

otra América es posible



FORO SOCIAL AMÉRICAS

Forum for Quality Public Education in the Americas

THE PARTICIPANTS AT THE "FORUM FOR QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE AMERICAS", ORGANIZED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE AMERICAS SOCIAL FORUM IN GUATEMALA CITY, CENTRAL AMERICA OCTOBER 8TH, 9TH AND 10TH 2008, DECLARE:

WHEREAS:

The neoliberal perspective sees education as a commodity and measures its quality as if it were a commercial product and not a social right. This mercantile concept of education has replaced the principle that education is a human and constitutional right whose quality is present in all aspects of curriculum as well as in the quality of its human and social relations, in the spaces for freedom and ongoing collective reflection, and in the collective action by all members of the educational community to create the social and material conditions with which to promote the awareness, organization and unity necessary to produce the changes to make the subjects of education are active participants.

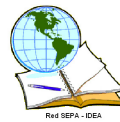
WHEREAS:

Quality education, understood in human and social terms, produces individual and collective transformations that can contribute to a life of dignity, something which has not yet been achieved by people in most countries in the Americas because the majority of states have not fulfilled the commitments made at the World Education Conferences in Jomtien and Dakar, nor have they achieved the millennium development goals set for "education for all." This can be seen in the fact that almost no progress has been made either in terms of providing accessible education to all nor in the creation of education with an ethnic and gender perspective that can contribute to building unity and respect for the diversity of abilities and identities of individuals and peoples. Too often States and governments engage in a doublespeak, making promises and signing international agreements, which they fail to fulfill at the national level.

WHEREAS:

Education reforms in most countries in the Americas have been driven by international financial institutions without taking into consideration the concerns of the education community nor the people of the Americas in general, and forgetting the fact that *there are no quality schools nor quality education without the experience and commitment of teachers*. As a result these reforms are highly exclusionary and of little relevance, and their impact is now being measured through de-contextualized standardized examinations which are denying thousands of students access to all levels of the education system. A further consequence is the de-structuring of that system in an attempt to shift the state's responsibility for education onto families, communities and/or municipalities while

FORO POR UNA EDUCACION PÚBLICA DE CALIDAD EN AMERICA
En el marco del Foro Social Américas-Guatemala del 8 al 10 de Octubre-2008
Calidad, Gratuidad, Cobertura y Equidad



imposing new controls on teaching work, individualizing labour relations and attacking teacher and student organizations.

WHEREAS:

Despite governments' ratification of many international conventions, as well as the enactment of national legislation, discrimination against women continues both in societies as a whole and in education systems where gender-based inequity and exclusion are heightened. Additionally, a "hidden" curriculum exists which maintains an androcentric and patriarchal culture that violates the human rights and dignity of women in all areas of society.

WHEREAS:

The education problems generated or exacerbated by neoliberal policies are felt in similar ways all across the Americas. Teachers, students, families and the education community in general have been assuming the responsibility to defend quality public education that they see as both a social right and a path to development.

WE DECLARE:

1. There is an urgent need for all members of the education community in the Americas - students, families and teachers - to unite and organize in order to reclaim and strengthen quality state-funded and directed public education.

We must also recover a holistic concept of quality based on human and social understanding rather than that which is promoted by international financial institutions. Therefore, the concept of quality must carry the following characteristics:

Humanistic education that promotes the development of values according to the cosmovisions or worldviews of the different peoples of the Americas in order to achieve a balanced life and harmonious relations among people and among nations.

Public, democratic and inclusive education, *which, in addition to its humanistic training, also covers scientific and technological advances*, and which constitutes the path to social development for all the peoples of the Americas. This requires full civic participation and especially that of teachers, students, families and the state itself.

A quality education that covers all areas of the curriculum, and includes the quality of all its components, elements and processes, but most importantly the quality of life of each person involved in the education process. Education reforms must respond to the needs of the people of the Americas, such as the objectives and commitments made in the Millennium Development Goals and at the Dakar World Education Conference, and that provide opportunities for life-long learning at all levels for everyone.

Bilingual, pluricultural and intercultural education, *based on the cosmovisions and epistemological foundations of the indigenous peoples*, that promotes

unity while respecting the diversity and identity of persons and nations, strengthening their philosophical concepts, resources for learning, methodologies and teacher-training so as to develop *an educational theory that goes beyond western science, making possible a greater understanding and balance of human beings with nature and the cosmos and that deepens the concept of quality pluricultural and intercultural education.*

Education with gender equity and a gender perspective that promotes awareness of and respect for the rights of women and girls, the elimination of segregated schools and the promotion of inclusive education without discrimination and stereotypes in curricula and school texts.

Education systems should consider the special educational needs of persons with different abilities as this is a tool for social integration.

2. We will intensify our struggle to defend and strengthen quality public education and to fight against its commercialization and privatization. We will continue to demand that States and governments fulfill both their constitutional obligations and the commitments they have made by signing international agreements on education.
3. We will establish a communication network to continue working together at the national and international levels in order to build a globalization of solidarity in contrast to the globalization of the neoliberal marketplace, promoting solidarity among individuals, organizations and peoples.
4. In spite of the problems described above, we recognize and support the progress made by some governments in Latin America in responding to society's demand that States take responsibility for providing free, public and compulsory education.

SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS:

I. SOLIDARITY WITH MEXICAN TEACHERS:

On October 8, in the context of neoliberal reforms that deny democratic freedoms and violate universal human rights and in the face of the growing unrest of thousands of teachers belonging to the CNTE (National Coordination of Education Workers), the Mexican government brutally repressed protesters leaving dozens of teachers disappeared, wounded and jailed. Therefore, those of us attending the "Forum for Quality Public Education in the Americas" declare that:

1. We condemn the repressive acts against Mexican teachers, especially those in the state of Morelos from Section XIX of the SNTE (National Union of Education Workers).
2. We demand that the Mexican government respond to the just demands of teachers by:
 - Canceling the "Alliance for Quality Education" program.
 - Repealing the law regarding the Social Services and Security Institute for State Workers (ISSSTE), because of its negative impact on social security.
 - Improving the working and living conditions of education workers.
 - Respecting the democratizing processes of the SNTE.
3. We support the struggle to have the Executive Committee of Section IX of the SNTE recognized, given that it was democratically-elected by the elementary school teachers of Mexico City

II. SUPPORT FOR STUDENT MOVEMENTS:

Because students at all levels are both the present and future of countries in the Americas, and because their struggles represent the needs and demands of their age group, those attending the Forum declare ourselves in solidarity with student movements that demand an education system that responds to the real interests and needs of the population and that rejects the privatization of the right to quality public education in the Americas. In particular, our support goes out to the student movements in Chile and Mexico, which we encourage to keep up their demands until they are achieved.

GUATEMALA CITY, THE TENTH OF OCTOBER, 2008.