

ΣΟΦΙΑ—SOPHIA

Challenges of Secondary Education in Argentina: Thinking together some necessary and possible transformations

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Abstract

Starting from the knowledge acquired in a study on characteristics and processes of Secondary Education in Argentina during the period 2000-2010, which was carried out to identify the main challenges and possibilities of this part of the education system, this article presents some proposals for change that involve the necessary and possible transformations to contribute to the reorganization of this education level, as an alternative to a hierarchic approach up-bottom or bottom-up, which places governments in the upper part, and those working at school in the bottom, other logic and dynamics are proposed for these relationships. From such relationships, some priority actions are included for education policies at school (micro), provincial (meso) and federal (macro) levels, with special attention to their interactions. The central idea lies on the need of a truly implementation of changes agreed at federal level by the subjects (individuals and institutions), who are the reason of education existence: the jurisdictions and schools.

Keywords: Organizational change, secondary education, educational policy, state policy, education sciences

Introduction

In the process of educational change, thinking and educating from a constructive perspective involves embracing the legacy of knowledge, practices and beliefs accumulated in the past (to revalue it and also to challenge it), interpreting the signs of new scenarios with openness to current innovations, and foreseeing and building the best possible futures. This is the perspective that, in our research on Secondary Education in Argentina, has pushed us to go beyond the characterization and contextualization of this educational journey in the first decade of the 21st century in Argentina, to assume a prospect of change, with the conviction that quality is possible by generating conditions of equity in educational trajectories, from established and innovative institutional arrangements, from better institutional climates, from richer learning experiences for secondary school youths, from agreements between educational and social actors, and provincial and national policies - that sustain and guide the change.

The intention is to contribute to the processes of re-signification in secondary school, starting from the recognition of the aspects that should be modified (because of their already proven inefficiency), those that demand a review due to the new requirements of the time - and those that should remain and become stronger because they give meaning to the educational function in each of the scales/territories that make up the national educational system. We speak of re-meaning because we understand that it is necessary to unravel the meanings implied in the languages, stories and grammars of the secondary school to create new narratives that give an indication or clue of a different reality.

The starting point of the projections reviewed in this article is the idea that the re-signification of Secondary Education, as a national system, depends to a great extent on a real appropriation of the changes agreed at the federal level on part of the subjects (persons and institutions) that give life to education: the jurisdictions and the schools. Correlatively, we advocate other logics for these relationships, so that, as an alternative to a top-down or reverse hierarchical approach, which places governments at the top and those who work in schools at the bottom, to be possible to conceive a set of concentric circles at the core of which students and their families are interacting with their teachers at school, and from which, relationships are extended to encompass community, region/area/district, the province/jurisdiction, and the National State.

When considering the various influential factors in Secondary Education, a representation, such as the one we are proposing now, allows us to work with an image of simultaneous relationships that circulate from the inside out, and from outside in (Darling-Hammond, 2001), or as Martinic (2001) argues - of relationships built in and out. Thus, interactions and influences are multidirectional: each and every component conforms and is shaped by others. As Darling-Hammond (2001) argues: "It is not plausible a hard view of the reform undertaken from above, nor a romantic one, left to the brink of spontaneous changes from the foundations. Both local imagination and political leadership are necessary" (page 274). This is the framework from which we next outline some guidelines that could contribute to the desired re-signification.

Educational policies in the school environment (micropolitics)

In this area, management should aim to promote the quality of education, seeking the conditions necessary for the inclusion, recognition, integration and educational achievement of all young people in compulsory education. This means considering the school as an organization, as a school system (micro) that is part of an educational system (meso/macro); as an institution in situation, perfectible, intelligent, sensitive, democratic, ethical, dynamic, constructive and enterprising; with the capacity to grow from a common plan or project (with the inherent encounters and disagreements) focused on teaching and learning in context. We believe that this would be a propitious field in which each secondary school considered as a pedagogical and organizational unit - decisions were taken, in a democratic and participative way, in accordance with the current national and provincial guidelines, while at the same time making their own proposals according to the history, the culture and the context of each institution, in a movement that relates the global and the local.

An open and flexible plan of action (Institutional Educational Plan -IEP-), composed by systematic, coordinated, whole and integrated activities would facilitate the vision of the whole, without losing sight of the centrality of the pedagogical as framework of action. It is in this project that all the programs and projects that, from the jurisdictional as well as the national instance, arrive at schools, in order to strengthen the teaching to enhance the learning of all the students. This way, it would be avoided the disjointed proliferation that is the sum of projects, which fragments the management - rather than integrate it - and that prevents innovations from happening.

It is imperative that the educational task of each institution be focused on its students and on the achievement of a more and better learnings, which means thinking schools with the capacity to identify needs and articulate answers according to recognizing, valuing and developing the potentialities of all and each one of the students; and that guarantee the right to learn. Only in this way it is possible to reach quality with pertinence, relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and equity (Orealc/Unesco, 2007; Blanco, et al 2008). In this context, a reflective review of teaching practices is required in order to generate changes in the institutional culture that makes it possible to approach problems as opportunities to deepen inclusion processes. This

is also the area where the times and spaces can be generated and sustained, necessary for educators to boost their professional development by focusing on school (Vezub, 2009, Lombardi and Vollmer, 2010).

Likewise, it is an imperative of school management to enable channels of participation and concert, so that all the subjects involved in the training process (managers, teachers, students, alumni, families, representatives of civil society organizations, businessmen, etc.) assume their role as committed protagonists, and not as mere transmitters or spectators (Blejmar, 2005, Ferreyra and Peretti, 2006, Ferreyra 2009, Romero 2009, Bolivar 2009). Only in this way it is possible to build in networks an educational community that gives life and seeks intra- and inter-institutional strengthening. We understand that it is in this line where it is included the movement of “good schools”, “inclusive schools”, *i.e.*, “schools that work well”, that are willing to modify management practices and concentrate efforts on the quality of education and human promotion, generating changes that translate into innovations inward and outward, depending on the proximity with the participants, the requirements of the community of belonging, and within the framework of the educational system.

Educational policies at provincial level (meso-policy)

In this field, the challenge is twofold: to sustain and deepen the processes of participation in the Federal Council of Education (CFE)¹ and, at the same time, to move from the emphasis placed on the knowledge of the prescriptions contained in the agreements issued by this body to its effective appropriation, through a systematic work with the technical teams, supervisors, managers and classroom teachers. The process may begin taking into account the degree of implementation that each jurisdiction has reached with respect to the different agreements, by redefining the meaning and functions of Secondary Education by virtue of its compulsory character (Basic and Oriented Cycle) or, by default, reviewing the process of changes in progress taking into account its multidimensionality, involving not only the teachers, but also other actors, such as families, students and community, with the purpose of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the actions developed to promote the corresponding improvements, re-signifying and re-orienting the educational policy. This means assuming the necessary and inevitable educational policy situation in each provincial context in the national context.

Those jurisdictions that to date do not have the Provincial Education Law, sanctioned after the National Education Law, need to adapt the regulation of the local system based on the agreement with the different actors of the educational community. Those that already have specific laws or regulations can advance with their regulation in order to guarantee the right to a quality education for all young people. It is necessary that the modifications resulting from the implementation of the changes be regulated by explicit rules, thus building an updated normative plexus.

With regard to the implementation of the Basic and Oriented Cycle, those jurisdictions that have not done it yet could assume the construction of a map of the location of the offer, and study the issues related to the relocation of teachers at the local level through a collaborative work between provincial technical teams and schools. On the other hand, those who are advanced in the definition of the cartography should pause to evaluate it, in order to make the adjustments that allow to generate more and better educational opportunities for all the young people in their respective territories. In this sense, it is essential to think about how to approach the secondary school in rural areas and how to attend the population that presents overage, among other imperatives.

We consider it essential to define in the jurisdictions a policy of articulation within and among levels and/or cycles, particularly with Primary Education and especially with Higher Education and the scientific, technological system. This means to assume articulation as an institutional question beyond the mere relation of content among grades or courses - as a strategy that allows complementing efforts, optimizing the use of resources and ensuring the transit of students through different levels, cycles and paths.

For those jurisdictions that have not yet begun the process of curricular construction or that have it under way, their challenge is to face it from a participative model, which not only involves teachers, managers, supervisors and technicians as central protagonists of the Educational fact, but to society as a whole. They could take into account contextualizing them in their own realities - the devices and dynamics that followed those provinces that present advances in this sense.

On the other hand, we consider that new designs and/or curricular proposals, before final approval, should be validated in practice during at least one year - to facilitate the processes of appropriation and adjustment

that mediate between the project and its development. At the same time, the jurisdictions that developed their curricular designs and proposals prior to the approval of the federal agreements (Priority Learning Centers² for the Orientated Cycle and Reference Frameworks³ for each one of the Guidelines) need to focus their efforts on the revision, in order to make, if necessary, any changes considered pertinent and relevant in each context, based on the validation that could have been made in practice.

In all cases, it is vitally important to think about dynamic designs and developments that emphasize teaching, that are monitored on a permanent basis and that every four or five years are integrally revised and formally modified by installing an action continuum - research-reflection that enhances the learning and constructive dialogue between all the subjects that interact: School-Province⁴. Updating, in this way, the different devices that involve schools, the Province and the Nation, it is entered into a permanent and dynamic process of construction and curricular reconstruction.

In each context, it is essential to analyze the regulations governing teaching and learning practices (evaluation, promotion and accreditation regimes, admission, equivalences, certifications and degrees) in order to adapt them to provincial needs and characteristics within the framework of federal policy. Likewise, jurisdictions must work to bring teacher labor regimes into line with current demands, to make them more consistent with the purposes of quality, equality, inclusion, management and participation desired. For example, through the implementation of mechanisms that allow for hourly concentration in a few establishments, the evaluation of teaching work (Marcelo, 2009), the application of incentives for performance or job placement in vulnerable areas, the determination of teaching profiles for each of the disciplines, subjects or curricular spaces of the new designs and/or curricular proposals; promotion and access mechanisms by contests that take into account backgrounds; establishing specific (intensive or extensive) times for a collective approach of institutional themes and actions (at the level of courses, cycles, etc.), among other topics.

It is a priority to promote the use of quantitative and qualitative information produced jointly between the National Ministry and the jurisdictions for the purpose of feeding decision-making processes at the provincial and school levels. For this, it should be strengthened the work articulated around the assessment: of learnings, teaching and institutional.

Another key task is to strengthen the provincial education planning systems by developing conceptual and methodological tools to design and implement a system of democratic, systematic and reliable information and communication between the Ministry (Provincial Educational Development Plan), the Supervision Units (Regional Supervision Plan) and Schools (Institutional Educational Plan) within the framework of the National Education Plan. To this, we add the need to generate the mechanisms for linking and coordinating the different plans, programs, projects and pedagogical, curricular, community and administrative actions that are developed in the different scales/territories of the education system.

In all provinces, greater emphasis should be placed on deepening those actions that allow more pedagogical and organizational autonomy of educational institutions, linking current regulations with local and institutional particularities in order to establish - within the framework of their respective IEP and from ongoing self-evaluation processes - annual improvement plans aimed at overcoming problems or situations that are serious or urgent, with the objective of not dispersing human, functional, material and economic efforts. In this line, it is necessary to evaluate the experiences that are being developed in different institutions within the framework of the plans for the improvement of Secondary Education.

The implementation of new training proposals requires continuous teacher training actions that meet the provincial and school requirements. In this sense, in order to accompany and strengthen the implemented processes of change, the focus should be on school-based and teaching-oriented devices, promoting work in school networks, developing training courses for teachers and managers in order to support the new roles and functions, implementing graduate and/or postgraduate courses, among other possibilities, with the purpose of strengthening the management of change in each of the schools of the jurisdictions.

In this line, it is a priority to focus efforts on the articulation of the Provincial Educational Development Plan with the ongoing training proposals established in the National Program of Permanent Training (CFE Resolution 201/13), within the framework of the National Plan for Compulsory Education and Teachers Training 2012-2016 (Resolution CFE 188/12), and the priorities of the schools.

All these actions must be accompanied by a greater investment in education, which implies clearly establishing the priority given to education in the country project in order to allocate budget items (in their macro- and meso- scale) that make it possible to promote the construction of a Secondary Education of quality for all the young people in each one of the provinces and, consequently, in the Argentina of the XXI century.

Educational policies at the federal level (macro-policy)

In this area, it is fundamental to keep strengthening and prioritizing the functioning of the CFE as an interprovincial body, of a permanent nature, as an area for concerted action, agreement and coordination of educational policy, ensuring unity and articulation of the system. This requires strengthening the actions initiated to promote the participation of national actors, political, social, religious and productive forces, among others, in the construction of a National Education Project that is the central nucleus of a State policy for the economic, social, political and cultural development of our country⁵.

In this sense, there should be strengthened the Federal Bureau of Education Secretariats/Undersecretaries of the Jurisdictions, coordinated by the Under-secretariat of Equity and Quality, as well as the working tables by educational levels and modalities and the inter-sectorial meetings, in order to maximize the planning and implementation capacity of educational actions. This participative action, in the specific case of Secondary Education, would have to be accompanied by various instances of systematic evaluation of federal agreements and programs that guide and support decision-making processes, with the intention of addressing not only emerging issues (phenomena), but also those components or structural aspects that facilitate and/or hinder those processes or actions initiated in each of the jurisdictions, from a national perspective, but in turn contextualized in the regional particularities. In this regard, and taking into account the results of the research carried out, the following lines of action appear as priorities:

- To agree on new goals along the time, for the implementation of the different cycles that make up Secondary Education in virtue of the progress evidenced by each one of the jurisdictions.

- To consolidate educational planning and evaluation actions within the framework of the National Compulsory Education and Teacher Training Plan 2012-2016, considering the short, medium and long term goals.

- To evaluate the Provincial Improvement Plans of Secondary Education, and based on this, to plan the projects for the period 2014-2016 and, in this framework, to continue with the financing of Plans of Institutional Improvement, through the allocation of resources to the schools, so that the actions provided therein can be carried out:

* To continue with the 1-to-1 Model, Connect Equality, Program (Lugo and Kelly, 2011) and to promote the pedagogical use of ICT in the classrooms, schools and communities.

* To deepen the processes of homologation of secondary school diplomas and those related to student mobility.

* To continue the technical and financial support to the provinces in the processes of implementation of the Federal Agreements through the Support Plans to Initial Education, Compulsory Education and Modalities.

In addition, it will be necessary to re-think the socio-educational policies for the Secondary Level and Modalities, from the development of authentic actions of positive discrimination, in order to contribute to the reduction of inequalities, social fragmentation and segmented educational circuits in the different Jurisdictions. These actions involve the social - in a broad sense -, they strongly interpellate the territorial context, the community and all the institutions that contribute to the strengthening of educational processes. The improvement of the conditions and possibilities in access, the quality of the school itinerary and the results achieved (in terms of appropriation of the necessary knowledge for social, cultural, political, economic and community life) constitute the horizon of socio-educational policies. It is for this reason that there should be re-taken and reoriented the different programs, strategies and actions that exist to address the current challenges of educational policy in the field of Secondary Education and Modalities. Socio-educational policies should be based on a broad concept of inclusion, which understands that it is necessary to guarantee the right to access and it is fundamental to work for an educational inclusion with quality, where everyone can exercise the right to education.

In this sense, we believe that it is necessary to focus some actions in those institutions that attend subjects in a situation of social and educational vulnerability, but also to universalize others, as well as to centralize or decentralize actions that are considered necessary due to reality, in order to contribute to the process of educational inclusion in terms of equality of conditions and quality of processes and results.

Such policies should be designed and managed from an integral (sectorial) perspective, but at the same time integrated (inter-sectorially) with other personal, social and citizenship promotion policies supported by the National State, jurisdictions and civil society organizations. This means continuing to rely on building policies from a relational perspective, aimed at integrating the terms of the classic tensions (typical of the last decades of the twentieth century) -centralization vs. decentralization, universality vs. focalization, sectorial vs inter-sectorial, among others- in the search for points of balance in the generation of social and educational policies.

Within this framework, the following could be included among other lines of action:

- To expand and consolidate the current scholarship system for Technical Education students, incorporating some of the Orientations for Secondary (school) that are also considered as priorities for sustainable development in each province and, therefore, at the national level.

- To incorporate student's grants that be assigned not only based on socio-economic vulnerability conditions, but also on the effort and performance of the students.

- To continue with scholarships for students from indigenous peoples, presidential patronage, children of former combatants of Malvinas, and eradication of child labor.

- To keep on providing books (textbooks, literature and consultation) and procurement of supplies, in a decentralized manner, within the framework of a process involving the participation of schools in the selection of the above-mentioned goods, based on their respective institutional educational plans and the priorities established by each jurisdiction and the Nation.

- To strengthen and expand the Project for the Prevention of School Dropouts.

- To continue the Youth Activity Centers by diversifying their activities in order to broaden the cultural horizons of young people, and strengthening their articulation and integration in the respective Institutional Educational Plans.

- To continue supporting socio-educational proposals aimed at guaranteeing Secondary Education.

- To extend, previous evaluation, the Educational and Recreational Tourism Programs, Orchestras and Choirs, among others.

On the other hand, in order to guarantee secondary education, there should be evaluated the experiences that are being developed in different jurisdictions, in order to generate knowledge as possible alternatives, so that overaged young people, who at some point interrupted their studies, can resume them; and those who have not been able to access, initiate them. In this same sense, one should start thinking about possible strategies to bring secondary education in its two cycles to rural populations or those away from urban centers. To this end, it would be advisable to link the Rural Education Modality to the federally agreed strategic guidelines, to study the ongoing experiences and actions carried out within the framework of the Rural Education Improvement Program (Promer, for its initials in Spanish), among other initiatives, in order to generate proposals that allow to attend the diversity of situations that are presented in the national territory and, in this way, to assure to the young people, in rural zones, opportunities of a quality Secondary Education.

In terms of pedagogical and curricular policies, the following actions are necessary, among others:

- To establish the approval of the frames of reference for the new Secondary Education Guidelines incorporated by Resolution 210/13 of the CFE (Literature, Mathematics, Physics and Pedagogy), as well as the revision and extension of the Agrarian/ Agro and Environment and Tourism Guidelines, as it is established in the aforementioned resolution.

- To review the configuration of the Art-Oriented Secondary, in particular the emphases (languages).

- To evaluate the appropriation of the NAP of the Basic Cycle and General Training of the Oriented Cycle in the jurisdictions.

- To advance in the discussions regarding the academic regimes of the Secondary Education.

- To establish a federal system for monitoring curricular coherence that allows to follow the decisions that are adopted in each jurisdiction, in order to achieve unity in diversity.

- To advise the provinces in the elaboration of their respective curricular designs.

Regarding teacher training, it is necessary to promote all those policies that tend to hierarchize, professionalize and improve the material and cultural conditions of teachers. To this end, the training system should not only take care of initial training, but also address continuing training within the framework of professional teacher development policies. In this sense, a greater articulation between the National Institute of Teacher Education and the policies of each one of the levels and modalities of the educational system should be strengthened.

Regarding Initial Formation, it should continue discussing in depth where, how, in what and with what resources teachers will be formed. In this sense, it is necessary to keep encouraging the opening in college institutes of teacher training (courses), and in the universities, of careers (professors-intended) whose titles qualify them for the performance of teaching in those fields (subjects and/or curricular spaces) that require them the most, because the demand far exceeds the supply. In addition, in order to respond to an important group of senior and professional technicians who have joined (in the absence of people with teaching titles) or who wish to join as teachers, it should be expanded the offer of courses or pedagogical training paths to this type of agents, as a complement to the epistemological training, and in disciplines they already have, so that professionals in different specialties can obtain a certification or diploma that validates their professional teaching skills.

With regard to Continuing Education, and as it has already been emphasized at the level of jurisdictions, it should be strengthened the development of a policy that includes, among other actions, a joint definition by the National Ministry and the provinces of plans, programs and/or training projects for in-service teachers in the framework of the Supporting Plans to Initial, Compulsory and Modalities Education.

These actions must take into account the demands, needs and priorities of the educational system coming from the institutions, the projects or the characteristics of particular educational communities,

and the personal concerns of the teachers in a particular socio-educational area or problem. This construction, which is already being developed between the Nation and each province, should be perfected in order to contemplate regional particularities, and it should respect the pace of implementation of transformation in each of the provincial contexts under the Federal Agreements.

In this line, it appears as a clear challenge the implementation of the National Program of Permanent Training 2013-2016, which aims to articulate:

The hierarchy process of Teacher Training and the quality of learnings, articulating training processes with mechanisms for evaluating and strengthening the school unit; as a privileged area of work performance; and at the same time, as a space of participation, exchange and belonging. (Annex Resolution CFE N 201/13, p.2).

It is a relevant challenge to effectively fulfill the intention of attending, at the same time, the integrality of the national educational system and the construction of the necessary consensuses with the educational governments of the jurisdictions in relation to the training priorities.

The premise is that the professional development of in-service teachers (teachers, principals, supervisors, course tutors, coordinators or heads of departments) implies a work that should promote autonomy and participation, and to deepen the growth of their learning, skills and competences from an on-site work (in the school), with a collaborative (not only individual) style, opened to the contribution of external knowledge, the exchange of experiences and collective reflection on the facts and pending issues, in order to contribute to their personal, social and professional development in context. In this context, it will be necessary to review the developed actions and to promote the professional development through other strategies beyond the traditional courses, such as: school-based training, participation in training and exchange networks, training cycles, graduate courses and post-doctorates.

In the context of training, there should also be continued an articulated work between the jurisdictions and the Institutes of Teaching Education and Universities for the development of activities linked to the research of issues related to teaching, teacher's work and teacher training; pedagogical advice to schools, preparation for management and supervisory positions, accompanying

the first professional performances, training for the fulfillment of different functions, the production of teaching materials, among other possibilities .

It is the responsibility of the National Ministry to continue promoting the development of integral strategies for evaluating the quality and the integral use of the information circulating in the system, articulating the national and provincial arrangements (annual surveys, national and provincial quality assessment, monthly reports and school documents, among others). Thinking about an authentic evaluation means designing it by taking the right of everyone to learn as a starting point; in this sense, it is not a question of establishing standards as parameters for the control of students, teachers and schools, nor as mechanisms for classifying educational institutions, but of setting goals to achieve a common curriculum, and assessing their degree of attainment in schools, in context, taking into account the variability and particularity of each school (Darling Hammond, 2001, Bolivar, 2003a and b). This strategy of "establishing non-standardized standards" concerns, as Bolivar (2003a) argues:

To ensure equity in education ... the focus is now shifting from quantity to quality, from control to support, from bureaucratic performance to public accountability (to the community) for the work being done. In this way, the decisions made during the evaluation may have a better potential to improve the quality of learning (p.8).

On the other hand, it is fundamental to continue supporting the development of strategies of joint work between the Nation, jurisdiction and schools, so the subjects involved take ownership of the learning assessment devices, and from their results, they can generate actions that enhance the improvement. In addition, to make possible the developing of research in the different programs and projects, as well as the socialization of innovative experiences with the purpose of reorienting the processes of generation of improvement policies in the different scales/territories that make up the national educational system.

It is, ultimately, a consolidation of a Ministry of National Education with a high professional capacity, dynamic and efficient, that based on respect for regional particularities, give support to the needs of technical and political teams in the different jurisdictions to make real the centrality of inclusion, justice and integration policies; pedagogical and curricular ones, of teaching and research, instituting a vision that, beyond the limited limits of political times, projects and acts in the broad times of education.

At this stage of re-signification of Secondary Education, the challenge is twofold. On the one hand, to continue deepening the role of the State in the design and management of an Educational Policy from a relational perspective that tends to create conditions of equality for all the adolescents and young people of the country, which means, among other things, to consolidate the processes of consensus and social participation, by making decisions for the sector that tends to give unity to the national educational system, respecting the federalism and the particular conditions of each of the jurisdictions and their schools. On the other, to concentrate efforts and actions aimed at making that the changes agreed at the federal level can be really appropriated by the subjects (people and institutions) that give life to education: jurisdictions and schools.

Conclusions

In Education we say with Terigi (2005): “We learn throughout history, in the course of practices ...” (page 66), learning with and from others, sharing doubts and findings, being open to listening and dialogue, with the commitment and the expectations always placed on educational innovation, on school and the rights of the students. It is about adding up opportunities to continue thinking, researching and learning with others, in an attempt to know more, in order to contribute to the possibility of doing better.

Re-signifying Secondary Education from this new logic of concentric circles whose nucleus, composed by the students, requires the articulation of policies that reinforce and sustain the centrality of the school according to its meaning, context, growth and improvement:

- Regarding sense: schools where it is taught and learned by implementing diversity of strategies, using intensively varied didactic resources, contextualizing the formative proposals without losing sight of learnings considered priority or essential. Schools where the adults in the school community locate the entry, re-entry, permanence, progress, and discharge of all students at the center of their concerns and occupations; where it is hoped that all adolescents and young people can learn, encourage and strengthen their achievements, act institutionally in the search for alternatives to overcome their difficulties (socioeconomic precariousness, family or personal problems, cultural deprivation, among others).

- Regarding the context: schools where everybody works intensely in a cooperative and solidary climate, in an environment with identity, where the productions of students and teachers are valued; schools in which the institutional space - material and symbolic - “makes room” for the messages that are intended to be transmitted, for the works to be shared, for the situations that are important for the educational community.

- Regarding growth and improvement: schools in which the professional capacities are increased based on the daily cooperative practice, the contribution of external knowledge, reflection on the built and on the pending challenges. Schools that accumulate and integrate the “teaching and learning capital” of the experience of all teachers, so that the repertoire of teaching proposals can be expanded to meet the diversity of students. Schools that are inclusive, committed, willing to give and receive contributions from their environment.

In short, the secondary school should assume education as an emancipatory social practice that “catalyzes the socio-educational reality”, with the intention that people learn to communicate, work and participate as citizens (with rights and obligations) and not as mere inhabitants in today’s society. This means living the school in a permanent process of situated learning.

This way, we have posed some challenges of the Secondary Education in Argentina, convinced that the necessary and possible transformations are tasks of the society as a whole. Argentine adolescents and young people expect answers that allow them not only to know, but to be, to do and to live better. Guaranteeing the right to education offers the opportunity to make possible the realization of all other human rights.

Footnotes

1 In Argentina, the Federal Education Council (CFE, for its initials in Spanish) is an institution for concerting, agreement and coordination of the national educational policy to ensure the unity and articulation of the National Educational System. Its president is the Minister of Education of the Nation and it is integrated by the maximum educational authority of each jurisdiction and three representatives of the Council of Universities.

2 In the Argentina Republic, from the Federal Council of Education, the approval of the Priority Learning Centers (NAP, its initials in Spanish) has been agreed with the intention of promoting the integration of

the National Educational System. The NAPs for the different Levels and Cycles were prepared by political representatives, technicians, supervisors and teachers from the Argentina provinces and the City of Buenos Aires, and by the technical teams of the National Ministry of Education and approved by the educational authorities of all Jurisdictions.

3 Reference Frameworks for Guided Secondary Education are the manifestation of the federal agreement of specific training for each of the Guidance: Social Sciences/Social Sciences and Humanities, Natural Sciences, Economics and Administration, Languages, Agrarian and Agro and Environment, Communication, Computer Science, Physical Education, Tourism, Art (with different emphasis: Music, Theater, Dance, Visual Arts, Design, Audiovisual Arts, Multimedia or others).

4 It could be reviewed the experience developed in the province of Córdoba regarding the validation and approval process of curricular designs for a specific period (5 years).

5 To this end, there should be strengthened the mechanisms provided in the National Education Law to accompany decision-making processes - Council for Educational Policies, Economic and Social Council and Curriculum Update Council - in order to allow the participation of all those who, in one way or another, are linked to the problem of Secondary Education.

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