people's centres. These two types of establishment are unique in the world'. These opinions agreed with those of the American education specialist Watson Dickerman, who, invited in the 1950s by the Democratic Party to suggest a solution to the problem of adult education in Turkey, noted that 'The village institutes represent an education system that is unique in the world. Thanks to these institutes, the Turkish education system is set to develop increasingly' (Dickerman, 1956).

Many countries at a similar stage of socio-economic and cultural development followed Turkey's example when setting up their practical experiments in the field of education. Examples include the 'educator' experiment conducted in Nicaragua during the Sandinista Government, Cuba's action of locating schools near sugar factories, or the example of Turkey's neighbours (Iran, Bulgaria, Romania, the former USSR, Sudan, etc.) (Arayici, 1995).

We remain convinced that there is still a need for real scientific research in this field. However, the work done at Columbia University by Kirby is interesting, particularly when he presents his findings as follows:

Another important conclusion arising from our study emerged from a comparison of the Turkish village institutes with the educational experiments of other countries that are also seeking more modern solutions. From our own personal observations in India, Pakistan and Indonesia, and our studies of experiments conducted in countries such as Mexico, Brazil, Sudan and Egypt, we see that these countries are not attempting to solve the problem by setting up village institutes (Kirby, 1962).

## Conclusion

During the brief period of their existence, the greatest success of the village institutes, and also the main reason for closing them down, was that they trained a new type of intellectual by promoting awareness among primary schoolteachers who were of peasant origin but did not on that account aspire to be upwardly mobile. This achievement endures, and is both firmly based and indestructible. Engin Tonguç notes that 'When the process of destroying [the institutes] began, there was only one thing that remained intact: the fact that the teachers had become class conscious! [...] These intellectuals were to play a very important part in developments and discussions in Turkey in the years which followed' (Tonguç, 1970).

Karatekin notes that 'Between 1940 and 1946 Turkey devoted itself to mobilizing for primary education in a way that had never been done before ... The State and the people worked together to create the workshops and schools required for this new type of village teacher' (Karatekin, 1965).

The 1948 report to UNESCO by the Turkish Government on its education programme comments on primary education:

It is above all the effort made by Turkey in the field of basic education to which particular attention should be drawn. The action taken and arrangements made by the State from 1937 onwards were to give fresh impetus to education for the people and to spread culture. The creation in different regions of Turkey of 'rural institutes' represents a decisive step in basic education and, in its originality, was the crowning achievement of the efforts to that end (UNESCO, 1948).

The village institute experiment has several positive aspects, not only from the educational point of view but also as regards the construction of a society in which the changes and innovations required for progress in socio-economic and cultural structures were to take place. Surely one should deduce from these results that education can one day be called upon to play a progressive part in transforming a society in which the prevailing relations of production are of a semi-feudal or capitalist nature. If this were not the case, how could one explain the development and importance of the institute experiment? It is not enough to say that the experiment was doomed to fail from the outset and was therefore pointless, since people had direct, hands-on experience of the institutes. It seems that the reply to these questions should pinpoint the place of education in society in relation to other social institutions (Dolay, 1978; Arayici, 1987).

According to Marxist thinking, education depends on the infrastructure and is defined by it, in the same way as all social institutions that form part of the superstructure. The institute system as a whole was aimed not only at educating a limited part of a population but also at the popularization, secularization and democratization of education in the truest senses of these words. If all these objectives had been reached, awareness would today be an established fact, not only among teachers, democratically oriented organizations, professional associations or workers' unions, but also among a majority of the people at large who do not belong to these democratic organizations. The type of education introduced by the institute system would not be synonymous with a brief educational experiment in the history of Turkey, but would have become the system of universal education specific to the country as a whole, since it was demanded by the people. While it is probably the case that the village institute experiment was only a passing phenomenon, it nevertheless left deep marks on Turkish society. It remains rich in conclusions for all educational specialists and theoreticians confronted with similar problems, whether they concern the stated aims, the results achieved or the difficulties and forms of opposition encountered.

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# EVALUATING

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## UNIVERSITY EDUCATION:

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### GRADUATES GIVE THEIR VIEWS<sup>1</sup>

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*Farid Boubekeur*

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#### **Introduction<sup>2</sup>**

This article presents some of the findings of a study conducted under the research programme on the policies and management of higher education in Africa.

It contains the views of graduates of the University of Constantine on curriculum content and the evaluation system in force between 1980 and 1995. It forms part of an analysis which helps to throw light on the gaps in the training provided. This is an evaluation of the education process by the graduates of the university itself, i.e. the product passes judgement on the way it has been produced.

#### **Research characteristics**

##### PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Graduates are usually excluded from the educational research field, since they are no longer part of the educational environment. The volume of research concerning them is limited, and the few examples which exist deal with their finding employment. This study allows them to speak out, because we consider that they have

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worthwhile comments to make on the way they have been trained by the university. An evaluation of university education based on the professional experience of graduates provides relevant feedback on the quality of that education.

The subject of this investigation is the evaluation of the University of Constantine by students graduating between 1980 and 1995. The evaluation is geared to the reality of the graduates' professional activities and is therefore a retrospective one, conducted several years after they have completed their university course. This helps to elicit value judgements produced at a distance from any immediate influence of the educational factors involved.

Our study touches on various aspects of the training process: objectives, content, teaching methods, evaluation, course organization, teachers and resources. We present and analyse course content and the evaluation system used. The aim of studying course content is to gauge how far the theoretical and practical knowledge taught is adequate, satisfactory and beneficial. A second, related objective is to identify and evaluate the skills developed by the training course.

As regards the evaluation system, the analysis aims at verifying whether it serves as an educational regulator, whether the content of examinations covers different fields of knowledge, whether marking is objective and whether the system is appropriate.

#### SAMPLE

We worked on a sample comprising graduates from three institutes of human sciences and literature and three institutes of science and technology.

- The three former were the Institute of Psychology and Educational Sciences, the Institute of Economic Sciences and the Foreign Languages Institute.
- The three latter were the Institute of Architecture, the Physics Institute and the Computer Science Institute.

These two groups of institutes cover different scientific fields, disciplines and educational methods. We shall first compare the views of graduates from each of the two institutional groups.

In each institute, the study dealt with 10% of the students graduating in the years between 1980 and 1995, with the exception of the years 1986, 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1993, for which no statistics for the number of those graduating were available at the time the survey database was constituted. The sample chosen consisted of 638 graduates. We compiled and worked on 600 answers to our questionnaire. Some answers could not be used as they were inadequate or wrong. Table 1 gives the breakdown of the replies actually processed.

The graduates were divided into three periods so as to exclude non-significant data spread over each of the sixteen years covered by the investigation.

- The first group (1980–84) corresponds to the period at the end of the reform of higher education.
- The second group (1985–87) corresponds to the introduction of university mapping, curriculum reform and reform of the evaluation system.

TABLE 1. Breakdown of sample

Training period	Literature and social sciences	Science and technology	Total
1980-84	116	84	200
1985-87	96	104	200
1994-95	88	112	200
Total	300	300	600

- The third group corresponds to the present period, characterized by a general feeling of unease affecting all concerned in the education process.

We processed and analysed the replies according to the six categories of students concerned, namely:

- students graduating between 1980 and 1984 in literature and human sciences, referred to below as LSH 80-84;
- students graduating in 1985 and 1987 in literature and human sciences, referred to below as LSH 85-87;
- students graduating in 1994 and 1995 in literature and human sciences, referred to below as LSH 94-95;
- students graduating between 1980 and 1984 in exact sciences and technology, referred to as SET 80-84;
- students graduating in 1985 and 1987 in exact sciences and technology, referred to as SET 85-87;
- students graduating in 1994 and 1995 in exact sciences and technology, referred to as SET 94-95.

In analysing the results we frequently use, without any accompanying reference, the expression 'science' to designate graduates in exact sciences and technology, and 'literature' to designate both modern language and human science graduates.

### Some characteristics of the sample

Below are some of the social and professional characteristics of those who replied to the questionnaire. Our aim is to classify graduates by the career on which they are embarking, since they largely base their assessment on the training they have received in the light of their chosen profession or economic sector. Our sample contains more women than men (67% as against 33%), and consists of graduates resident in the six departments of East Algeria as follows: Constantine, 56%; Mila, 19%; Bordj Bou Arraredj, 11%; Guelma, 9%; Skikda, 3%; and Jijel, 2%. As a university town, Constantine has the greatest proportion, owing to the large number of resident graduates.

As regards employment, the education sector is the largest employer, recruiting 66% of university graduates (60% in primary and secondary education and 6% in higher education). The other sectors which employ graduates are town planning

and building (10%), local government (9%), industry (7%), finance (6%) and trade (2%).

It should be noted that university graduates are chiefly recruited by the two education sectors (primary and secondary, and higher education). To begin with, this was explained by the fact that in the 1970s and 1980s each ministry and each branch of the economy set up its own institute or college to train its professional staff to its own requirements. Subsequently, a second explanation was the spread of graduate unemployment, beginning in the 1990s. However, primary and secondary and higher education are still sectors which offer relatively numerous employment opportunities.

#### DATA COMPILATION METHOD

To obtain the graduates' views, we devised a detailed questionnaire. This was preceded by a kind of preliminary survey consisting of in-depth interviews with ten graduates of different University of Constantine institutes working in different economic sectors. In these interviews we were able to explore the graduate world and pinpoint problems peculiar to a university education. On this basis we drew up a questionnaire which was tested on a restricted sample and then submitted to experts. After corrections and improvements, the final form was adopted and sent out to the survey population.

#### DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

The 600 replies analysed were sorted into groups. For each question, tables were drawn up with rows indicating the numbers of graduates and columns indicating the reply methods. For tables with two reply methods, we limited ourselves to interpreting the data by means of frequency distribution. Where there were more than two reply methods we have had recourse to simple correspondence factor analysis.

### Presentation and analysis of replies

#### EVALUATION OF TRAINING CONTENT

Under this heading we present the graduates' views, judgements and appraisals of different content aspects, namely theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge and the skills acquired.

##### *Theoretical knowledge*

We obtained the graduates' opinions about the quantity and quality of the theoretical knowledge transmitted during their training. As regards quantity, we asked them whether the theoretical knowledge transmitted was adequate, and as regards quality, whether it was satisfactory.



It will be seen from Figure 1 that opinions differ as regards quantity: 54% of graduates consider the theoretical knowledge transmitted to be inadequate, as against 46% who consider it adequate. In other words, once they have found a job, more than 50% of the graduate sample consider that the knowledge transmitted to them is quantitatively inadequate. This view was even more pronounced among human science graduates, where we note that negative replies outstrip positive ones for all three training periods. Inadequacy is reported by graduates in these disciplines both before and after the 1984 programme reform. Science and technology graduates give fewer negative replies, except for those graduating in 1994 and 1995, 62% of whom reply negatively.

We conclude that graduates in human sciences and literature are those who are least satisfied with the quantity of theoretical knowledge transmitted during their course. More than half reply negatively. By contrast, science and technology graduates reply on the whole that their theoretical knowledge is adequate, with the exception of the years 1994 and 1995.

The quality of the theoretical knowledge transmitted also fails to satisfy graduates fully (Figure 2). In all, 46% of them report that it is not satisfactory. This means that university education, which is usually described as theoretical—by contrast with training provided in colleges of higher education and technological institutes—is in the graduates' view lacking both in quantity and in quality. This is a severe judgement, since it relates to the university's chief task, namely the transmission of knowledge.

The graduates' replies to the question on their satisfaction with the quality of the knowledge transmitted show that they are on the whole divided between 'satisfied' (48%) and unsatisfied (46%), as will be seen from Figure 2.

Figure 3 shows the differences which emerge in terms of the training periods and the subjects studied. It will be seen that the variables and types of reply constitute subgroups of scatter diagrams on the vertical and horizontal axes. The first subgroup consists of a scatter diagram along the negative side of the vertical axis, com-

FIGURE 1. Adequacy of theoretical knowledge

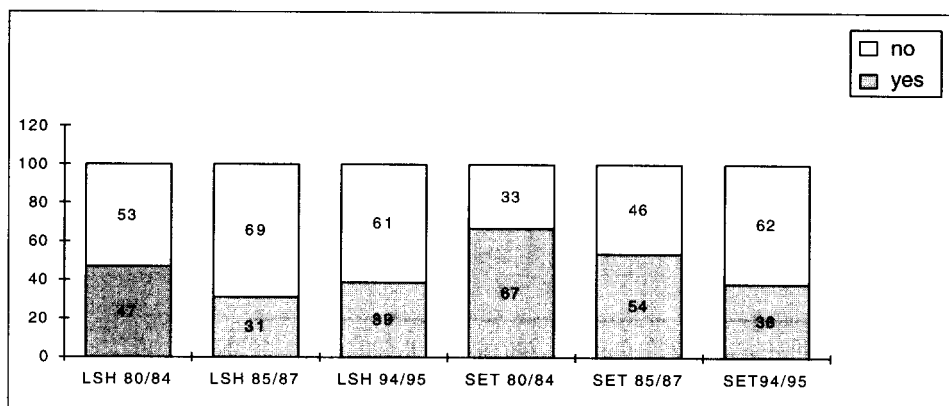
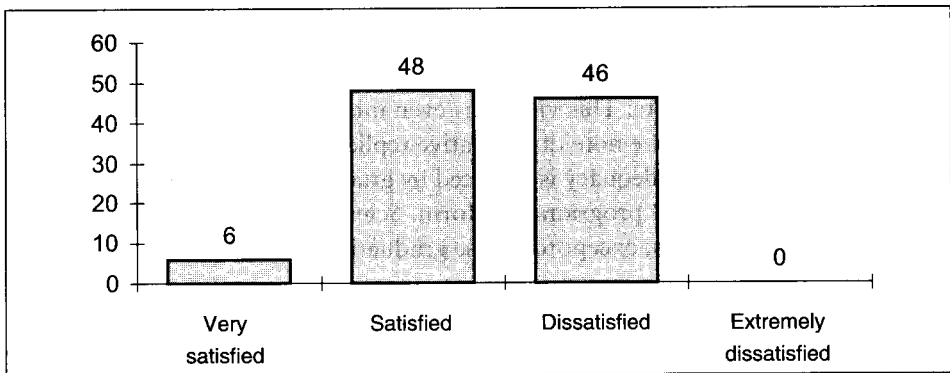
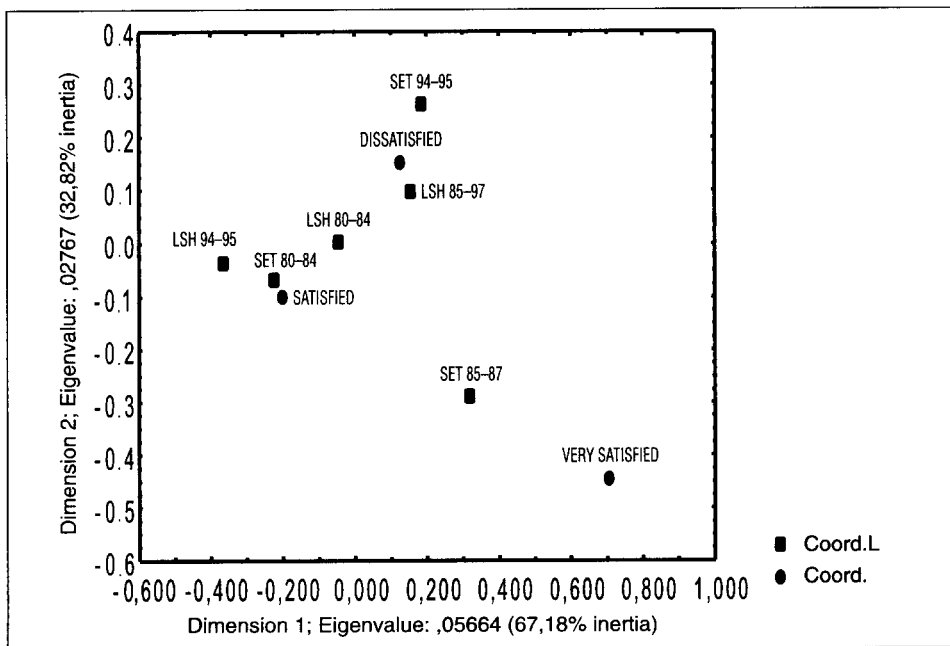


FIGURE 2. Satisfactory nature of theoretical knowledge



prising the SET 80–84 and LSH 94–95 variables, with the reply ‘satisfied’. This means that the satisfied graduates are the scientists graduating in 1980–84 and those graduating in arts and human sciences in 1994 and 1995. The second subgroup, on the positive side of both axes, groups together one variable, SET 94–95, and one reply ‘not satisfied’. It is those graduating in 1994 and 1995 who are the least satisfied with the quality of the knowledge transmitted. The third subgroup, partly opposed to the previous one, since it is situated on the negative side of both axes, consists of the variable SET 85–87 and the reply ‘very satisfied’.

FIGURE 3. Satisfaction with theoretical knowledge



This way of processing the data in Table 2 through correspondence analysis shows that the graduates differ in their assessment of the quality of knowledge, depending on their course of study and the training period. A total of 50% of the science and technology graduates in 1980–84 are satisfied and those graduating in 1985 and 1987 are mostly ‘very satisfied’, but more graduates in 1994 and 1995 reply ‘dissatisfied’. This reflects a decline in the quality of the teaching of these disciplines during the last decade. Human science graduates are, on the contrary, those who in the years 1990 to 1994 report that they are the most satisfied. We can therefore note with these disciplines that there has been an improvement in the quality of the knowledge transmitted. An analysis of the replies to the two questions above yields the following observation: there is no unanimity as to the quantity and quality of the theoretical knowledge transmitted in university courses among those graduating between 1980 and 1995.

TABLE 2. Satisfaction with theoretical knowledge

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Extremely dissatisfied	Total
LSH 80–84	5	50	45	0	100
LSH 85–87	7	39	54	0	100
LSH 94–95	0	64	36	0	100
SET 80–84	3	59	38	0	100
SET 85–87	16	43	41	0	100
SET 94–95	5	33	62	0	100

### *Practical knowledge*

As regards the practical knowledge transmitted, the graduates’ replies are very clear. Table 3 shows that the vast majority of those surveyed report that practical training is inadequate, wholly inadequate or even non-existent. Thus practical knowledge is still less adequate than theoretical knowledge. Table 3 also shows that practical knowledge is reported as wholly inadequate, and even non-existent, for both human and social sciences and exact sciences and technology. Here we can note that the practical activities scheduled in the training curriculum of the technological and science institutes are often provided not with a view to discovery and application, or in relation to theory, but as demonstration sessions on scientific equipment. These activities frequently take the form of hands-on sessions. In the human and social sciences there is little or no practical training. In these disciplines, the practical aspects of training do not form part of the curriculum, and even training courses and vocational courses are little more than a pretence.

To bring out the reply variations in relation to our variables and make the

replies easier to understand, we have processed the data table by means of correspondence analysis. This yields Figure 4, in which we can see two groupings of variables and types of reply. In the bottom left quadrant, the human science graduates in 1980–84 are shown as replying ‘wholly inadequate’ and ‘inadequate’. In the top left quadrant it is the science graduates in 1994 and 1995 who are the most likely to report that there is no practical training. By contrast, it will be seen that graduates in the same subjects, but trained between 1975 and 1983, are those who most frequently reply ‘wholly adequate’.

To sum up these findings, it can be said that practical training in literature and human sciences is inadequate, not to say totally inadequate. This inadequacy is reported by graduates in all the relevant years. By contrast, the practical scientific training which some graduates between 1980 and 1984 found wholly adequate has become non-existent for many of those trained between 1980 and 1995. Also to be seen is the decline in practical activities, in particular for scientists. This may be explained partly by the obsolescence of the experimental equipment, dilapidated premises and, above all, the overcrowding of students, which makes it difficult to conduct practical activities. The conclusion which emerges is that practical training has always been wholly inadequate in literature and human sciences, and has shown a marked decline on the science side.

TABLE 3. Practical training

	Wholly adequate	Adequate	Inadequate	Wholly inadequate	Non-existent
LSH 80–84	0	2	36	50	12
LSH 85–87	0	8	23	37	32
LSH 94–95	0	9	17	45	29
SET 80–84	17	10	21	40	12
SET 85–87	12	19	14	22	33
SET 94–95	0	19	18	27	26

### *The usefulness of practical training*

Table 4 shows that graduates in both fields of study report that the practical training they have received is ‘not beneficial’. For both fields, the number of negative replies increases between 1980 and 1995, rising from 57% to 86% for literature and human sciences and from 51% to 58% for science and technology. The inevitable conclusion is that practical knowledge is becoming less and less beneficial. The graduates have thus not had occasion to use the rudimentary practical knowledge transmitted.

FIGURE 4. Adequacy of practical training

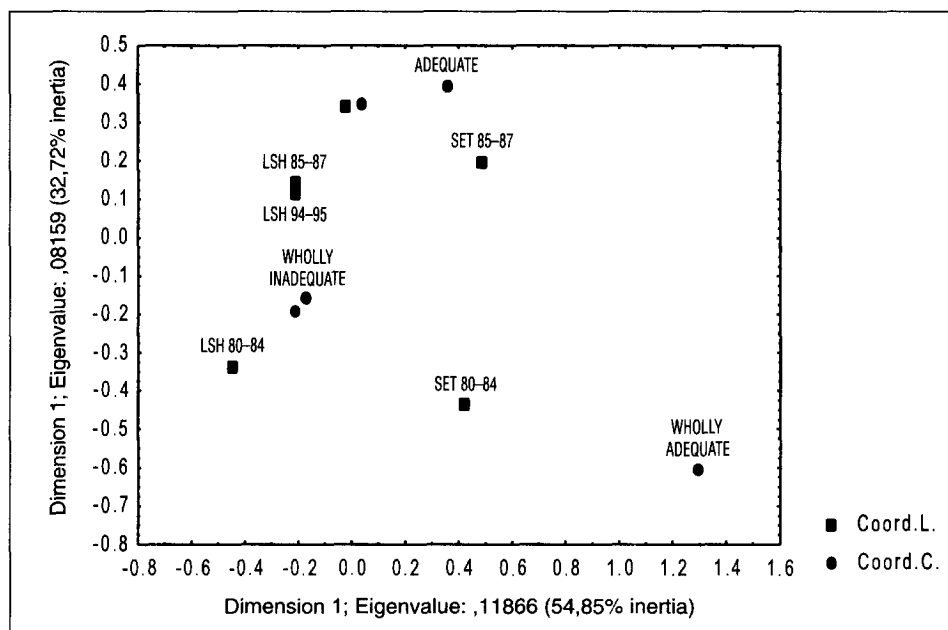


TABLE 4. Practical training

Practical training is beneficial	Yes	No	Total
LSH 80-84	43	57	100
LSH 85-87	31	69	100
LSH 94-95	14	86	100
SET 80-84	49	51	100
SET 85-87	50	50	100
SET 94-95	42	58	100
Total N	229	371	600
Total %	38	62	100

Here we are entitled to question the nature and scope of a university course which as regards theory is inadequate and unsatisfactory, and at the practical level is inadequate, not to say non-existent, in some of the human sciences. The modicum of practical knowledge taught is reported as 'not beneficial' by most graduates.

#### *The skills developed by a university education*

The question arising here relates to the objectives of the content of a university edu-

cation. Using Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, we attempted to determine those which were achieved by the university in terms of the skills developed among graduates. The skills proposed are understanding, memorization, creativity, delivery, analysis, synthesis, application and evaluation. We invited the graduates to classify them from the most to the least developed. For the purposes of the analysis, we selected the skills that were most highly rated. They are certainly the most significant. The results are shown in Table 6. The skills are ranked as shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5. Ranking of skills

Understanding	269 times top of the list	Application	26 times top of the list
Memorization	168 times top of the list	Evaluation	21 times top of the list
Analysis	57 times top of the list	Delivery	5 times top of the list
Synthesis	54 times top of the list	Creativity	Never top of the list

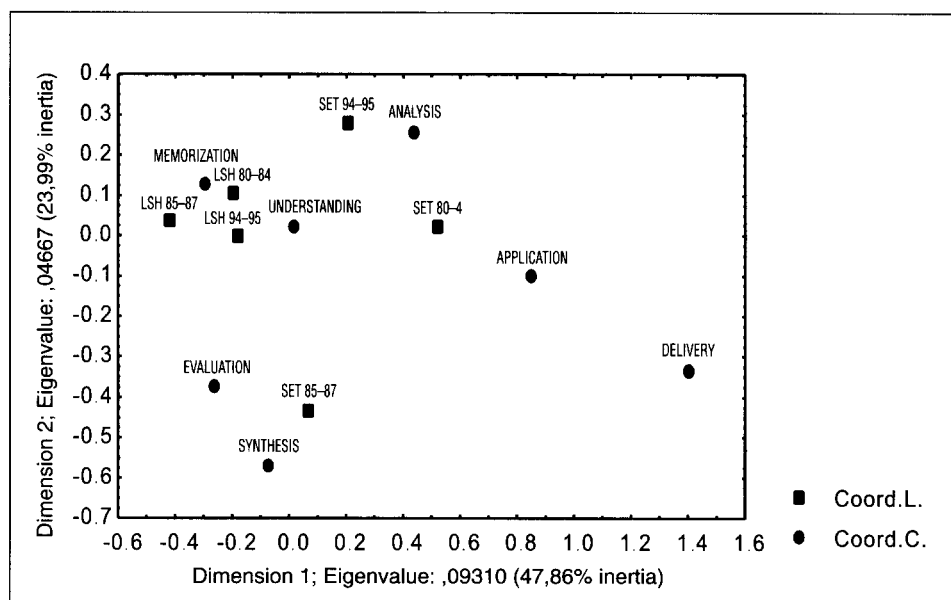
From this general result it emerges that in all courses and for all training periods the training provided by the university primarily develops the graduates' skills in understanding and memorization. These two skills, which we shall call means, should serve other skills—objectives—i.e. evaluation, creativity, delivery, etc. However, in the light of the results, the content of the university training as evaluated by the graduates is very limited. Whole fields of training are not included, not targeted and not provided. Training is closely linked to the context of the course and does not help students to extrapolate possible applications. Skills of delivery and creativity, which give the learner autonomy, rarely head the list. This leads us to conclude that teaching practice is based on the transmission of skills prepared and taught by the teacher. The full development of the student through application, delivery, creativity, evaluation, analysis and synthesis is not taken care of by the curricula.

Figure 5 shows some significant relationships between variables and reply methods. We begin by noting that the skill of 'creation' is not shown in the analysis, since all replies indicate that it is not applicable. The solitary position occupied by the skill of 'delivery' in the bottom right quadrant calls for comment. This may mean that the University of Constantine is not creative and has little to deliver. The skills of synthesis and evaluation are listed first only by graduates between 1985 and 1987 (see the bottom left quadrant). On the positive side of the vertical axis we see a fairly dense scatter diagram. This reflects the two skills of 'memorization' and 'understanding', around which all the other replies congregate. In the light of the graduates' replies, we conclude that university training as expressed in terms of content is geared to the acquisition of knowledge—the students are required to understand and memorize the programme—and is less concerned with criticism through evaluation, analysis and synthesis, and not at all with students' creative ability.

TABLE 6. The skills developed

	Memorization	Understanding	Creativity	Delivery	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
LSH 80-84	30	50	0	0	0	9	5	6
LSH 85-87	44	38	0	0	0	4	8	6
LSH 94-95	33	43	0	0	0	10	14	0
SET 80-84	16	41	0	4	8	20	8	3
SET 85-87	18	46	0	1	8	3	18	6
SET 94-95	27	51	0	0	10	11	1	0

FIGURE 5. The skills developed by training



### Conclusion

The results reveal the general lack of satisfaction of graduates as regards both the quantity and the quality of theoretical and practical knowledge transmitted. This dissatisfaction, as noted above, is more marked in modern languages, psychology and economics.

In terms of the skills sought and developed, the training provided at the University of Constantine focuses on the acquisition of knowledge, not the development of the students' innate abilities.

## EVALUATION OF THE EVALUATION SYSTEM

*Educational function of the evaluation*

The University of Constantine carries out what is known as continuous assessment, by means of three examinations of average duration during the university year. These examinations usually relate to course content. Their function is to help students improve their results and teachers to improve their teaching. As a source of information on the progress of learning, they have a basically regulatory educational function. In order to evaluate this function, we put to the graduates the following statement: 'Evaluation makes it possible to improve the training provided'. The graduates' replies do not confirm this statement, since two-thirds (70%) report that this is not the case (see Table 7).

Graduates trained in the six special subjects between 1980 and 1995 are not convinced of the educational qualities ascribed to continuous assessment. It should be noted that this view predominates in all disciplines, although graduates in literature and human sciences between 1980 and 1984 are less categorical. The rejection of this function of the evaluation is very marked in all science courses. For the three periods it is respectively 77%, 83% and 81%.

TABLE 7. Educational function of the evaluation

Evaluation makes it possible to improve training	Yes	No	Total
LSH 80-84	45	55	100
LSH 85-87	36	64	100
LSH 94-95	39	61	100
SET 80-84	23	77	100
SET 85-87	17	83	100
SET 94-95	19	81	100
Total N	179	421	600
Total %	30	70	100

*Purpose of the evaluation*

Table 8 shows the results of the replies to the question on the purpose of evaluation. We endeavoured to identify from the individual replies the skills which are evaluated. Graduates put at the top of the list memorization, and in second place an understanding of courses. Thus we can describe the evaluation conducted by the university as academic. The skills of creativity, application, synthesis, evaluation and analysis are rarely at the top of the graduates' lists. That these skills are not the subject of evaluation confirms the results above. Thus in view of these replies we can say that the training provided by the university is narrow in scope, since evaluation is neglected in whole areas of the education of the individual. This observa-



tion has still more serious implications for courses in architecture, where the creative spirit is essential, for physics and computer science, where the application of procedures and the conduct of experiments are an integral part of training, and for economics and psychology, where analysis and synthesis are vital skills. We conclude that the students' evaluation is very elementary, verifying merely the memorization and understanding of the material transmitted by the teacher.

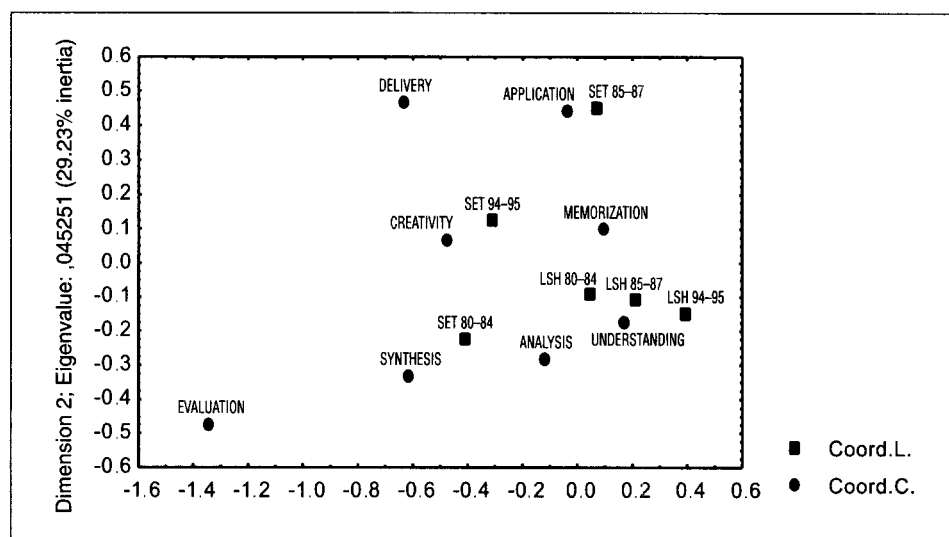
TABLE 8. Skills evaluated

	Memorization	Comprehension	Creativity	Delivery	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
LSH 80-84	43	30	1	2	7	9	8	0
LSH 85-87	36	39	0	1	10	11	3	0
LSH 94-95	54	39	0	0	0	7	0	0
SET 80-84	30	33	0	9	4	10	8	6
SET 85-87	50	25	0	10	13	2	0	0
SET 94-95	48	15	1	9	7	10	7	3

### *Objectivity of marking*

Is marking objective? A very small proportion of graduates consider that it is always objective (only 4%). The majority say that marking is sometimes objective (82%). A total of 14% say that it is seldom or never objective. Table 9 shows the graduates' replies. The first observation to emerge is that marking is not always objective. It is

FIGURE 6. The skills evaluated



therefore flawed by subjectivity. Consciously or unconsciously, teachers introduce additional subjective criteria in their marking. This phenomenon, a common one in teaching, is revealed by many international studies on docimology. We note that it is general for all courses and all training periods. However, 12% of science graduates in 1994–95 consider that marking is seldom objective and, going further, 20% of them say that it is never objective. This is alarming, since over-subjective marking tends to discourage and demotivate students who are serious and hardworking. It also gives rise to a degree of illusion of success among the students who have higher marks.

TABLE 9. Objectivity of marking

Marking is objective	Always	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
LSH 80–84	8	71	15	6
LSH 85–87	0	92	8	0
LSH 94–95	0	96	4	0
SET 80–84	8	83	9	0
SET 85–87	6	87	5	2
SET 94–95	0	68	12	20
Total N	22	497	53	28
Total %	4	82	9	5

### *Evaluation and pass rates*

Does the evaluation system guarantee a pass only for students who have made an effort during the school year? This question can be used to analyse the evaluation system in its function of recording failure and success. The majority of the graduates (63%) reply that the evaluation system does not allow only high-achieving students to pass. This figure is still higher in the exact sciences and technology, rising to 73% for the 1985 and 1987 graduates. The evaluation system in Algerian universities has in fact undergone changes. Before 1984, courses were modular and the pass requirement was the average mark in each module. A second examination was then held to give those who failed a second chance. Since 1985, the system of compensatory averages has been introduced generally in all courses. This means that for a student to pass, the average of the marks for the year should be above or equal to an average of ten. This allows students who have failed in one module to be recognized as having passed at the end of the year, thanks to compensating marks in other modules. The present system has yet another drawback: students who have not obtained the average mark at the June session can resit the modules for which they have not obtained the average at a further examination session known as a 'synthesis'. The student then keeps the better of the two marks. The general average is calculated on the basis of the best marks obtained. If the student does not obtain ten, he or she takes the 'second chance' examination in September.

Even in this case, the compensation system operates for various modules, regardless of what the student has actually learned from each module. This very permissive evaluation system has been repeatedly denounced by teachers, but Ministry officials still support it. It ensures a regular flow of student numbers and thus, by educational measures, solves problems of student number management and planning.

What are the gaps in the evaluation system? As noted above, it virtually guarantees that, thanks to a multiplicity of examinations, the student will be admitted to the next year. Compensation enables students to pass in subjects without having acquired the necessary knowledge and know-how. The system takes up a great deal of time in examinations, to the detriment of teaching. It forces teachers to spend much time in correcting papers, reading and evaluating research studies, calculating averages and deliberating. At present it produces pass rates in the neighbourhood of 100 per cent in the University of Constantine's institutes of human sciences and psychology and educational sciences. The direct consequence is that students who have made an effort to acquire training become discouraged. Its other untoward effect is to discourage teachers when they are faced with so many examinations and above all with the discouragement of students who deserve to succeed.

### *Conclusion*

The graduates' evaluation of the evaluation system makes it clear that in their view the assessment of knowledge acquired is not a way of improving training. The evaluation carried out is very narrow, covering few fields. Basically, it deals only with the acquisition by students of the material and ideas transmitted in courses. It is not always objective, and the pass system in force gives precedence to quantity over quality. It gives an illusory picture of training and success.

## **General conclusion**

Throughout this article we have sought to evaluate university education. Our analysis of the results records the views, judgements and appraisals of the graduates of the University of Constantine. The representative nature of the sample allows us to extrapolate. The study's conclusion is that the content of training is more theoretical than practical, and that even the theoretical ideas transmitted are, in the graduates' view, inadequate and unsatisfactory. In other words, the theoretical part of courses is not always taught, and what is taught is usually not brought up to date.

The university course is primarily concerned with developing the students' ability to understand and memorize. Their self-development is not on the agenda. In their view, the evaluation system has no training function. Evaluation is concerned primarily with the students' ability to reproduce the course. Marking is not always objective, and it is not only those who deserve to do so who actually pass.

In the foregoing, we have noted the main gaps, weaknesses and inadequacies

in the content and system of evaluation. In conjunction with other aspects of training, they account for the low rate of delivery of the objectives of making graduates operational and efficient, and integrating them into the world of work.

The inevitable general conclusion is that we must recognize that the two main tasks entrusted to Algerian universities—the training of efficient operational executive staff and the training of the supervisory staff required by the economy—are far from being achieved.

It appears that if we are to remedy the gaps and weaknesses that have emerged, a global reform of the University of Constantine is necessary. The reform should be preceded by a series of investigations and evaluation which would be conducted on the lines of this article, but would concern other categories of actors and deal with all aspects of the training process. We consider that the key word is evaluation. A university watch body would be a structure which would be responsible for compiling the necessary data on all aspects of university education and proposing a strategy for change.

In this study we have tried to obtain information from graduates on what is said about the university and the training it provides. We consider that the opinions, views and feelings expressed by graduates who have entered the world of work deserve to be taken into account.

## Notes

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2. We wish to thank Mr Jean-Claude Eicher, professor emeritus of the Dijon Institute for Research on the Economics of Education, for his kind assistance in the conduct of this study.

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# PROSPECTS FOR AND CONSTRAINTS UPON THE VOCATIONALIZATION OF THE UNIVERSITY: THE EXAMPLE OF TOGO

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*Emile-Michel Hernandez*

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Anyone taking an interest today in African universities will find more reasons for lapsing into pessimism about Africa: a surplus of students, a dearth of teaching staff (many of whom have only limited qualifications), strikes, wasted years when no teaching is done, non-existent openings for students in many areas of training, graduates unable to find jobs, and so on. Tolba wrote in 1993 that 'the university system of Mauritania has a serious credibility gap. Designed as it were *in vitro* between four walls, created from scratch by a government whose primary concern was to provide places for large numbers of baccalaureate-holders whom it no longer knew what to do with, the university immediately became transformed into a day nursery for adults'. Quashie (1994) described the university system in Togo as 'an extremely selective system which educates, under deplorable pedagogic conditions, a minority that will end up unemployed'.

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*Original language: French*

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However, in the vast universe of African universities the situation is not entirely grim, and despite some undeniable problems, certain fields of study manage to produce satisfactory results for teachers and students alike. On the campus of the University of Benin in Lomé (Togo), for example, three vocational training schools are functioning very well. We will look first at these schools and then turn to the general and very topical issue of the vocationalization of the university system.

## The Togolese example

The *Ecole supérieure de secrétariat de direction* (ESSD) (Higher Secretarial School) opened its doors in December 1986. Students completing the three-year programme receive a diploma (*diplôme supérieur de secrétariat de direction*). Admission is competitive and based on examinations open to holders of a baccalaureate in any specialization. There are, on average, twenty to twenty-nine students in each year. The students' academic success and failure rates are much better than those of students enrolled in other faculties on the campus. For example, for the academic year 1993–94, ESSD had a success rate of 72.80%, while the rate for the Faculty of Economics and Management was only 31.22% and for the Law School only 13.98%. Furthermore, ESSD graduates do not have any major difficulties in finding employment.

The *Institut universitaire de technologie et de gestion* (IUTG) (University Technical and Management Institute) was also set up in 1986. The programme admits about twenty students for a two-year course of study. For the first year, everyone follows the same basic curriculum. In the second year, half the courses are compulsory for all students, the other half being divided into two options: finance/accounting or business management. As in the secretarial programme, students are admitted on a competitive basis and academic failure is rare. While early graduates found work easily, recent graduates have encountered more difficulties.

The most recently established vocational school is the *Centre africain de formation à la maintenance micro-informatique* (CAFMICRO) (African Training Centre for Computer Maintenance), set up in October 1990 on the joint initiative of Benin, Burkina Faso, Gabon and Togo. At present the Centre offers two types of training: a one-year programme to train specialists in counselling and computer maintenance, which has an annual intake of about ten students who have already obtained a university degree in technology; and since the 1995–96 academic year, a two-year training programme in computer maintenance, open to holders of baccalaureate C, D, E or F2, who are admitted on the basis of a competitive examination following a preliminary selection process. In the first year, thirteen students were admitted. As in the case of the two other vocational schools, the rigorous selection of candidates and the quality of the training limit the academic failure rate and make it easy to place diploma-holders, most often before they have even finished their course work.

The smooth functioning of these three vocational schools is linked to certain common features. First, the schools all operate on a human scale: because the number of students is limited, the administrations can follow them more closely, moni-

tor their absences and late arrivals, listen to their needs and be more alert to their difficulties. Furthermore, the schools are in touch with the surrounding socio-economic context: there are frequent contacts with the working world; students are taken on as interns; and some of the teaching is done by professionals. In this way, the university seeks to break out of the 'ivory tower' by creating a symbiotic relationship with the business world. In terms of recruitment and job openings, a regional approach is adopted. Because the national employment market is limited, graduates of these schools have to seek work abroad. CAFMICRO in particular reflects this philosophy.

The modest size of the vocational schools and their close ties to the business world make them highly responsive to the job market. For example, to meet the needs of the economic sector more effectively, ESSD plans to provide specialized training in the third year by introducing a different speciality each year—for example, training for legal or medical secretaries.

Taken together, these features also illustrate the limitations of this approach for African universities. First of all, it is expensive: whether teaching a dozen students or lecturing to several hundred, teachers earn the same salary (unlike F.W. Taylor's workers, university lecturers are not paid by 'piecework'). The cost per student at a university technical institute will therefore always be higher than for a student in the regular academic programme. In countries where university budgets are inadequate in relation to the number of students, it is always problematic to allocate substantial resources to a privileged few while the majority often have to put up with deplorable working conditions. Secondly, this approach can be used only with a limited number of students—a substantial increase in the student body concerned would rapidly strain the limited absorption capacities of the job market. Lastly, not every academic field can be vocationalized.

## Vocationalization of the universities: the issue

Whether in the West or in the developing countries, the issue of the vocationalization of the university system is undoubtedly highly topical. For some it is the solution to every problem now plaguing our universities.

First of all, the original function of universities should be borne in mind. In the West, the first universities (such as the Sorbonne and Oxford) appeared in the Middle Ages. Originally, they were places in which scholars could congregate and spread their message; they were not meant for students. This initial function is still strongly present. In fact, the career prospects of academics depend exclusively on the research they produce: no account whatsoever is taken of their ability as teachers or their competence in transmitting vocational skills. At a later stage, universities developed into places where advanced knowledge was disseminated. It is only recently that they have become the almost systematic next stop for baccalaureate-holders, who often lack the motivation and aptitude for higher studies and whose sole concern—and a perfectly justified one at that—is to get the training that offers the best possible guarantee of employment upon completion of the course. Thus, in

addition to their original role of producing and disseminating advanced knowledge, universities today are being called upon to fulfil a new function, namely that of providing vocational training, which has caused them numerous problems of adaptation.

If the university system comes down clearly in favour of vocationalization, which is not yet the case, it will have to modify both its skills and its practices. Proper vocational training covers knowledge, know-how and life skills. For example, *Electricité de France* (the French national electricity company) uses this standard trio of requirements in all its job descriptions. While universities are perfectly well suited to transmitting knowledge, they are less so when it comes to teaching know-how and not at all when it comes to teaching life skills. Yet in the business world, these last two elements are fundamental. While companies usually find that graduates have adequate, and sometimes even excessive, theoretical training, they are less satisfied with the rest. Like social, behavioural and ethical qualities, which play a decisive part in the specific organizational world of business, life skills such as creativity, autonomy, the ability to relate to others, civility and so on are sometimes lacking. Table 1 summarizes this mismatch between the skills supplied by the university and the demands of the business world.

TABLE 1. Disparity between university skills and business needs

Components	University skills	Business needs
Knowledge	+++	+
Know-how	+	++
Life skills	-	+++

Le Boterf (1994) devoted an entire work to the concept of professional skill, which he defines as consisting in 'harnessing the knowledge that it has been able to select, integrate and combine'. Skill draws upon a fund of knowledge that may be regarded as a reservoir of resources. Le Boterf identifies six kinds of knowledge (Table 2).

## Kinds of learning

Study of Table 2 shows that formal education, whether initial or continuing, cannot be the principal mode of acquiring knowledge. In the business world, as we have seen, procedural, experiential and social know-how is often more important than theoretical knowledge. Le Boterf contrasts the declarative and procedural modes of expression. In the declarative mode, knowledge is expressed in terms of propositions, which can be about anything, from chemical or physical laws to methods or procedures. The procedural mode forms part of our behaviour. Knowledge is expressed in action rather than in natural or symbolic language; it is included in our behaviour patterns.



TABLE 2. Six kinds of knowledge

Type	Function	Principal mode of acquisition	Mode of expression
Theoretical knowledge	Ability to understand Ability to interpret	Formal education Initial and continuing training	Declarative mode
Procedural knowledge	Knowing how to proceed	Formal education Initial and continuing training	Declarative mode
Procedural know-how	Knowing how to proceed Knowing how to operate	Professional experience	Procedural mode
Experiential know-how	Knowing and doing	Professional experience	Procedural mode
Social know-how	Knowing how to behave Knowing how to act	Social and professional experience	Procedural mode
Cognitive know-how	Ability to deal with information Ability to reason Ability to describe one's work Ability to learn	Formal education Initial and continuing training Analysis of social and professional experience	Declarative mode and procedural mode

This shift in emphasis by the universities must go hand in hand with a change in the students' attitude to the job market. Instead of presenting themselves almost automatically as job-seekers, they will have to become 'providers of services' or 'suppliers of skills'. Nowadays, many students—as well as young people without training and executives over the age of 50—are having difficulty in finding waged employment. They tend to forget that the wage-earning system is very recent in historical terms. In the West, it came into being in the nineteenth century and became the general rule in the twentieth century. In Africa, it is even more recent, dating on the whole from the time when the African countries gained their independence some forty years ago and involving a much smaller percentage of the population than in the developed countries. Some African countries systematically offered civil service jobs to all university graduates. Budgetary constraints have forced them to abandon this practice. Today, under the structural adjustment plans imposed by the

World Bank, these same countries have had to reduce the number of their civil servants even though the public (or semi-public) sector is the principal source of regular employment in Africa.

In view of the growing difficulties facing the wage-earning system, more and more students in Africa and in the West will have to start thinking about working freelance or becoming self-employed. With the decline of wage-earning in society, students will have to progress from the imposed form of self-employment that is current today to the voluntary self-employment of tomorrow.

Some authors—mainly American—have been over-enthusiastic at times in their descriptions of a future working world in which wage-earning will be the exception and self-employment the rule. Aubrey (1994) outlines a new vision of individual development in the context of a fundamental transformation of work involving self-enterprise. Bridges (1988) in turn explains how to manage oneself as a company. Students will have to stop being the passive recipients of learning. They will have to develop independent attitudes, not just learning, but learning how to learn. According to Kabou (1991), education in Africa has ‘everything to gain from teaching individuals to be creative enough for self-employment’. Etounga-Manguelle (1991) says that African education needs to develop the qualities on which progress depends: ‘imagination, non-conformity, creativity; professionalism and skill, a sense of responsibility and duty, the love of a job well done’. Lastly, Tolba (1993), referring to the university system in Mauritania, speaks of the need to ‘introduce the entrepreneurial spirit into higher education’.

## **Conclusion**

The example of Togo shows that vocationalization is a useful approach for African universities and can yield positive results, although it is not universally applicable. It has three main limitations: it is expensive; it can apply only to a limited number of students because of the limited number of jobs; and not all academic fields can be vocationalized. Accordingly, we need to take a broad, general view of the university system at the present time.

Of all the levels of education in Africa, higher education is the one that is most explicitly based on Western models. In basic education, the contents and educational structure can now be devised locally, taking the surrounding conditions into account. The time when teachers used to talk to African pupils about their Gallic forebears is a thing of the past. In higher education, however, the Western model is rarely called into question. Yet that model is currently under heavy fire in the countries where it originated (as witnessed by the many protest movements in French universities), and it is too expensive for Africa. It consumes too high a proportion (between 25 and 30%) of the total education budget in relation to the numbers concerned. These circumstances should prompt African academics to reflect on ways of bringing their institutions into closer contact with their countries’ realities and needs.

Nowadays the linear conception of development as formulated by Rostow is discredited. Most Third World economists refuse to regard underdevelopment as

no more than a time lag, a natural phase in the history of all societies. They consider it to be a specific situation resulting from a historical process that the developed countries did not undergo.

It is now incumbent upon African academics to reject imported and foreign organizational models, to abandon the tendency to imitate others, and to build a specific university geared to a specific historical situation.

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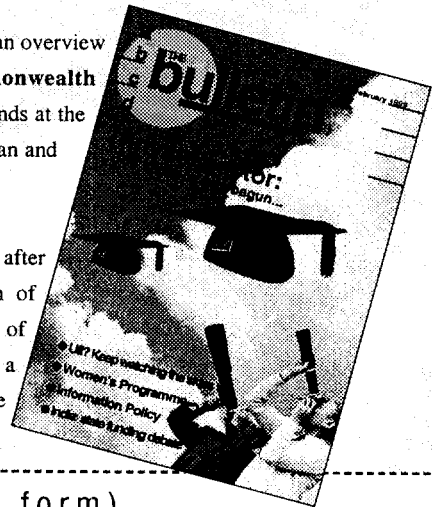
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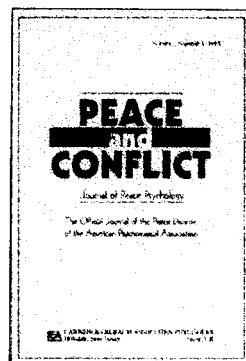
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