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AUTHOR Tapanes, Tomas
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ABSTRACT

Lifelong education in Cuba is seen in a socioeconomic context. The characteristics of lifelong education in Cuba are implicit in its revolutionary setting, and the task of carrying it through has become an obligation and a right affecting every citizen. The training of teachers is at present the center of greatest effort. The Literacy Campaign, which mobilized every political or mass organization, abolished illiteracy within one year. Adult education is offered in elementary education, secondary course of worker education, worker-farmer faculty, language teaching, and youth movement. Classes are held in almost any location, and sessions are adapted to the industrial or agricultural area. The government is active in facilitating the incorporation of women into the political, economic, and social development through special literacy, technical and other educational programs. Youth movement schools were established to promote and organize the education of adolescent pupils above the age for elementary schools. Teacher training includes study and research on educational subjects, active participation in the educational workshop, and participation in People's Cultural Circles and in literary and scientific seminars. The circles and seminars are part of a governmental effort to make Cuban education an integrated and continuous process. (KM)

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ADULT EDUCATION AS PART OF LIFE-LONG EDUCATION

by

Tomás TAPANES

(Cuba)

This study is intended to serve as a working document at the International Round Table on Life-long Education. The opinions expressed are the author's own, for which Unesco does not assume responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

The development of life-long education in Cuba stems from the revolutionary process itself and is thus based on the profound economic and social changes that have taken place there since the triumph of the Revolution.

In 1959, as the result of an unjust social system marked by the accumulation of immense riches in a few hands and the poverty of the many, the population contained about one million illiterates, and such was the educational system that barely one half of the population of school age attended elementary school, while enrolments at secondary and higher education levels were even more restricted; in addition there were serious qualitative problems and no link existed between education and the development of the country.

This distorted and neglected educational system imposed on Cuba by imperialist exploitation was swept aside by the revolutionary victory of 1959, which radically changed that oppressive structure by creating the necessary conditions for incorporation of the Cuban people in the changes brought about by the scientific and technical revolution taking place in the world. This was not - and is not - an easy task, starting from the low level of technical and cultural development inherited from the colonial régime under imperialist domination. Suitable means had to be created for mobilizing the resources of the country on a planned basis so as to carry out projects capable of turning Cuba from an underdeveloped country into a developed, enlightened and truly free country.

The laws on Agrarian Reform, nationalizations and other important laws passed gave the educational system the required impetus both quantitatively and qualitatively, so that from then onwards, with the increasing participation of the organized masses, education became closely linked with social practice, and educational theory with productive work and basic vocational technological principles.

The mass school enrolment of children and young people and the new collective forms of social action based on work and the defence of the Socialist fatherland strengthened pupils' ideological principles and incorporated them as active participants in the revolutionary movement.

With the development of a social awareness in which values have acquired a new dimension, the schools and universities are filled to overflowing; their integration with work in the production centres and planned services is an aspect of the training they give, and they embrace the whole social spectrum. In spite of temporary limitations and deficiencies that have to be faced, we are all consciously working towards fulfilment of Che Guevara's maxim: "Society in general must become one gigantic school".

With a unified, totally free and compulsory educational system dedicated to the ultimate aims of the Revolution, education as a whole being considered a priority duty and right of every citizen; with the increasing assistance provided by community services and by cultural, sports and artistic institutions participating in the integral training process, and with the constant drive given by the Party, the Union of Young Communists and the mass organizations, our global education has acquired the mass scope and continuity which it is able to display before the whole world as a material and progressive demonstration of life-long education.

For the above reasons, we in Cuba are unable to conceive of life-long education in the abstract or as a spontaneous process, for we see it in a socio-economic context and as bound up with the social characteristics of the country in which it is practised.

The characteristics of life-long education in our country are implicit in its revolutionary setting, and the task of carrying it through has become an obligation and a right affecting every individual citizen, not as a means of separate individual survival, but as part of a community effort on behalf of what our Revolution regards as of supreme importance - the human being.

The national system of education

The system is based upon the organization of instruction according to the various educational levels and types composing the structure of the Ministry of Education and includes:

- General education
- Special education
- Technical and professional education
- Out-of-school education
- Higher education
- Teacher training
- Adult and youth movement education

General education is divided into three levels:

- Primary
- Secondary
- Pre-university

Primary education is open to all children and includes the pre-school course and the 1st to 6th grades of primary school.

Secondary education includes the basic secondary schools from the 7th to 10th grades and the pre-university course from the 11th to 13th grades.

Technical and professional education includes industrial education, agricultural education, and education in economics and administration for training medium-grade technicians and skilled workers in the various branches of production and planned services.

Our higher education system has been harmoniously adapted to the structural changes brought about by the Revolution. The University, having cast off the shackles which bound it to the old form of society, has thrown itself fully into national life and is closely associated with the development of the country.

The training of teachers has been one of the determining objectives of the educational work carried out by the Revolution. It is obvious that, for a country that has given priority to education and that has in practice materialized the right of all its citizens to receive education, the problems of training and providing professional growth to teachers have been, and are at present, the centre of our greatest efforts.

The essential change in the training of our teaching personnel has involved the approach, orientation and content of teaching in accordance with the ideology of the Revolution, which determines a training based on a high moral concept, a spirit of sacrifice and endeavour, professional efficiency and a very well defined concept of the revolutionary duties of the young Cuban teacher in relation to the liberation struggles of the exploited peoples of America and the world over.

Teacher training curricula are suitably articulated and closely linked with the general secondary, technological and higher education courses, and with education and work in general, as a procedure for applying the principles of our educational policy.

In addition, the vocational guidance plans and professional guidance services which continue to be developed, participation in cultural and sports activities, the scientific and technical interest circles, the Pioneer Movement, the political and mass organizations of students, and other types of institution lend cohesion and unity to an educational policy aiming at ensuring a nation-wide and integral educational system.

ADULT EDUCATION

Background

The Literacy Campaign is an important landmark in the education of the country, a general outline of which we gave at the beginning of this report.

Together with immediate measures for giving every child access to education, energetic, planned steps are being taken to eradicate illiteracy, which used to affect 23.6% of the population, reaching sensational proportions in rural areas with a figure of 41%. This proportion of illiterates was a reflection of their social origin and geographical location, for the zones with the highest percentage of illiteracy were the agricultural zones and the poor, unemployed working quarters in the towns.

The Literacy Campaign was a well organized undertaking which, under the leadership of the Ministry of Education, mobilized every single political or mass organization; all these, incorporated in the National Council of Education, unified and systematized the Campaign, with the result that in one year it was possible to say that illiteracy had been banished from Cuban territory.

The old notions of fighting ignorance and of considering literacy training as an isolated and terminal educational fact, instead of a permanent social combat, received their death-blow with the 1961 Campaign, which introduced the fundamental principle of mass-oriented action in revolutionary educational strategy. Its successful outcome was not solely due to sound organization and the resources mobilized in the great task; to these must be added the motivational impetus which the Revolution, with its structural modifications, succeeded in arousing among the masses, leading to the social awareness and creative spirit needed to bring together literacy trainers and trainees, young people and adults, and instilling in them, in addition to the knowledge of reading and writing, political and social knowledge enabling them to take an active part in all the developments of the revolutionary process and to realize that fighting ignorance means fighting the causes of ignorance.

These activities formed the basis on which the system of Adult Education in Cuba was built, its post-literacy activities continuing in 1962 with the establishment of the Worker-Farmer Faculty, which organized two courses, a Follow-up Course and a Workers Education Course.

The structure of the Worker-Farmer Faculty was characterized from then on by a combined system in which organization, administration and technical instruction were organically linked for pursuing the educational process. This Faculty also became a department of the Ministry of Education and was closely linked with political and mass organizations incorporated in the National Council of Education.

The experience acquired during the Campaign served as guidelines for evolving organization and technical methods applicable to adult education, the laws and principles of which were discovered through day-to-day practice and implemented in the preparation of curricula, teaching methods and manuals specially designed for adults, and in the formulation of appropriate rules for this type of instruction.

Development

The adult education system in Cuba has not been static. Its development has been conditioned by the revolutionary process itself. That is why traditional methods have been revised and replaced by radically different ones, thus making each educational course available to an average of half a million adults.

Teaching personnel

This task called for the services of teachers with a certain specialized training. However, it is not easy to find teachers in sufficient numbers and with the appropriate training. Nevertheless, all the activities were able to be carried out, though not always up to the required standard, but endeavouring to satisfy the needs of the situation. Teachers were drawn from the ranks of the workers themselves, from mass or political organizations, and from various sections of the population; their training was in the hands of technicians with specialized experience in adult education. The maxim adopted in the early days of the literacy campaign still holds good: "The one with more knowledge must teach the one with less".

Present situation

Adult education, which began in 1962, has during ten years developed different forms of teaching, that in the present stage constitute an educational system organized and endowed with a structure that binds it closely to the plans of national development, with the support of political and mass organizations.

The levels and cycles of adult education are the following:

(a) Elementary education

- (a) Literacy
- (b) First Level
- (c) Second Level
- (d) Third Level
- (e) Fourth Level

- (b) Secondary Course of Worker Education (CSSO) with a duration of two semesters, equivalent to that of seventh grade general education.
- (c) Worker-Farmer Faculty (FOC), with a duration of eight semesters and articulated with higher education.
- (d) Language Teaching. Course with a duration of from four to seven semesters, depending on the language.
- (e) Youth Movement, which maintains the same levels as adult education, but with objectives, content, programmes and duration of courses adjusted to the characteristics of the adolescent with a low educational level.

Adult education includes the following educational institutions:

- (a) Day and night schools
- (b) Schools in factories
- (c) Worker-farmer faculty
- (d) Special plan schools
- (e) Agency sponsored schools
- (f) Youth column schools
- (g) Residual illiteracy classrooms
- (h) Family reading circles
- (i) Language schools

It has been necessary to ensure flexibility and variety in scholastic calendars, time-tables and types of school in order to bring the education of the masses into conformity with production, which calls for continually increasing participation by the Cuban people in maintaining the country's development.

The content of study programmes is arranged in courses lasting one semester; their short duration enables students to attain a definite level of knowledge without giving up their productive work or patriotic defence service.

Scholastic calendars are as follows:

Normal, for adults in urban and non-sugar-growing rural areas, beginning in September and ending in June.

Sugar plantation, for adults in sugar-growing areas; from May to December.

Montana, for adults in coffee-producing areas; from January to August.

The schools operate in night centres, factories, organizational premises, and even in private homes, in an effort to abolish the last vestiges of residual illiteracy.

Time-tables are adapted to the requirements of the industrial or agricultural plant and include early morning, evening or night classes of varying duration.

The mass organizations, industrial undertakings and trade unions are jointly responsible for the setting up of classrooms and for ensuring adherence to time-tables and students' regular attendance; they also provide those most highly qualified among their ranks as teachers, and co-operate with the latter in the organization and development of their activities. The plan of professional emulation provides for the cultural and political education of the workers.

Night schools and comprehensive centres possess a school council composed of representatives of the people's educational agencies (CIC, UJC, CDR, FMC and ANAP). The function of such a council is to analyse the problems of the school or centre and help in their solution; reinforce community-school relationships, and promote the specific activities of each organization. Pupils of the school or centre are represented on the school council.

Work centres possess a training committee whose main function is to reconcile cultural education with workmen's qualifications programmes. Representatives of the trade union, the administration and political organizations are on the Committee.

The Secondary Workers' Education Course provides workers with the necessary knowledge enabling them to derive greater benefit from cultural productions, increased technical and moral qualifications for participating in industrial activities, and enables them to continue improving their education at the secondary level.

Worker-farmer faculties raise the cultural level of their pupils by offering them a preparatory secondary course in the humanities and science, without neglecting their all-round training, and enabling them to enter university to prepare for careers contributing toward the country's scientific and technical development.

The faculties articulated with the various training sectors, although they also facilitate the access of worker students to the university, are primarily devoted to the training of skilled manpower.

The increased scope of university education through the inclusion of regular practical work in the activities of students offers at the same time new possibilities in the process of incorporating workers in general and technological courses of study, and especially university studies. In the same way as the schools, secondary training courses and faculties established in production centres and public services are moving towards closer collaboration in the need to train technicians, greater adaptability to working conditions, and a more direct participation by such centres in the training and education of their workers.

The training and education of militants and cadres of the political and mass organizations, the in-service training specifically related to the tasks performed by workers in the branches of productive and planned service agencies, cultural and technical education, as a preliminary to the re-education of prisoners, and other activities have brought about the establishment of Special Schools, which adapt their scholastic calendars, time-tables organization methods and programmes to meet the particular needs of each case.

This sector, so closely linked with the productive agencies and their technical training needs and with national planning, is in a stage of development and improvement. The experiment, which began with the Polytechnic Centre of Cienfuegos, under the sponsorship of Unesco, offers encouraging prospects for the training of skilled manpower by providing instruction for workers at their own place of work, and increasing participation by engineers and technicians in programming and teaching.

The rôle played by Cuban women in all the various tasks - political, productive, technical, instructional and artistic - is highly significant and positive evidence of life-long education.

The system of co-education is applied at all levels and in all types of education, as being a primordial factor in social development.

The Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) heads an important movement for facilitating the extensive incorporation of women in the political, economic and social development of the country, and among its work plans education occupies a privileged place; woman's rôle in education is seen as a double one: attention to her own educational development and aid in upholding her children's educational obligations.

The Vice-Ministry of Adult Education and the Federation co-ordinated their efforts on behalf of:

- (a) Women's admission to the various branches of instruction provided by Adult Education.
- (b) Opening of special day classes for housewives.
- (c) Opening of special classes where women can learn domestic skills (tailoring and dressmaking, craftsmanship, etc.) while at the same time improving their cultural background and acquiring the necessary knowledge for looking after their children.
- (d) Seeking out women in remote districts who have remained illiterate, and providing facilities for them in Reading Circles.
- (e) Supervision of technical courses for training skilled female workers.

With the object of facilitating women's participation, the Federation undertakes the direct management of infant schools and of the Child Institute, so that children of working mothers may be appropriately reared.

Language schools operate as night centres at the disposal of the workers, on the premises of secondary basic and primary schools and, sometimes, on their own premises.

The purpose of these schools is to give workers attending them a basic knowledge of the language enabling them to understand, speak, read and write it and so be able to contribute more effectively toward the country's economic, technical and cultural development; and at the same time to tighten the bonds of friendship and solidarity between the peoples of the world.

The principal languages taught are English, Russian, French and German. There are also classes in Italian, Czech, Chinese, Hungarian, Portuguese, and other languages, depending on the qualifications of teachers. An important addition is Spanish for foreigners.

Language teaching is also concerned with teacher training through the Maxim Gorki Language Teacher Training Institute and various preparatory training schools for satisfying the growing demand for learning foreign languages. The training of translators and interpreters is carried out in a special institute for that purpose.

Youth movement

The existence of school wastage is unjust and its consequences take the form of anti-social behaviour for which the social system as a whole is responsible, since at the bottom of abandoning school lie socio-economic problems relating to the lack of appropriate educational attention given to children and young people. School wastage and "over-ageness" are themselves a denunciation of the exploitation forced upon peoples, and are far from expressing the true feelings of the children or young people who cease to attend school because the above-mentioned conditions make it impossible for them to remain there.

The pernicious social effects of this expulsion of children and young people from the field of education are seen when a country sets out upon the path of rapid development. Cuba is an example of how, when the socio-economic structure is changed, it is possible to eliminate both school wastage and educational backwardness, through the adoption of revolutionary educational methods appropriate to the situation.

Various types of youth movement schools were established with the purpose of promoting, organizing and controlling the raising of the educational level of over-age pupils between 13 and 16 years old and enabling them at the same time to learn a trade through a joint course of theoretical and practical instruction.

In the early stages, as a result of local circumstances and production requirements, these schools underwent transformations that led to various forms or types such as youth classrooms, youth centres, vocational centres, shop-schools and others, until the passing of Decree No. 3664/71 by the Revolutionary Government, when they were officially designated as shop-schools, youth centres, vocational youth schools and pre-columns.

These institutions are an appropriate means of combating school wastage and backwardness, while at the same time ensuring the recuperation of a section of youth (which if left to itself would be a fruitful source of anti-social behaviour), by reincorporating it in an existence offering ample scope for acquiring an education and qualifications, thereby creating a supply of skilled manpower for various sectors of production. The school system for young persons with a low educational level, which forms a parallel educational course, combines, moreover, the need for reintegrating young drop-outs of both sexes in the educational system with that of filling important gaps in skilled manpower for the different branches of production and planned services.

The youth movement schools are based upon a complete reciprocal relationship between theory and practice, intellectual studies and work, and between schooling and the revolutionary society we are in process of building.

The curricula and syllabuses of these schools are prepared with due regard for differences of age and degrees of low educational level of pupils, and the opportunities they have for studying.

Sports and cultural activities are organized in conjunction with work in the classrooms and outside, and student associations are developed (such as the Roberto Rodríguez Brigade "El Vaquerito"), with the object of giving pupils an all-round training.

Training and in-service training of teaching personnel

The extension and variety of educational sectors and types of school, the variations in environmental and student characteristics we have described above, all point to the tremendous task it has been, for years, to provide teaching personnel trained and equipped to meet such an assortment of needs.

This training process, while able to count upon vast human resources among the population, has had to be carried out gradually in a variety of ways, through the organization of introductory courses, basic preparatory seminars, permanent seminars, national seminars, and seminars for cadres.

The preparatory courses are held in provincial boarding-schools, where candidates for the teaching profession undergo an initial training that enables them to take a job as teacher whilst completing their training in permanent or weekend seminars. These have been established for the in-service training of teachers; they are held once a week and last six hours; attendance is obligatory. This educational institution is considered the basic one.

Technical assistance adds to the teacher's qualifications for his professional work and stimulates his capacity for undertaking essentially practical activities connected with study and research, and developing enterprising methods in the organization and promotion of the school plan. It includes:

- (i) study and research on educational subjects;
- (ii) active participation in the educational workshop where practical classes are held, activities are planned, the class plan is drawn up and teaching media are prepared;
- (iii) participation in People's Cultural Circles and in literary and scientific seminars.

Where greater urgency is called for, basic preparatory seminars are organized with a minimum duration of 15 weeks, where students acquire the basic knowledge and practical experience for enabling them to work as teachers. This preparatory course is completed by attending permanent seminars.

National seminars are organized for principals and technical advisers to enable them to acquire a more thorough knowledge of specific subjects such as school organization, educational psychology, educational technology, etc.

In these seminars, which are held three or four times a year, organizational problems and innovations within the system are analysed, as well as crucial educational questions.

Seminars for cadres are held at the national and provincial levels for the purpose of in-service training of technical and management personnel in special educational sectors. In the various preparatory and in-service training institutions for teachers (including workers' faculties and training sectors) work is based on practical instruction leading to a thorough understanding of the methodology of educational organization, the development of a social sense among teachers and the most active and widespread adult participation under the principle of "learning to do a job by doing it".

When referring to the systems for the preparatory and in-service training of teaching personnel engaged in adult education, it must be borne in mind that many of our teachers in the Worker-Farmer Faculty have the merit of being working teachers whose revolutionary standards and zeal fit them to be voluntary teachers of their workmates, without this entailing the abandonment of their task as producers. Numerous workers also function as instructors in shop-schools or training courses. The rôle of monitors has also been developed at all levels, as a means of utilizing various available forms of participation both as students and as teachers of fellow-students.

Increased participation by the workers' movement ensures a steady supply of teachers in the immediate future of teachers combining the necessary technical qualifications with practical experience in industry.

Innovational experiments

With the creation by the Revolution of the objective and subjective conditions for a global and systematic use of all the cultural potentialities possessed by the community, and the elimination of mutual opposition between the educational system and society, it became materially possible to diversify the educational opportunities provided; to start from the basis of the adult's specific nature as a receptacle of knowledge, and to endow educational institutions with great powers of attraction. In this way, the Vice-Ministry of Adult Education organizes the People's Cultural Circles, Literary and Scientific Seminars and Internal Educational Institutions, as systematized educational patterns for helping to form Cuban education into an integrated and continuous process.

The People's Cultural Circles, with the human resources (scientific, technical and humanistic) and material resources (conference halls, printing presses and mass communication media) possessed by the localities, offer cycles of varying duration (between 8 and 16 sessions) on various subjects in over one hundred institutions distributed throughout the country. These cycles are programmed by the Board of Management, and are based on an inventory of the manpower resources available and the ascertaining of preferences through holding inquiries; the Board also directs publication, supervises enrolment and attendance, ensures the due carrying out of curricula, and distributes participation vouchers.

The purpose of the Literary and Scientific Seminars, which are organized in the hundred in the various branches of the Vice-Ministry of Adult Education, is to encourage the reading habit and autodidacticism through the discussion and analysis of literary works.

The rôle of the Internal Educational Institutions, which have been greatly developed in the youth movement, is to forge a functional link between schools of whatever type and the community through activities such as a choral society, political or scientific study circle, theatre group, school garden, library, or

murals - all of which help to develop abilities and skills that last through life, at the same time opening up new vistas with regard to everyday work and social cooperation. The variety of these institutions encourages students to participate in some of them while, on the other hand, enjoying the benefits of all of them.

CONCLUSION

The system of adult education organized by the Ministry of Education that we have been describing, and within the framework of which our practical experience is expressed, is very far from representing the total effort our country is making on behalf of life-long education. The scope of that effort is much greater, extending to the impact of activities carried out by the political and mass organizations and the productive and planned service agencies through their training departments.

To this should be added the educational work of the country's mass means of communication and social services, inasmuch as the press, radio, cinema, television, museums, libraries, exhibitions, theatres and assemblies are valuable instruments and forms of life-long education.

In its conclusions, the Latin American Seminar on Adult Education (Cuba, March 1972) sponsored by the Vice-Ministry of Adult Education and CREFAL, expressed the view that ... "Adult education in Cuba is a prospective expression of life-long education because of:

"The mass nature of adult education in Cuba and its extension over a considerable period of human life - which in this case starts in adolescence and ends in old age - helps to consolidate the quantitative aspects of life-long education.

The global character of the educational system enables qualitative aspects of adult education to be understood which increase its impact within the scheme of life-long education.

In the first place, it is clear that all the factors included in the economic and social framework are present in educational action. From the economic standpoint: the technical training and preparation of the individual for his double rôle as producer and consumer.

From the social standpoint, the rôle of the political and mass organizations which to a large extent help in maintaining unanimity of view about education.

Concern in this field is shared by fathers and sons, by men and women. It can be seen that to equip oneself educationally is just as much a moral duty as to equip oneself for a trade. Whoever is neither working nor studying feels himself to be morally a pariah, and society has in this respect created its own sanctions, with the result that education is not only a right and a duty, but is also regarded as a prerequisite for development.

From the political standpoint, preparation for direct participation in the analysis and search for solutions to common problems, in a spirit of solidarity,

which leads to the adoption of such decisions as are most suitable for building the new society.

The non-systematized forms of education, the work carried out by the cultural agencies of the community (libraries, museums, theatres, and so on), the system of participation which encourages the mass practice of sports and leisure activities, have also been shown to be valuable contributions toward life-long education.

It is considered that in this respect the mass media fulfil a very important function, not only because they constitute an educational resource in themselves, but also because of their daily invitation to participate through radio, television, press, cinema, mass production of books."

A number of participants, after their observations and experiences, agreed in subscribing to the notion of "Cuba as a gigantic school".

And it may well be that Cuba is, in fact, one enormous school, for in carrying out our idea of complete, continuous, mass and life-long education, there have converged upon the Ministry of Education the efforts of the cultural agencies of the community, the mass media, the political and mass organizations, the production and service agencies - in short, society as a body - all working with equal enthusiasm, all sharing the same ideals in the cause of education.

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