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Coll, C. (2000). Education Policy: Education, Society, Territory and Social and Civic Co-Responsibility for Education

I. A new scenario for education

Over the past century, education has been one of the most important tools of modern societies to combat inequality, to spread, expand and deepen civic and democratic values, to foster economic and cultural development, to promote personal development and to improve the quality of life for all members, and every indication suggests that it will continue to play this role. As with other aspects or areas of people's lives and activities regarded as no less important and crucial in modern democratic societies, such as health care, accommodation, employment and social welfare, there is little doubt that the way in which education systems are currently organised, the solutions that are adopted to ensure the provision of education services to the whole population and even the very conception of education that underpins this organisation and these solutions will all have to undergo profound changes to confront the challenges of the new economic, social, political and cultural scenario that has begun to take shape over the past few decades.

In reality, none of the elements that make up this scenario is entirely new. This is the case, for instance, with shifts in value systems; changes in the structure of the labour market; shifts in family organisation; the "socialisation deficit" (Tedesco, 1995, pp. 35ff.), which has resulted from the weakening of institutions of primary and secondary socialisation, especially the nuclear family and school; the progressive introduction of new information and communication technologies and their impact on the modes and relations of production; economic and market globalisation; a growing cultural homogenisation, and more. All of these elements have steadily been taking root over the course of the past few decades. What is new, however, is an awareness that their convergence and expanding reach is ultimately taking a new form of social, political and economic order that marks a radical change from what came before, regardless of the various names adopted to describe it, such as the information society, the knowledge society (European Commission, 1995), the digital society (Majó, 1997), the "remote-control" society (Sartori, 1998), the global village (UNESCO, 1996), the network society (Castells, 1997) and so forth.

While their perspectives and concerns vary widely, most of the writers who have focused their analysis on the characteristics and scope of this scenario agree on three points. First, the scenario, which even now appears on the horizon and looks well on the way to consolidating itself with much greater speed than had been expected only a short time ago, poses the potential risk of new and powerful forms and processes of segregation and social exclusion. Second, education will once again be the key tool to neutralising this risk as it has been in the past and is now in the present. And third, for education to carry on playing this role in the future, it will have to confront a number of hitherto unprecedented challenges.

It is increasingly apparent, however, that these challenges cannot be tackled by making more or less minor tweaks to current education systems. Sufficient indicators are starting to emerge to suggest that we are not simply facing a new version or manifestation of the almost permanent crisis that has characterised education systems since at least the end of the nineteen-fifties (Coombs, 1968; Ghilardi, 1993). What now appears to be at issue is neither this or that aspect of the organisation and functioning of education systems, nor this or that aspect of the curriculum or teaching methodology. What appears to be at issue is the very structure of the education system as a whole, its aims and objectives, in short its capacity to adjust to people's modes and ways of life and meet their educational requirements—that is, their basic learning needs—in the new scenario.

As a result, it proves highly questionable to attempt to address the new situation armed solely with the "traditional" discourse of educational renewal or to face the unprecedented challenges with "old" proposals, even accepting that these proposals have often never, or only partially and unsatisfactorily, been put into practice. To put the case in somewhat radical terms, all indications are that the challenge before us is no longer to improve current education systems, but rather to conduct a root-and-branch review and then to rebuild them from the ground up in accordance with the characteristics and demands of the new situation. To meet this challenge, what is needed is an educational discourse, approaches, categories of analysis, and strategies of action and education policy that can hardly be the same ones that we have used and practiced thus far.

In this respect, it may prove useful to point out that current education reforms, which were first instigated in the nineteen-eighties and early nineties in many countries across the globe, are still designed, to a greater or lesser degree according to the case, to respond to the previous scenario. Indeed, to my mind, some of the problems encountered in their effective implementation have their origins in this time lag. They are attempts to respond to problems that have been identified and analysed according to parameters whose validity is starting to wane and which will, in all likelihood, cease to have any relevance at all in the near future. They are reforms designed to meet a social, political, economic and cultural reality that appears increasingly unlikely to persist or endure into the future.

In this sense, Spanish education reform is no exception. The legislative advances that have been made in Spain in the past fifteen years[1], as well as the changes and transformations that have been and are now being made possible by this new legal framework, seek to redress the country's historical backwardness[2] through a process of modernisation that seeks to bring its education system in line with those of other European countries. From my perspective, these education reforms, above all, represent an attempt to bring the Spanish education system up

[1] During the period, three major pieces of legislation were enacted to regulate the current Spanish education system: in 1985, the Organic Law Regulating the Right to Education, known as LODE; in 1990, the Organic Law on the General Organisation of the Spanish Education System, known as LOGSE; and in 1995, the Organic Law for the Participation, Evaluation and Administration of Centres of Education, known as LOPEGCE.

[2] It should be recalled that the Spanish education system was regulated until 1970 by a hundred-year-old law known as the Moyano Act (*Ley Moyano* in Spanish), which was passed in 1857 and remained in effect with little amendment until the enactment of the General Education Act of 1970, which marked the start of the modernisation process for education in Spain.

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to date[3]. Such reforms, if not thwarted, could well put Spain in a similar position to other countries—and perhaps, in some respects, in an even better position—to confront the challenges of the new social, political, economic and cultural scenario emerging at the start of the twenty-first century. Under no circumstances, however, will they permit us to circumvent the aforementioned process of review and rebuilding.

Against the backdrop of the foregoing considerations, the following pages focus on two aspects that are, in all likelihood, going to lie at the very heart of the thorough review of education systems that now appears unavoidable. These two aspects link to a number of somewhat convergent trends and are starting to be expressed vigorously at the level of ideas and proposals. While they may have taken concrete form only in rather isolated and still limited experiences at present, they are, in my view, bound to play a crucial role in the organisation and provision of education services in the not-too-distant future. The first of the two aspects is the increasingly widespread recognition that it is necessary to review and expand the concept of education that underpins the organisation and operation of most, if not all, of today's education systems. This concept of education has gone through a gradual narrowing, particularly since the nineteen-fifties, until it has now come to be identified only with school education and the process of schooling. The second aspect concerns the increasingly widespread conviction that it is necessary and urgent to review and reinforce the relationships between education practices and civic activities, that is, between education and the city.

II. Education and schooling: toward a broader vision of education

Education in its original sense is a concept that refers to the set of social activities and practices through which, and thanks to which, human groups foster the personal development and socialisation of their members and safeguard the functioning of one of the key mechanisms in the evolution of the species: cultural heritage. Human groups have always made simultaneous use of various types of social practices and activities to give younger generations access to cultural forms and knowledge—e.g., knowledge and beliefs about the world, languages and tools to understand reality and act on it, technologies and techniques, traditions, value systems, etc.— that are deemed fundamental for group survival and, as a consequence, judged necessary for individual appropriation to become a full member of the group. Also, in societies of all kinds, the responsibility for organising and conducting these social practices and activities has always been entrusted to a variety of actors and often even to a variety of bodies, which contribute jointly to the personal development and socialisation of younger generations from their specific role and place in the established social, cultural and economic order. Moreover, in the case of open societies, they also do so with newcomers who seek to become members.

Broadly speaking, therefore, education has always been a shared responsibility in human groups. A variety of actors, within the context of their normal activities and the settings in which those activities are carried out, jointly take on the commitment to meet the educational needs of all members, particularly the youngest members and newcomers, offering them the opportunity to take part in such activities and settings and, in some cases, even forcing them

[3] See, for example, Coll and Porlán (1998) and Coll (1999a).

to do so. Only on rare occasions have the activities, settings or actors been specialised solely and exclusively in education, and never or seldom on a widespread and ongoing basis. By and large, exercising influence and performing an educational role are two added values beyond the primary reasons for the activities being carried out—e.g., family care, economic production, recreation or play, religious offerings, etc.—and the institutional settings in which those activities take place—e.g., the family, business or workshop, church, etc. Similarly, the actors who take responsibility for educating are not, in the first instance, specialised educators. Rather, to build on the examples above, they are fathers and mothers who, in addition to acting as parents and at the same time as they act as parents, educate their children; or they are master artisans who, at the same time as they practice their craft, teach their craft to the apprentices in their charge; or they are members of the clergy who, at the same time as they perform their rites, pass on to their congregation a worldview and a value system.

This state of affairs is turned upside down with the appearance of school education, which for the first time entails the establishment of institutional settings—namely, schools—and activities—namely, teaching and learning activities—that have a solely and exclusively educational function and purposes that are aimed at the entire population. No less importantly, it entails the appearance of social actors who specialise in the activity of education: teachers. Contrary to what happens with other education agents, the exercise of educational influence over their students is not an added value in the normal activity of teachers. Rather, it is their primary job. With school education, the figure emerges of the education professional, which, as we shall soon see, will ultimately become vested with much of the responsibility hitherto exercised by other education agents[4].

It is useful to recall that school education, more specifically basic and compulsory schooling, is in reality only one among many social practices that have been used by human groups throughout history to carry out the task of socialising and promoting the personal development of their members. It is also a relatively recent social practice, which appeared first in the nineteenth century in connection with the transition from feudal societies to industrial society. Moreover, from its origins, it is marked by the convergence of two starkly different notions whose mutual opposition has never ceased to exist over the years and whose relative predominance accounts for the organisation and functioning of education systems and the functions that they have ultimately come to fulfil in practice[5].

The first of these two ideas is that it is necessary in an industrial society to have skilled labour that can meet the demands of new modes of production. Accordingly, the state bears a responsibility to provide skills to the working classes who lack the resources needed to acquire them on their own. The second idea is that knowledge is a universal heritage that must be accessible to all human beings without exception in a genuinely democratic society. As a result, the state also bears a responsibility to ensure equal opportunity in education. While the first idea is a contribution of the liberal state and the emerging bourgeoisie of the nineteenth century, the second idea is rooted in Enlightenment thought and develops in the context of the social state and the social struggles that distinguish the twentieth century. National

[4] For a more detailed analysis of the similarities and differences among education practices at school and other types of education practices, see Solé (1998) and Coll (1998a).

[5] See, for instance, the analyses of Delval (1990), Puelles (1996) and Gómez Llorente (1998) on the relative weight and constant tension between the two notions as they relate primarily to the evolution of school education in Spain.

education systems, which were first set up in most countries in the nineteenth century in keeping with the first idea, gradually incorporated elements of the second idea to varying extents over the course of the twentieth century. The universalisation of basic and compulsory education, its gradual expansion and the efforts made to increase and enhance the capacity of education systems to offer an education for all without exception are some of the milestones that mark this evolution.

The universalisation of basic and compulsory education and the phenomenon of society's gradual "de-responsibilisation" towards education

With the implementation of basic and compulsory education, its broadening to the entire school-age population and its gradual expansion to cover eight, ten or even eleven or more years in some countries, school education in contemporary societies has slowly taken on an importance and a centrality without equivalent to any other type of education practice in human history. This is particularly the case since the nineteen-fifties. It is true that school education has never gone so far as completely to overshadow or eclipse other education practices, such as the ones that take place within the family, in work relations, in recreational and leisure activities or in social and community activities. In my view, however, it is also true that there is no other period in human history in which social groups have placed so many expectations on, or have demanded so much of, a single type of education practice.

In the collective imagination, school education has ultimately become the quintessential tool not only to combat inequality and foster the development and socialisation of all people without exception, but also to do so in the most diverse facets and aspects of human personality and conduct. Education writ large—that is, education understood as the whole range of social practices by which and thanks to which human groups foster the development and socialisation of people—has thus undergone a gradual narrowing until it has come to be identified with only one of its modes or forms, school education, and school education in turn only with basic and compulsory schooling and with what happens in schools and classrooms[6].

One of the most negative consequences of this identification of the whole—education—with what is, in reality, only one of its parts—schooling and teaching—has been the gradual "de-responsibilisation" of society and the community in education matters. As a result of this identification, education ceases to be perceived as a shared responsibility taken on by society as a whole through the educational influence exerted by a set of actors in a broad range of social practices and activities. In its place, an idea takes root that education, understood basically as schooling, is a responsibility of the formal education system that must be taken on fundamentally by the professionals who work in the system—that is, the teachers—as well as their political leaders, their administrators and other specialists.

[6] Along a similar line of reasoning to the one pursued here, Torres (1999) has recently analysed the narrowing of the concept of basic education based on his formulation in the documents of the "World Conference on Education for All" (Jomtien, 1990). According to Torres, in most interpretations, basic education has been narrowed to school education and then, within school education, to access to primary education. In my view, the origins of this narrowing lie in the exclusive and sometimes exclusionary centrality that school education attained over other types of education practice during the twentieth century.

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In this context of growing societal "de-responsibilisation" for education, the formal education system is viewed both as the entity directly responsible for all the problems related to the development and socialisation of younger generations and as the source and origin of potential solutions to those problems. Practically no aspect or issue escapes this assessment: youth violence; the loss of civic and democratic values; intolerance; racist and xenophobic behaviour; drug use; unhealthy eating habits and behaviours; consumerism; the low level of culture; the dwindling interest in reading; limited knowledge of science and technology; the mismatch between training and job requirements; youth unemployment, and more. Whatever the focus of attention and debate, the shortcomings and dissatisfactions relating to the training process for children and young people are invariably attributed, by action or omission, to the education system and schooling, *to what is being done poorly at school or not at all*. Similarly, whatever the nature and reach of the identified shortcomings or dissatisfactions, the key to correcting and overcoming them is also sought invariably in the education system and schooling, in *what should be done better* or in *what should be done and is not being done at school*.

Questioning the excessive importance and centrality of school education

Without in any way denying that there are probably many things that have not yet been done or that could or should be done at school, nor denying as well that there are doubtless still many clearly improvable aspects of school education, it is true that the responsibilities and expectations that are often placed on school education as a consequence of the process of societal "de-responsibilisation" towards education seem to go well beyond its capacity to shoulder and satisfy them. Indeed, it is increasingly obvious that the problems mentioned above and others of similar tenor and import do not have their origins at school, nor can they be addressed in a wholly satisfactory manner only at school.

In this respect, the subject of values education offers a striking illustration. School can and should educate children and young people in civic and democratic values, respect for differences, solidarity and commitment to the vulnerable and oppressed, dialogue and negotiation as ways to resolve conflicts, the rejection of violence, and respect for basic human rights. It would be unrealistic, however, to expect that the educational influence of school can be sufficient to offset and neutralise the contrary educational influences exerted on the same children and young people in many areas of social life that are often governed by values that differ or even openly contradict the ones listed above. Something along the same lines occurs, for example, with the persistent critique of the limitations and shortcomings of the education system to shepherd students through their transition from school into the world of work upon completion of their compulsory education and with the education system's inability to provide students with adequate training to enable them to find paid employment quickly and effectively. As an additional example, the current experience of implementing compulsory secondary education in Spain shows with crystal clarity that the education system, especially the public education system, is expected to take on a whole host of issues related to diversity that often have a clear social origin and that can only be taken on, because of the multiplicity of factors involved, through the coordinated action of different sectors and bodies that obviously must include school education, but under no circumstances only school education[7].

[7] The following extract, which comes from the Catalan federation for pedagogical renewal known as the Federació de Moviments de Renovació Pedagògica de Catalunya, clearly illustrates how broad sectors of teachers take the view that too much responsibility is being foisted on school education to address the issue of diversity:

In these examples as in many other aspects of education, the function of the school is certainly important. From there, however, it is a leap to give schools sole responsibility for the education and moral development of children and young people, to demand that schools ensure the successful transition of students from school into the world of work, or to expect that the schools alone and unassisted should take on, channel and resolve serious problems of a sociocultural and/or family origin. Not only is this leap unreasonable, but it is also increasingly apparent that it is misguided. Why? Among other reasons, because school education is being ascribed a responsibility and functions that lie beyond its exclusive purview. In some cases, school education may indeed have no competence whatsoever but find itself driven down a blind alley, unable to meet the particular demands or expectations.

The argument above gains even more force, if possible, with the boom in new information and communication technologies, undoubtedly one of the hallmarks of the new scenario taking shape in recent decades. Hand in hand with these new technologies, traditional education agents, settings and practices—basically the family and school—have been forcibly joined by other education agents, settings and practices that exert a growing influence over the processes of personal development, socialisation and training for younger generations. It is increasingly less open to question that the participation of children and young people in settings and activities relating to the new information and communication technologies—e.g., television, online networks, multimedia materials, etc.—have a decisive impact on their personal and social development and on their formative process. Even if school education is successful in bolstering its objectives with literacy in the new technologies, that is, with a functional knowledge of the languages involved—and it is able to exploit them as methodological resources for teaching, the ubiquity and growing use of these technologies in the most wide-ranging areas of human activity turns them de facto into potential vehicles and tools of education practices that are, in principle, unrelated to school and not necessarily consistent with its aims and objectives.

Another factor that is sharply undercutting the almost exclusive centrality and importance of school education is the growing importance of what has come to be known as lifelong learning. Changes afoot in the structure of the labour market and in professions suggest that initial training, which is essentially identified with school education, will cease to be a guarantee for the personal and professional development of individuals in the future. Some analysts indicate that the generations now being trained in schools and institutes will probably have to change profession and not just their place of work several times over the course of their working lives. It is also anticipated that members of these generations will need to grapple with important new advances in scientific and technological knowledge throughout their lives, which will require them to adapt and engage in new training processes. In short, we cannot keep counting solely and exclusively on initial school education as a guarantee of personal and professional development and as a tool for social cohesion. Access to lifelong

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"The public school is often called upon to a perform a care and compensatory function with respect to inequalities as well. Society does not have institutionalised forms of intervention to face social needs as they emerge. Consequently, because the education system is the system that most universally serves the population, it is the focus of demands that do not correspond to its purposes, with no account being taken of the fact that centres of education only have pedagogical tools and that these tools are often inadequate for intervention in given sociocultural and/or family problems.
"While we have no doubts about the strength of pedagogy, we are far from thinking that it is only with educational action [at school] that we will ameliorate the problems generated by our economic and cultural system. Or that we can transform the world only through school."
(FMRPC, 1999, p. 14)

learning processes will become as important in this sense as initial training has hitherto been. And these new learning processes entail new educational needs, new learning needs, which today's education systems as they are currently organised do not appear able to meet.

Education: a shared responsibility

Accordingly, there is an urgent need to return to the original concept of education writ large and to draw on this concept to review how education systems are currently organised and how solutions are adopted to meet the education needs of the population as a whole. At present, the organisation and solutions of education systems reflect an extremely limited view of what education is. This view—it bears repeating—is based on the de facto identification of education with school education and, in turn, of school education with the basic and compulsory schooling of children and young people over a very narrow period of their lives. Moreover, this identification has perhaps never been fully justified and yet it has proven manifestly inadequate to face the challenges posed, in the education field, by the new social, economic, political and cultural scenario. On the current organisation of education systems, it was Mayor Zaragoza (1999, p. 375) who said:

> "The gradual emergence of a learning society provides the occasion to move from the image of learning focused on a time, namely youth, to one focused on a space, namely school, which is entrusted to a single teacher or to a successive or simultaneous set of individual teachers. Hybridising the means of access to knowledge and diversifying the range of education agents are essential to the creation of an education without distances, to ensure a society without distances. Promoting the interweaving and reciprocal borrowing of practices among the adjacent sectors of education, whether they be formal, informal (museums and all cultural agents), distance or blended, is a critical challenge for the decades to come".

However, expanding the concept of education to recover its original broad meaning is tantamount to restoring the idea that education is a responsibility of society as a whole, which fulfils its role by facilitating the participation of all members in a wide range of settings and social practices of an educational nature. In short, it is tantamount to accepting with all of its consequences that the commitment of schools and of the professionals who work there is not enough to confront all the sorts of challenges that now face education. What is also needed is the commitment and shared responsibility of society and the community in which the school is located. It should be noted that the preceding assertions go well beyond the usual appeals to open up schools to their social and community environments. They even go beyond calls for the participation of different sectors of the educational community—students, parents, teachers—in the activities and operation of schools and other educational institutions.

In my view, starting from the principle that the education of children and young people—and, by extension, of all citizens—is a responsibility shared by the whole host of social agents that exert educational influence on them, two fundamental ideas must inform the proposed review. First, a process of reflection and public and collective debate needs to be launched for the purpose of establishing a new social contract for education. This contract would clearly establish the duties and responsibilities of the various agents who operate as de facto education agents in a given society. It would also lay out a precise definition of the functions that can and must be performed by schools in this context, specifically, the functions that

correspond exclusively to schools, the functions that schools take on in conjunction with other education agents and settings, and the functions that cannot and must not be taken on by schools, that is, where the contribution of schools is limited only to providing support and encouragement if required. Second, the policies and plans that would make possible such a social contract for education need to be defined and translated into lines of action (Coll, 1999) within the immediate community environment in which children and young people—and citizens in general—live and develop. This is the environment that encompasses the educational settings in which children and young people normally take part and in which the social agents who have a real impact on their development and socialisation operate.

III. Education, community and territory: the articulation of education practices

It is time now to address the second trend raised in the introductory remarks in connection with the deepening relationships between education practices and civic activities, between education and the city. Indeed, this trend has a direct link to arguments in favour of returning to a broad view of education, to the proposal for the establishment of a new social contract for education, and to the idea that this contract needs to be embodied in specific policies and action plans in the social and community environment in which children and young people live and develop. If we understand the city as the set of people who carry out totally or partially connected, or simply concurrent, activities in the same territorial space, who tackle projects, objectives and problems that are, to some extent, common or interdependent, who identify to a greater or lesser degree with the social organisation with which they maintain bonds of belonging and membership, and who share a set of collective services and facilities, then it is the city that defines the immediate community environment in question. Thus characterised, the city could be a city in the usual sense of the term—that is, a relatively large urban area—or a part of an urban area—e.g., a neighbourhood or district—or a territorial area—e.g., a region or county—where several smaller urban areas are located.

The immediate community environment: an exceptional space to detect and meet the population's educational needs

This trend takes various forms in different countries and even in different territories within the same country based on a set of factors such as the degree of centralisation or decentralisation in the education system, pedagogical history and tradition, the varying breadth of local authorities' power over education matters, the density of each community's network of associations and the political and ideological options that govern the actions of educational authorities and of anyone else who has some type of formal responsibility in education. Beyond these differences, however, the trend is general and points in the same direction in every case: toward selecting the immediate community environment as the space where it is possible and desirable to promote the articulation of education practices, including school education, in order to marshal them on behalf of a better, more effective detection and satisfaction of the educational needs of the whole range of citizens who share the space.

This is the environment in which to address the demand for "expressly linking <u>education processes</u> and <u>social processes</u> (school and life, school and home, school culture and social culture, education and work, school curriculum and local reality, theory and practice), raising the possibility of new articulations or new ways of understanding these articulations" (Torres,

1999, p. 52, underlining in the original text). It is this environment where the task of "breaking the institutional isolation of the school, opening it up to the requirements of society and redefining its agreements with other socialising agents, particularly the family and the media", can be made reality (Tedesco, 1999, p. 31, underlining in the original text). It is this environment where the pursuit of a new social contract for education must take place through a process of discussion and joint reflection on the aims and objectives of education. It is also this environment where it is possible to achieve the collective commitment and shared responsibility of the school and other social agents to meet the educational needs of citizens, utilising and optimising all available resources to do so. In short, it is this environment where it is necessary to specify the comprehensive education policies to keep in mind so that the better part of their aims and objectives are not forgotten or lost along the path from design and planning to effective implementation.

The trend discussed above can now be traced through a relatively large number of projects, initiatives and analyses[8], ranging from "learning communities" (see, for example, Barron et al., 1995; Talberg and McLaughlin, 1993) to "the city of children" (Tonucci, 1997). The clearest example, however, may be the "Educating Cities" movement, which draws on the participation of cities around the globe, including a substantial number in Europe. The foreword to the collected papers[9] of the 1st International Conference of Educating Cities, which was held in Barcelona in November 1990, already contains a clear proposal to review the concept of education along the lines suggested here:

> "(...) the family and the school cease to have their exclusive role in education, sharing it now with many other institutions and groups—both public and private—that are, with increasing clarity, expressing their willingness to have an impact on citizens, very often with educational purposes".
>
> (Final papers of the Conference, 1991, p. 9)

Along the same lines, the Charter of Educating Cities (Barcelona Declaration), which was signed at the same conference, expresses the idea that it is necessary to review the role of municipalities and cities—the immediate community environment of citizens—based on a broad view of education. Specifically, principle 2 of the charter states the following:

> "The municipalities shall undertake to exercise their powers effectively in matters of education. No matter what the scope of these powers may be, they shall put forward a broad and integrated education policy, in order to include all the modalities of formal, non-formal and informal education and the different cultural manifestations, sources of

[8] See, for example, Gennari (1995) and Görlitz et al. (1998), which offer two starkly contrasting views of the same trend.

[9] From the final papers of the 1st International Conference of Educating Cities, entitled *Primer Congrés Internacional de Ciutats Educadores: Documents Finals*. Barcelona, 26-30 November 1990. Barcelona municipal government. April 1991.

information and paths of discovery of the reality of the city".

(Final papers of the Conference, 1991, p. 117. Underlining added by author.)

As the paragraph above states, however, while it is important for municipalities to define a broad and integrated education policy, whatever the scope of their powers in matters of education, it is also true that their room for manoeuvre and their effective capacity to define and develop education policies and action plans within the city is hugely affected by the scope of their powers and, more broadly, by the way in which the distribution of powers and responsibilities among the different levels of administration is regulated in relation to the planning and administration of the education system.

Powers and responsibilities in the planning and administration of education systems

In this respect, the situation varies enormously by country. In Spain, for example, a clear contradiction exists between, on one hand, the education powers assigned by law to local authorities and, on the other hand, the potential—and sometimes actual[10]—role that municipalities can play in the provision of education services to all of their citizens.

The powers assigned under Spanish law to municipalities in matters of education are scattered across several pieces of legislation enacted over the course of the past two decades[11]. From their scattered emergence over time, it is possible, without running into deep-seated contradictions, to discern clearly different sensibilities according to the moment and the social and political context in which the laws have been enacted. When analysed as a whole, however, two clear conclusions emerge. First, the distribution of powers and responsibilities among the three levels of public administration—central, autonomous community and local—refers almost exclusively to the organisation, operation, planning and administration of school education, of the formal education system, which is clearly in keeping with the limited view of education indicated earlier. Second, the local authorities are *not* regarded as an educational authority, that is, they are given no powers over the general programme of instruction or the planning and administration of basic and compulsory education. They are only assigned powers relating to the duties to provide buildable plots of land for the construction of schools

[10] The city of Barcelona serves as a clear example. The municipal government oversees a network of 70 schools (approx. 23% of all public schools in the city), which cover practically all levels and types of education—nursery schools, early childhood and primary schools, secondary schools, schools for the performing arts, adult education centres, special education schools—and which account for roughly 1,200 teachers and 10,500 students. This network of schools, together with a range of education services for the entire school-age population and the obligations that derive from the mandatory fulfilment of obligatory powers in the area of education, such as buildable plots of land for the construction of schools or the preservation, upkeep, cleaning and security of schools, means that the municipality of Barcelona is deeply involved in the education and training of its citizens, both through the impact of the services that it offers and through the amount of resources that it administers. Also, as in other major urban areas, the city's administration receives a constant flow of demands and requests from citizens to keep increasing its education services and it is subject to strong, persistent pressure in this respect.

[11] Specifically, they are article 27 of the Spanish constitution of 1978; the Organic Law Regulating the Right to Education, known as LODE, in 1985; the Law Regulating Local Ordinances of 1985; the Organic Law on the General Organisation of the Spanish Education System, known as LOGSE, in 1990; the Organic Law on the Participation, Evaluation and Administration of Centres of Education, known as LOPEGCE, in 1995, and the decrees and orders that implement these laws.

and to take on the preservation, upkeep, cleaning and security of school premises.

Admittedly, the legislation assigns many other powers in matters of education to local authorities, but always in terms of collaboration and participation with the administrations of the state and the autonomous community, which are, strictly speaking, the only educational authorities in reality. Two formulas are commonly employed to describe these powers: "the educational authority shall establish collaboration agreements with local governments for the purpose of …"; or "local governments may collaborate with the educational authority to …". Behind these formulas, we find references to a wide range of educational aspects and levels that are more or less directly related to schooling: childhood education, adult education, instruction in the arts, special education, instruction in foreign languages, programmes for the transition from school to work, family participation in the functioning of schools, the monitoring of compliance with compulsory schooling, teacher training, educational innovation, student health, school transport, school canteens, extracurricular and complementary activities, careers guidance, detection of the population's education needs, etc.

Thus, the legislation reflects some degree of awareness of the importance of local authorities in the organisation and provision of education services for all citizens. However, when it comes to spelling out the details, their role is limited to aspects that are peripheral or complementary to school education, whose organisation, planning and administration remain exclusively reserved for the educational authorities at the centre or in the autonomous community in accordance with a framework that is clearly homogenising in nature. Furthermore, the specification of the complementary or peripheral aspects that are seen as powers shared between local government and the corresponding educational authority depends clearly on the initiative and willingness of the latter to enter into collaboration agreements with the former and to transfer the economic resources that are needed by the former to fund such agreements.

If we compare the situation in Spain with the framework of powers adopted in other European countries, we find that it has one element in common with the others and another element that is clearly different. The shared element is that the framework of powers across much of Europe also refers primarily to school education and the formal education system. The differentiating element is that, as comparative analyses have clearly shown (Oroval, 1998), the most widespread situation across Europe is a more or less balanced distribution of authority over education between the central administration, the regional administration (or state administration in countries with a federal or confederal state) and the local authorities, together with a logically similar distribution of the resources required to exercise these powers. In most European countries, local authorities take on many of the powers related to the planning and administration of school education, especially at the levels of basic and compulsory schooling, and they can count on the economic resources needed to exercise their powers, reflecting a strict application of the proximity principle, whereby it is necessary to bring decision-making as close as possible to the citizens in order to ensure that the best way is found to meet their needs, based on a direct knowledge of them, and to allocate and use existing resources to do so.

As noted earlier, there is little doubt that the current framework of powers in Spain is not conducive to the definition and implementation of policies and plans that would promote and specify the social contract for education in the immediate community environment in which children and young people live and develop. The distance between schools and the bodies

responsible for decision-making, planning and administration of the particular contexts where educational processes occur inevitably takes on a homogenising effect across the whole of the education system. This fits very poorly with a broad vision of education and the implications that derive from it. While this state of affairs needs urgent correction in my view[12], it is necessary to stress that the problem cannot be considered only in terms of powers and it will not be solved purely and simply by allocating greater powers in matters of education to local authorities. A change to this effect, with the corresponding reallocation and redistribution of economic resources, is doubtless highly desirable and, I would say, almost necessary to break through the heavy homogenising mantle that weighs on the organisation and functioning of our education systems. Under no circumstances, however, will it be enough. Also required are a willingness and a capacity to articulate the whole range of education practices, settings, agents and resources in the community in order to marshal them on behalf of detecting and meeting the education needs—or, in other words, the basic learning needs—of the people who make up the community. This is the idea that underpins the strategic proposal to promote the preparation of integrated territorial education plans[13].

IV. The preparation of integrated territorial education plans: a strategy for action

Accordingly, the most important characteristics that these plans should have and the requirements that should inevitably be met in their preparation process can be stated succinctly in eight points:

(i) They need to reflect a broad systemic view of education, that is, they must consider the entire range of educational settings, practices and agents that are actually in operation in a particular territory and take into account their particular characteristics in relation both to the possibilities that they hold for the education and training of people in their different strands and facets and to the limitations that they entail with respect to other territories and community environments.

(ii) They need to begin with the detection, analysis and assessment of the specific education needs and basic learning needs of the population, accepting that these needs may vary widely from one territory to the next, and to aim to meet them through the coordinated action of all educational settings, practices and agents present in the environment and the use of all available educational resources, which may also vary widely from one territory to the next.

(iii) They need to be profoundly participatory in nature, both in their preparation and in their development and implementation. They need to draw on the active engagement and

[12] The decentralisation process undergone by the Spanish education system with the setting-up of the so-called State of the Autonomies established in the Constitution of 1978 has been limited exclusively to the transfer of education powers from the central administration to the administrations of the autonomous communities. From the latter tier, however, no significant advances have been made in the transfer of education powers to local authorities.

[13] This is the sense in which it is necessary to interpret the recent initiative of the city of Barcelona and other cities sharing the philosophy of the Educating Cities movement when they have pushed forward with processes to develop what has been called "City Education Projects" (Barcelona municipal government, 1998).

commitment of teachers, academics and administrators in charge of planning and administering formal education services in the community or municipality. However, more is required. To the extent that the ultimate goal is to marshal all available resources in the community environment on behalf of detecting and meeting the population's education needs, no body or group can, in principle, remain on the sidelines during the process.

(iv) Based on a joint assessment of the population's education needs, the priorities that must be established to meet these needs and the available resources, they need to set out clearly the commitments and responsibilities of all involved education bodies and agents, giving special attention to the key pivotal role played by schools and teachers in this respect.

(v) They need to establish a single body responsible for planning, administration and monitoring that integrates authorities from the different levels and sectors of the administration—central, autonomous community and local—who operate in the territory and whose actions can have a direct or indirect impact on the education and training processes of citizens. Only through a single body of this sort can a multi-sector, inter-level unity of action and of approaches neutralise the tendency of different levels and sectors of the administration (Torres, pp. 30-31) to act separately in line with their own aims, priorities and internal dynamics.

(vi) They need to enjoy a large measure of autonomy in their implementation and development so that they can be adjusted to the continuous and accelerating evolution of the population's education needs without being subject to the usual red tape, which can prove complex and cumbersome.

(vii) They need to include definitions of procedures and strategies for the rigorous, systematic evaluation and assessment of the successes that are achieved and the difficulties that may arise in implementation, and they need to forecast the resources needed to assure successful implementation.

(viii) They need to guarantee the economic and technical resources required for implementation and development and receive a differential treatment in budget allocations, with special attention given to redressing the shortcomings and constraints of territories and communities that have greater constraints and shortcomings in generating or using their own resources.

It must be admitted unreservedly that the immediate and widespread implementation of basic education policies organised around integrated territorial education plans with the characteristics set out above will be difficult. In some cases, it may simply be an unworkable approach in the absence of the minimum necessary conditions to make such an attempt with some assurances of success. In other cases, it may be possible to meet only some of the indicated characteristics and requirements. In many other cases, however, the resistance and difficulties may have their origins in the predominance of an unjustifiably narrow view of education and of a homogenising philosophy in the organisation and functioning of education systems, which are clearly not the most adequate to tackle the challenges of the new social, political, economic and cultural scenario in which we now find ourselves.

English translation: Coll, C. (2000). Política educativa: educación, sociedad, territorio y correspondabilidad social y ciudadana con la educación. En J. A Garde (Ed.), *Informe 2000. Políticas sociales y estado de bienestar en España* (pp. 165-187). Fundación Hogar del Empleado.

In any event, the arguments laid out on the preceding pages leave little room for doubt, in my view, about the need to restore commitment and social and civic co-responsibility for education as one of the keys to facing these challenges. The definition of specific policies and plans of action firmly anchored in the territory and the community environment in which people live and develop can be a good strategy to move in this direction. Notwithstanding all the caveats and precautions that are necessary when undertaking processes of educational change and transformation, we should now begin a more rigorous and systematic, less arbitrary or haphazard exploration of this strategy, its feasibility and its implementation wherever the minimum necessary conditions exist to try.