

# Time and freedom in Education. Some Latin American notes on the *Manifiesto for Education* of Biesta and Säfström

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Detail "Ceremonial site",  
collagraph. Marta Arangoa

## Abstract

This essay discusses Biesta and Säfström's *Manifiesto for Education* relation between time and freedom in education. I debate three theoretical nodes of this relation. First, I relate history of educational research in Latin America for demonstrate the strong theoretical and spatial limitation of Biesta and Säfström concept and how temporal articulations are similar in two antagonist perspectives: new educational theories and quality of education. Latter, is central in historical phenomena when educational research professionalization produce teachers deprofessionalization. Second, I argue how the temporal articulation based in the regime of historicity called *presentism*, reduce freedom possibilities in education, especially teacher's freedom to be. Finally, the political and theoretical principles of the proposal of *Manifiesto* are shared, but it opposes universal temporary articulation that restricts divergent paths to diverse forms of freedom in the educational sphere.

## Tiempo y libertad en lo educativo. Algunas notas latinoamericanas sobre el *Manifiesto por la educación* de Biesta y Säfström

### Resumen

Se discute la relación entre tiempo y libertad en educación defendida por Gert Biesta y Carl Anders Säfström en su *Manifiesto por la educación*. Primero, se narra la historia de la investigación educativa en torno de la calidad de la educación en América Latina, para demostrar dos nudos teóricos: las significativas limitaciones históricas y espaciales de algunas categorías utilizadas en el *Manifiesto* y; las articulaciones temporales similares entre dos propuestas educativas antagónicas, la filosofía de la educación y la razón instrumental. Esta última es responsable de que, a mayor profesionalización de los expertos en educación, mayor desprofesionalización del docente. A continuación, se argumenta cómo dicha articulación temporal, reduce las posibilidades de libertad que la misma proclama a ser defendida. Finalmente, se comparten los principios centrales de Biesta y Säfström, pero se opone a una articulación temporal de corte universal que restringe caminos divergentes a formas diversas de libertad en el ámbito educativo.

**Keywords:** temporal articulations; educational freedom; *Manifiesto for education*; quality education; Latin America

**Palabras clave:** articulaciones temporales; libertad en educación; *Manifiesto por la educación*; calidad de la educación; Latinoamérica

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**D**uring the second half of the XX Century, the pedagogical discourse in Latin America has undergone a long process of professionalization<sup>1</sup>, which was distinguished, among other aspects, by the effort to abandon its philosophical roots and thus achieve the status of social science. In the sixties and seventies, in our region and in other parts of the world, while the theoretical thought of the Social Sciences questioned its own epistemological validity. Ironically, the Sciences of Education were born under the cloak of a rigorous scientism, heir of the classical tradition that praised the prescriptive reason (Frabboni and Pinto, 2006: 28) and the methodological neatness. This foundational footprint that today continues almost unchanged, has produced the phenomenon in which the more the science of education was professionalized and found fertile spaces in the university environment first, and in public policies later, in the opposite direction, the teaching profession was discredited. Sociology and Psychology took the place of the Pedagogy that remained, especially in Latin America, in resistance. To consolidate itself, the new Science of Education was also producing its own language and found, in a relatively unstable concept, a pillar for its discourses and its interventions: the quality of education.

This process of professionalization is, in part, similar to the one that Gert Biesta and Carl Anders Säfström denounced in their 2010 *Manifiesto for Education*, when they demanded the urgency to rethink education from the educational point of view, that is, the return to think about education from its philosophical and practical roots, to counteract the instrumental reason of the new educational thought. However, although I share the essential aspects of the *Manifiesto*, if we look at them from the history of the Education Sciences of the region, we can distinguish points that are not transferable to our context and, at the same time, temporary articulations of philosophical and pedagogical discourse, which are similar to the instrumental rationality of educational quality. In this text, I try to show the distances and the proximities between both positions; at the same time I return to the struggle of Biesta and Säfström for a reflection and an action of education from the educational, to combat that science that in the name of quality has reduced

freedom to the maximum. In other words, face the prescriptive science hidden under the signifier of quality.

I have divided this essay into three sections. In the first, I analyze some elements that I consider central to the *Manifiesto for Education* of Gert Biesta and Carl Anders Säfström. In the second, I present some fragments of the history of educational science in Mexico and its close link with the quality of education. In the third, I discuss the conceptual weaknesses of the notion of timelessness and how the fixation on the tension between the past and the future desired in education does not necessarily imply freedom, as the authors analyzed here think.

### About the Manifesto

The *Manifiesto for the education* of Gert Biesta and Carl Anders Säfström is a text that, given its succinct format, enunciates a series of theoretical and political principles that open up different paths of action. At the same time it proclaims affirmations without nuances that demand to be questioned. In this interstice between possible paths and argumentative insufficiencies of the *Manifiesto*, I want to raise three aspects. The first aspect to work is the historical verification that education is under attack. The second is the timeless dimension in which it is intended to locate the educational process. Finally, the problem of the freedom of the other, the irreducible core of education for the authors of the *Manifiesto*. These three elements will be looked at in the Latin American context of educational quality, with special emphasis on the Mexican case, which allows me to discuss the *Manifiesto* from its cultural and historical limitations.

It is difficult not to agree that education is, once again, under attack. For Biesta and Säfström, violence comes from two fronts: populism and idealism:

Populism is revealed through the simplification of educational concerns by reducing them to matters of individual taste or questions of instrumental choice [...] based on scientific evidence about 'what works' [...] Idealism is shown through authoritarian expectations about what education should achieve. Education is connected here with

projects such as democracy, solidarity, inclusion, tolerance, social justice and peace (Biesta and Säfström, 2011: 540).

The result is twofold. On one hand, under these principles, Education is never, and will not, live up to expectations. And, on the other hand, there is a risk of losing what it does to educational education, because neither populism nor idealism respond to it. The first conclusion is central, since it is one of the autopoietic principles of educational quality in Latin America and its outburst of freedom to the teacher. The second involves a philosophical discussion about freedom as educative.

If we look at the argument of Biesta and Säfström of the double attack on education in the history of research and educational policies in Latin America, we can see that the categories do not fit or, at least, they are closely interwoven. In this region of the world, populism thinks about education from social justice, peace, democracy and inclusion and can find part of their origins in popular education. In return, what they call idealism in Latin America is the educational technocracy that, based on scientific principles, delineate the control mechanisms over educational processes, while defining quality as the equivalent of Education. However, at present both dimensions are imbricated in our region, since social justice, inclusion or democracy are promoted based on instrumental and scientific criteria (Plá, in press). I will deepen later about it. For the moment, suffice it to say that I agree with the Manifesto that the attacks on education leave our educational institutions in permanent state of failure, especially the teacher, and this attack comes, if we give continuity to the inaccurate categories of populism and idealism, of an unstable imbrication between both.

The second aspect of the proclamation that I am interested in highlighting, is the timeless nature of the educational process. Education is found, define Biesta and Säfström, in the tension between “what is” and “what is not” and not, as is customary to hold, in one or the other. For those who defend education from “what is”, socialization and adaptation are nuclear functions. On the other hand, those who focus on “what is not yet” are tied to utopian dreams that see in education the realization of a future already pre-designed.

Both positions, once again place education in an impossible situation, since the adaptation or the realization of a destiny already written, eliminate freedom as a core of the educational process. “What it is” because it values the past as primordial time, “what is not yet” because it does so with the future. The proposal of the Manifesto is not a dialectic between both, but it highlights the tension that exists between them, because it is precisely where there is space for liberty. It is this interstice, which is none other than the present, which they call the timeless dimension of education.

However, the timeless dimension in the Manifesto does not hold up. On one hand, by proposing freedom as a possibility, the future comes into play, so that the temporal dimension of the proposal contradicts its own demand for timelessness (Yun, 2014). On the other hand, the notion of timelessness falters, because although the story takes place in the interstice of ‘what is’ with ‘what is not yet’, or in terms of Reinhart Koselleck (1993), between the field of experience and the horizon of expectation, the temporal articulation cannot be avoided.

Rather, what Biesta and Säfström are defending is what François Hartog has called the historicity regime. For the French historian, each historical moment “articulates the relationship between past, present and future in different ways, privileging one time over another” (Hartog, 2003: 99). Nowadays, the present predominates, which expands into a timeless sensation, but in fact it remains temporal. Biesta and Säfström fall into this system of historicity and, as we shall see later, it is a central part of the quality of education and the construction of a state of permanent lack of teaching.

Finally I want to deal with the issue of freedom. The Manifesto for education is clear about it:

We hold the idea that speaking in the name of education in an educational way means expressing an interest in freedom and, more specifically, an interest in the freedom of the other: the freedom of the child, the freedom of the student, the freedom of the student (Biesta and Säfström, 2011: 540).

This freedom, the authors continue, is relational and conflictive, that is why “educa-

tional freedom does not imply the absence of authority but involves an authority that entails an orientation towards freedom” (Biesta and Säfström, 2011: 540). From this, it can be inferred that the authority refers, at least in the processes of schooling, to the teacher. The appearance of that in the *Manifiesto* is very brief and can only be done by inference.

What has been exposed up to this point allows me to form a reflexive circle: from the theory about the nature of the educational relationship (freedom), we turn to the empirical referent (the control of quality produces a reduction of freedom), in order to return to the nature of the pedagogical relationship, but no longer from an essential and almost deontological idea, but to retake the understanding of the type of pedagogical relationship that is fostered and the role of freedom in that educational nature. Therefore, it is not about seeing the educational in itself, in a final and complete dimension, but to see how a particular historical moment produces an idea of education in itself. Also, this reflective circularity –from the theoretical to the empirical to the theoretical– allows me to weave the problem of freedom with the other two aspects recovered from the *Manifiesto*: to understand how, on the flank of

educational research, guided by instrumental logic, they design control devices of the teaching practice; at the same time, that establishes a timeless logic of quality, based on the permanent state of lack of the particular teacher and of the educational system in general.

### Quality of education: historical remnants

If we follow the historical fabric of the quality of education, we can find some knots that fix the narrative. And with them, if we take up the image of the attack on education enunciated by Biesta and Säfström, we can understand quality as the scientific battering ram of the siege against education. These historical knots are: the relationship between the global and the national in the irruption and hegemonic expansion of the concept of quality; the formation and consolidation of educational research as the primary agent of the promotion of said educational policies; and the production of the crisis as a permanent state of the education system. Each one of them has its particularities, but together they allow us to observe how the notions of idealism and populism exposed in the *Manifiesto* are unsatisfac-



"Ceremonial site", collagraph. Marta Arangoa

tory for the Mexican case and in general, for Latin American history, and at the same time, it recognizes the attack on education as a global phenomenon.

A historical summary of educational quality can be constructed in this way<sup>2</sup>: in the sixties of the XX Century, the conditions of possibility for its emergence were created, linking the massification of educational systems, the transformations in capitalism, the accelerated development of technology and various social movements of the new left (feminism, ecologism, critical pedagogies) that did not adhere to orthodox Marxism. The overcrowding brought the opportunity to create the quality crisis with the notion of *trade-off*, in which quantity caused a deficit of quality; the change in labor relations required renewing the link between education and the economic system behind what is called the knowledge society; the new technologies facilitated the long-term construction of more efficient control devices for educational processes on a global scale; at the same time, they modified the very concept of what needs to be learned; and the social struggles demanded libertarian principles that were added up in the educational policies, but first they were emptied of their original revolutionary or transforming pretensions. The same thing happened with critical pedagogies. The works of Philip Coombs are nodal in this aspect<sup>3</sup>, and already in the eighties in our region, the *Main Project of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean* was decisive.

After the return of democracies in Latin America, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the hegemonic expansion of neoliberalism in the nineties of the XX Century, quality felt at ease. At that time, it joined the principles of equity, which left behind the universal policies of social rights and established targeted policies. Also, this decade strengthened old proposals of alternative pedagogies, such as the centrality of the child, and placed the learning results as a nodal point of quality. The control of learning became cardinal in the quality policies, so they dedicated themselves to creating centralized control devices that reduced the autonomy of the school, while offering some curricular flexibility. This led to the large-scale examinations<sup>4</sup> and the founding of national evaluation institutes. In the history of Latin American education, the National Institute for

the Evaluation of Education (INEE) of Mexico is just one more example of this process<sup>5</sup>.

The synthesis shows the historical and geopolitical conditions of educational quality, but it is worth emphasizing that, without the help of national capacities to produce the corresponding global policies, it would not have been possible to implement them. These capabilities are generated by education specialists. There is no attack on education without educational quality and there is no educational quality without educational research.

Educational quality has, as a necessary condition, the capacity of the Education Sciences to consolidate in a nucleus of knowledge and power. In the Mexican case, a substantial part of this process was the foundation in the 1960s of the Educational Studies Center (CEE), directed by Pablo Latapí and Carlos Muñoz Izquierdo. The dynamics of constitution of this particular group and of the field in general, it is not new, nor is its link with public administration. In Mexico, this phenomenon dates back at least to the late XIX Century, but it was not until the mid-twentieth Century when the study of public policies from the social sciences in the United States and Europe, that the dynamics became institutionalized (Rivzi and Lingard, 2013).

In the sixties, young researchers took their postgraduate studies abroad and returned to the country to develop the field of educational research. Despite their conceptual and methodological differences, they share two basic principles of research: a) the researcher as a representative of the cognitive neutrality that allows defining the correctness or not of a policy based on its specialized knowledge; b) the preponderance of a basically instrumental vision.

The first principle, the neutrality of scientific knowledge, allows the group of specialists to position themselves in a locus of enunciation of knowledge above the rest of the population and to sit on the throne of a supposed superior moral capacity. This idea holds that their specialized technical knowledge is only possessed by a few, which is true, and that this knowledge is alien to the political conjunctures, ideological tendencies and petty interests that abound in the educational and political environment, which is not true. They affirm that their concern is scientific and their commitment is only

with the truth. Finally, this positioning also allows them to position themselves as a group of power, but not as they had been doing since the XIX Century and a good part of the XX, when accompanying public policies, but imagined as representatives of civil society that participate in the production of public policies, despite not being voted on in any popular election.

His representation, therefore, is a group of determined power and knowledge. This change occurs especially with the establishment of large-scale educational evaluations by autonomous bodies such as INEE. However, despite the fact that in the conjunctures, let's say the current Peñista educational reform<sup>6</sup>, and have not been able to avoid being splattered by the Mexican political miasma, the ideological principle remains: civil society, represented by specialists, evaluates from neutrality technical the task of educational actors. In this way, they are part of the educational system but create the appearance of maintaining sufficient ethical distance to be able to generate scientific knowledge.

Specialized knowledge, currently extraordinarily developed in Mexico and owner of a great analytical and scientific power, also provides the tools to define what is quality and what is not. Given that, there are many ways to define quality and that, being an evaluative aspect, we all have the right to formulate our own opinion; for public policy it is necessary to reach relatively stable consensus based on technical and methodological principles. The objective of this rationality consists in the technical preoccupation that breaks down a concept and a policy into endless operations and particular behaviors-criteria and indicators-that end up defining it. The quality of education is quality as soon as it can be measured. What cannot be measured or reduced to indicators cannot be improved and, therefore is not susceptible to quality.

This summary allows me to point out three basic elements of the current attack on education, especially that coming from educational research under the shield of quality: a) educational quality is a global phenomenon, so it can be included in the universalism of Biesta and Säfström, but Latin American history shows that there were a series of fundamental conditions that are neither idealistic nor populist, although they do have a predominance of

a positivist and instrumental logic; b) the existence of a solid group of specialists, who design control devices that make education less educational or, if preferred, more statistical; c) symbolic and operative violence, produces a state of fault under the idea of permanent crisis of educational systems in the region. This last section, where the temporal relationship is central to the creation of the crisis feeling, is the core of the following section.

## Science, time and freedom

The assertion of Biesta and Säfström about the timelessness of the tension between “what is” and “what is not yet” of the educational process, as well as their notions of idealism and populism, must be questioned, both by the theoretical tissues that implies as by the possibilities of resistance against the attacks that the education lives. The theoretical aspects lead me to the discussion about the temporality of the educational process, the political aspects to the problem of freedom. In the first section of this article, I mentioned the inherent temporality of the timelessness expressed in the *Manifiesto*, or more exactly, the regime of historicity to which it is ascribed. Here, I want to work on the risk of a timeless vision of the educational process, when it is taken up by quality policies.

When Biesta and Säfström fix their attention on that vital space that is created in the interstice between the field of experience and the horizon of expectation, they recognize the relevance of the present. It is in this hiatus where it articulates the relationship between past and future, or rather, the present extends to the past and to the future. Both the past and the future are present. In this sense, any possibility of historical awareness, understood as the use of the past for action in the present with a view to the future is diluted (Rüsen, 2001).

As the European theorists maintain, the History is “–open to events, to the new and the unexpected– more than as an infinite repetition of what is already or as a march towards a predetermined future that may never come” (Biesta and Säfström, 2011). It is the field of possibility, of uncertainty, of the unknown. It is the story that is about to be made, it is the future history. But this possibility of future history, of change, requires an immovable

permanence, of something that can no longer be modified, but rather the freedom itself as power would be lost: the stable is the atemporal present. In its basic temporal articulation, it is presentism.

Educational quality, as part of the attack on education, is based on the definition of 'what is' to delineate 'what is not' and produce interventions, which do not intend to move from 'what is not' to 'what it is not' yet as it characterizes the populism of Säfström and Biesta, but to deliberately never reach 'what is not'. It is not a predetermined future that we will never really achieve; it is rather a horizon that guides our gaze and our walk, but with each step we take to get closer to it, it moves away from us in the same proportion. In other words, educational quality is self-reproducing in a continuous present, just in the tension between lived past and desired future. The dynamics can be summarized as follows: quality in general, and policies of educational quality in particular, have the purpose of producing legitimated inequality. Based on certain criteria – a comparison table – or a scale, the levels of proximity of an educational practice are measured. Say for example, the teaching processes guided by the teacher in the classroom. The level of proximity or distance occupied by the teacher determines whether it is of good or bad quality. But the scale is relational, so that a teacher is of good quality, necessarily there must be another of poor quality. A quality teacher system works best if the distribution throughout the Gaussian Bell is as ideal as possible, that is, while only a few remain in excellence, a few in the despicable, and most are around the average. The methodology produces a difference in legitimate status.

Quality policies are even more complex in the constitution of his discourse than what has been described so far. Unlike the *presentism* of the *Manifiesto*, which is pure contingency, quality is planning and, therefore, implies, at least declaratively, a future. The present without quality, has the purpose to be realized in a future of quality. This future appears hidden behind the eulogies to education as a salvation from social injustices, but in reality it is nothing more than educational quality in itself. For example, in Mexico, the educational reform in progress, devoted to educational quality in the political constitution as a human right.

Therefore, the quality of education must live in a permanent present, because human rights cannot be postponed. Likewise, educational quality as a human right requires its universality. However, this brings a fundamental contradiction in this educational logic. If the quality of education is relational, that is, there is no good quality without bad quality, as a matter of principle the quality of education cannot be universal. In other words, if we get all our teachers to go up to the top quartile or move to the left side of the Gaussian Bell, there will not be any quartiles or bells and therefore, there will not be the inequality necessary to qualify the teachers or the quality of Education

This leads us to the following reflection, which is also contradictory: for educational quality to be universal, it must, at the same time, be impossible for everyone to achieve. This implies, of course, that in fact it is not universal, but what matters here is the illusion of totality or universality, not that it is actually achieved. The illusion works through the aforementioned horizon effect. The evaluation for the improvement, the permanent improvement of the teacher or the niches of opportunity, are only some ways of producing the effect of totality. At the same time guaranteeing its impossibility. In other words, in the evaluations to the teacher, giving continuity to the example of the teaching quality, it is impossible to obtain a perfect qualification, there will always be something to improve, for which reason we find ourselves in an immovable present: the circle of improvement. It is as if the teleological direction of quality was linear, but in it the teachers lived in a kind of Moebius tape that has a single face and ends where it began: the state of fault. Or, assuming that the teachers manage to improve their indicators, approaching dangerously en masse to the upper quartile, the scale or the table of contrast is modified so that the upper quartile descends a few steps to become a lower or intermediate quartile, but cannot stop never be a quartile.

This brings me to the last point to discuss about the *Manifiesto*: freedom, or more exactly, the relationship between science, freedom and temporal articulation in education. For the dynamics of the present continuous quality of education works, a very specialized technical apparatus is required. In the Mexican case, this

device is the National System of Educational Evaluation, which is responsible for the INEE and has the functions of monitoring the management and educational processes within the classroom.

The emergence of the INEE is not only the product of neoliberal policies that recentralize the curriculum and teacher control, but it is the triumph of a small group of specialists in education, who, under the discourse of the reevaluation of the teacher, determine what is correct or not in education. These principles define what is educational based on the indicators that take away every day more, the freedom of the teacher. However, quality never promises freedom, only autonomy closely linked to management. That is why there is an antinomy: management autonomy/central quality control (Apple, 2012). This partly explains the formula of a higher educational quality, greater teacher de-professionalization.

It is clear that in this aspect, the *Manifiesto for Education* is far from the proposal of the quality of education, because while the former is based on

an ethics of subjectivity [of] the ways in which the subject appears as someone through responsible response to what and who is the other. A politics of emancipation focuses on the moment in which the subject speaks in a way that is not repetition or self-affirmation, but brings something new to the world. An aesthetic of freedom highlights the way in which common sense is transformed by assuming equality in a situation of inequity (Biesta and Säfström, 2011: 542).

The second ones have as their principle the central management of educational processes. Quality is the enemy of subjectivity, of freedom as equality and, of course, of emancipation. However, the latter understood in the temporal articulation of a continuous present that produces the novelty of future history, finds in the *Manifiesto* an astonishing similarity with the discourses of educational innovation.

Innovation –and emancipation understood as such– demand from educational processes the constant production of originality, in continuous denial of history and a central element of education, utopian hope. Emancipation

cannot be limited, from my point of view, to the rejection of the past and mere innovation, but part of freedom lies in the possibility of consciously choosing that we inherit from the past. Emancipation can also involve repetition. Likewise, emancipation without a future, in constant innovation, can offer individual freedom, but not collective freedom. This can be seen in the fact that the historical invariable *Manifiesto* –and the quality– is only sustained in a type of temporal articulation. What happens, for example, in those temporary articulations where the future is behind, as in the case of many indigenous communities in Latin America or with those other cultural forms of temporal articulation?<sup>7</sup> Plain and simple, they are excluded from the *Manifiesto* and of the quality of education.

### Time and freedom in education

The history of education is replete with antinomies, but what I have presented here is not exactly one more. It is, rather, a theoretical and political antagonism in which both parties have the same temporal articulation, producing relatively similar effects in some of its elements and irreconcilable in others. The notion of the educational process in the tension between “what is not yet” and “what is” of Biesta and Säfström occurs within a larger historicity regime in which the present becomes all sense of action. On the other hand, educational research that converts educational quality into education, lives in the same historicity regime, presentism, through a state of permanent lack. Likewise, both positions, by promoting the present as a single moment, limit or frankly exclude, freedom as an essential part of education. While quality simply controls it with the shackles of indicators, European theorists constrain it to a form of temporal articulation –the present as a single time– that excludes other forms of temporal relationship and therefore other ways of being free. The foregoing shows that defining the tension between “what is not” and “what is” education as the ultimate component of education is the least insufficient, since it is not the tension itself that is educational, but the divergent effects what it produces.

The antagonism discussed here is a sign of this divergence. While for quality it is the mo-



ment of self-reproduction of the educational or more exactly of the quality control devices at the hands of the educational experts, for Säfström and Biesta it is the space of dissidence, of the future history, of the freedom. However, by looking at this dissent from historical and cultural contexts of the western periphery, we can illustrate the constraint of the universality of the *Manifesto*, beyond the deficiencies in the use of the terms of idealism and populism. In this case, by promoting the present moment as a single time, there is only the possibility of the freedom of the other as an individual, not as a collectivity. In this sense, although the *Manifesto* shares the emancipatory principle with, for example, Latin American popular education, its concepts of freedom are different: one refers to the self, the other refers to us.

The conceptual fabric between time and freedom as a central component of the education enunciated in the *Manifesto for Education*, opens without a number of possibilities for reflection on education, all of them in resistance to attacks on education by prescriptive science and instrumental. One of them is the criticism of the notion of timelessness, since it makes the diverse production of freedoms impossible. For this reason, a view from other historical and cultural references allows us to commune with the basic principles of the *Manifesto*, while at the same time questioning them, as part of the dissent to which the text itself exhorts.

The central ideas of this section are taken from the conclusions of this investigation.

- 3 The book *The Worldwide Crisis of Education* by Phillip H. Coombs (1971) had a significant impact in Mexico and Latin America. Coombs was a functionalist typical of the stage of educational planning and developmentalism. For him the positive Social Sciences are a neutral configuration of knowledge, he trusts in the central role of the State in the transformation of the educational system, it is universalist and defends planning as a rational thought that can be applied to public policies independently of cultural and historical contexts in which they are carried out. His instrumental vision is a constituent part of the new attack on education.
- 4 There are many international evaluations. Two of the most important –and famous– are the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). In the case of Latin America, the three applied by the Latin American Laboratory of Educational Quality are called Regional, Comparative and Explanatory Studies, which by their abbreviations are called PERCE (First), SERCE (Second) and TERCE (Third), and were implemented in 1997, 2006 and 2013 respectively.
- 5 Currently all the countries of the region have institutions dedicated exclusively to the evaluation of education and although not all have the term of quality in their name, they include it in their approach and in their objectives. At a regional level, the Latin American Laboratory for the Evaluation of Educational Quality of UNESCO is held. At the national level, there is the National Institute for Educational Evaluation in Mexico, the Unit for Measuring Educational Quality in Peru, the National Directorate of Information and Evaluation of Educational Quality in Argentina, the National Institute for Studies and Educational Research Anísio Teixeira de Brazil, the Agency for the Quality of Education in Chile, the Colombian Institute for the Evaluation of Education, the Management and Evaluation of Quality in Costa Rica, the National Institute of Ecuadorian Educational Evaluation, the General Directorate of Evaluation and Research Education in Guatemala, in Honduras, the General Directorate for the Evaluation of the Quality of Education, the National Directorate of Educational Evaluation in Panama, the Paraguayan General Directorate for Educational Planning, in Uruguay, the Research, Evaluation and Statistics Division and in Bolivia, Plurinational Observatory of Educational Quality, among others.
- 6 Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto (2012-2018) initiated eleven structural reforms from the first days of his government. The first to be carried out, at least in the necessary legal changes, was the educational reform. Some of its main characteristics are: it converted the educational quality into a right safeguarded by the constitution, it gave autonomy to the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (INEE), it developed the National System of Educational Evaluation and created the Professional Teaching Service, which puts teachers in highly unstable working conditions. The education experts, members of the Governing Board of the INEE, have been major players

## Notes

Traducción al inglés: Laura Proasi (Grupo GIEEC-CI-MED-UNMDP)

- 1 This historical process, which goes back in some countries back to the nineteenth century and the twentieth, has its breaking point between 1950 and 1970. It was in those decades that the profile was modified and although today there is still pedagogy and science of education, we can say that in this historical period the step was taken from pedagogy to the education sciences (Pontón, 2011). A historical notes that summarize in a very specific way the institutionalization –which I call professionalization– can be seen in Gorostiaga, Tello and Isola (2012).
- 2 To read a historical account of the quality of education in Mexico and Latin America, see Plá (in press).

in the reform, especially regarding the evaluation of the teacher and the establishment of self-peer mechanisms of these policies.

- 7 Boaventura de Sousa Santos, exposes with clarity how a political antagonism can be mediated by different conceptions of time. On the conflict between former President Rafael Correa and indigenous communities that opposed oil exploitation in the Yasuni National Park in Ecuador of the Amazon in 2007, Sousa Santos writes: "Correa's time is the linear time of western modernity, the time of the progress. Indigenous time is a cyclical time, in which what is before is also what is behind, in which the ancestral is part of the present. Second, different conceptions of rhythm. Correa's rhythm is the accelerated and dizzying pace of political action so as not to lose more time after such a long history of underdevelopment. Dialogue, when you have the votes, is a waste of time. Effectiveness is measured by results and the urgency of tasks demands speed. For the Indians, diversity is patience, rhythm is peasant and cosmic, human actions mature like fruits and trees. The community decision is what counts and demands time to be built, and it also involves not only those who live today, but also the ancestors. His historical experience is that the urgency and effectiveness of results (for whom?) Have always been invoked, since the Conquest, to justify the violation of their rights, to force displacements, in short to justify theft and death" (De Sousa Santos, 2010: 122).
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