Panel discussion: "The challenges of popular education at the neo-liberal offensive: social participation and human rights"

(summary of the intervention)

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Considering the power of the neoliberal discourse in the media, there is great difficulty in the global educational debate approach. A major cause is the profound separation and estrangement between the sectors that should hold this debate (students, teachers, families, experts, managers etc.). This facilitates the development of technocratic and conservative policies, making the routine "flood" everything, leaving little room for the realization of collective, serious and deep reflections.

Any reflection on education must to include the challenge to end this system that takes human beings to suffer with extreme poverty, inequalities and all kinds of violence. And so, it should be the priority to face the only thought that aims to make us believe that the public interest would be better served if it was in private hands. A thought you want some new skills to replace the old knowledge, and for which the concepts of popular education of Paulo Freire and Célestin Freinet "learning throughout life" and "learning to learn", not only are not valid, as they are considered subversive.

It is the process that today makes us to assum posicion in front of two educational conceptions totally different:

a) One resulting from the development of neoliberal policies that consider education as a form of business and political control and from which the state has no obligation to guarantee the right to education.

b) The other one, which we advocate, throught progressive unions, the Pedagogical Renewal Movement and WEF, in which quality public education is a right and a public service that all States shall ensure. An education for a freer citizenship. An education that so citizens be able to question the established social order and promote social actions aimed at preserving nature, the implementation of justice and humanization of the planet.

c) The latter position entails the construction of an emancipatory movement that goes far beyond the conservative utopia of humanizing capitalism or manage their crises. For this, as we have stated in the various debates of our movements, we must continue to build a new political pedagogical project: move to a critical and transforming education, which respects the rights of the whole community and to promote the right to citizen participation in all decision spaces. And for that we must keep in mind that:
To begin any process of educational change, it is imperative to want to do it.

- To want, we need to transform the thought and it is not enough.
- We have to know to learn and think and make ourselves collectively.
- We have to promote the revolution of the sensitivity. We have to enhance the formation of a teacher category that knows how to live beyond the revolution of thought, the revolution of sensitivity.
- To use the affectivity as a pedagogical tool and social commitment to the most vulnerable. Committing to mutual care.
- We need to “open” the education to social movements, to other debates and also to the place where emerges the proposal of learning: the social environment of the students, the place where they live.
- Make our classes and our schools places of life. Keep creating and sharing alternative practices and reflexions. Practices and reflexions that achieve other minds, that cross and “bristle” our skin, that thrill, feed, illustrate and give shape to a silence movement of similar thoughts, a different way of understand the education and world.

This process of sharing reasons and feelings, interests and affections, to share time to listen, to reflection and tenderness, for mutual knowledge, to doubts and proposals, is one of the ways to build the education we need for the possible world we want.