# EDUCATIONAL REFORMS IN LATIN AMERICA AND TEACHERS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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**Abstract:** It is presented an approach to the implementation of different educational reforms in Latin America in the last 30 years, evaluating the role of the teacher in the implementation of them and their location in the scaffolding of 21st century society. From this perspective, it is analyzed the importance that currently has the design of learning environments that take into account ICT and the possible clashes between State policies that seek the unification of strategies when the resources offered today by technology invite to a multiplicity of paths to follow in pursuit of learning goals.
**Keywords:** Educational reform - Learning environment - Teacher leadership

## INTRODUCTION

The educational reforms aim to generate changes in the system that is responsible for training the citizens of a country at a certain level of propaedeutic cycles, whether pre-school, elementary school, high school, middle school, technical, technological or professional. The modifications that are presented in an educational system correspond to the structural scaffolding of the same, these modifications can attend extension of days, curricular aspects that attempt to satisfy the labor market, institutional cultures, budgetary allocation, administrative decentralization, etc. (Zaccagini, 2004). An educational reform that comes from the State without the intervention of the social bases of a country, it is a mechanism to direct the path of the allocation of capital and the organization of human groups, *it is an instrument of ideological cohesion that monopolizes the State, legitimized in the Constitution. It is clear that the teacher has to reproduce the contents that educational policies determine as appropriate for the interests of the State. However, the denial of this fact is the starting point to understand why there is an incongruence between the idealistic aims of education and its real practice* (González & González, 2016, p.42).

While it is true that the reform aims to generate State policies that reach all populations, it is ultimately the teacher who must make this goal real in the classroom. In this sense, the existing ruptures between the government and the teaching class create problems for the implementation of the strategies and do not consolidate a true path that everyone continues in a certain country. From different perspectives, the role of the teacher in the execution of reform proposals is perceived as *a process of social nature and situated, carried out by teachers in particular school contexts, which entails the realization of a set of activities that are configured in a historical -cultural context that gives them structure and coherence* (Contreras, 2016).

In Spain, it is considered that *it is not enough to have "new" decrees of autonomy that delegate competencies to the centers, it is necessary to create certain conditions to make effective an autonomy that improves the quality of education* (Cruz, 2016, p.15). In Mexico, the voices are pronounced about *the ineffective centralism of an instance of the executive that increasingly makes the possibility of creativity more remote at the level of school, locality, population, municipality and state* (Gil Antón, 2012, page 162).

According to Tello, when referring to Chile, Argentina and Mexico, State policies on education *must promote the proactive participation of teachers in the changes demanded by the reform processes. This implies establishing spaces, procedures and structures that facilitate their participation at the different levels, in the school, the local, regional and national community* (2013, page 155). In this regard, some studies of the late twentieth century explained that investments in public education and teacher training did not definitively impact the quality received by students in their training. As Gómez explains, the capital was directed largely towards higher education goals, contrary to what the Asian countries did, which began from the same starting point but decided to attend with full coverage and high teaching quality to the initial grades; the great differences that exist with respect to the results that can be seen today are evident (1998).

However, there is currently progress in new research which wants to find elements that support a truth that is intended to be undeniable, that is to say, a greater investment in public teachers and infrastructure that addresses the size of the class and the time spent in the classroom, will make students be better prepared. There is an ample

evidence to determine that the low coverage and quality results achieved in Latin America were given as consequence of inequities and deepening of socioeconomic gaps, in many cases due to a misallocation of education spending. *In other words, the educational progress of the region after the adjustment policies was poor, that is to the detriment of the poorest and contributed to social inequality* (Miranda, 2015, p.143). This confirms that the short-term policies that have been allocated on temporary defined governments, do not affect the training of the citizens of each country. In addition, it is evident over the years that the percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) spent on education each year has not increased significantly in the region.

Table 1
*Public expenditure on education 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 (% GDP)*

| COUNTRY/YEAR | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Argentina | 4.6 % | 5.0 % | 5.1 % | s/i |
| Brazil | 5.7 % | 5.7 % | 5.9 % | s/i |
| Chile | 4.2 % | 4.1 % | 4.6 % | s/i |
| Colombia | 4.8 % | 4.5 % | 4.4 % | 4.9 % |
| Ecuador | 4.1 % | 4.3 % | 4.2 % | s/i |
| El Salvador | 3.5 % | 3.4 % | s/i | s/i |
| Guatemala | 2.8 % | 2.9 % | 3.0 % | 2.9 % |
| Honduras | s/i | s/i | s/i | 5.9 % |
| Mexico | 5.2 % | 5.2 % | s/i | s/i |
| Panama | s/i | 3.3 % | s/i | s/i |
| Paraguay | 3.8 % | 5.0 % | 5.0 % | s/i |
| Peru | 2.8 % | 2.7 % | 2.9 % | 3.3 % |

Source: Own elaboration based on UNESCO data, ECLAC data and administrative data by country.

Taking all the above into account, it is important to address now a new company that is already part of education without the previous tasks have been satisfied: the society of the 21st century requests a new type of human being who must be adapted to the use of ICT and prepared for self-management of knowledge; *globalization and the scientific and technological revolution must alert governments to establish competitive strategies that allow the economic, political, social, cultural and educational growth and development of their countries* (Heredia, Armendáriz, Hernández, González & Ávila, 2016) , unfortunately, as it has already been stated, public policies are not always directed towards these objectives, they also have the inconveniences involved in strategies that do not last longer than the successive governments and from purposes in which intervene the different levels of the central and local bureaucracies. Something else to keep in mind is that the work of teacher training in the field of ICT is not immediate or its fruits are easy to identify, it is rather a complex process in which the fruits of the determinations of general or regional States are only seen in the medium and long term (Argentina, UNICEF, & Vaillant, 2013).

The reforms have not started from the base and therefore are not projected towards the learning environments. They are not taken to the classroom and do not incorporate ICTs holistically in the different teaching-learning processes. On the contrary, the economic establishment has shown intentions to liquidate taxes that subsidize the teaching salary; besides promoting the privatization of public universities and favoring private ones with scholarships granted to students from public schools, but paying high figures to private institutions (Puiggros, Torres, Rodríguez, Gadotti, Russo, Swope, & Zalmora, 2017).

**TOPICS AND SUBTOPICS**
**EDUCATIONAL REFORM AS A QUALITY STRATEGY**
The governments try that the modifications implemented from laws, decrees and directives improve topics of coverage, quality and competitiveness. In general, Latin American countries have been working on this from the directions given by international entities such as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, ECLAC or the OECD. In Colombia, the basic education cycle has reached 100% gross coverage, 97% was reached at pre-school levels and 75% on middle school. Similarly, the PISA tests for 2006 and 2009 show improvements in math, reading and science; However, this does not even increase in the OECD rates (Delgado, 2014). In addition, as shown in Table 1, for 2012 this growth could not be maintained.

Since Latin America has maintained a constant process of reform since the late eighties, it is easy to find in the results mentioned that the objectives have not been clear, that resources have been misdirected, that corruption has prevailed or that has not been attended the fundamental academic aspect that is present in the classroom, it is to say, in the space shared by students and teachers as an environment for learning. *It is not wrong to recognize*

*that the worst social crisis is caused by acts of corruption in different social stages, affecting in a special way education* (Cadavid, Hernández, Bustamante, H. D. J. V. & González, 2015).

The goals that the inhabitants of a given country in Latin America perceive as adequate are in danger due to the importation of those policies formulated by international agencies and organizations, which serve to the consolidation of the neoliberal economic model, safeguarding its main objective of privatizing public services (López, 2017).

The quality of education that a student receives is determined by the access to resources such as libraries, internet, recreational and sports training spaces; for conditions such as health, adequate food, proximity to the study center, security in the areas surrounding their institution; and by factors such as the teachers training, the updating of curricula and the propaedeutic structure that leads them to higher education. That is, quality is a polysemic concept that is not dependent on the trends of the time and the decisions of the current governments, which tend to believe that addressing only one or a couple of these needs, the problem will be solved. We must also take into account that always the measures that governments use will account for the benefits of their management and of the difficulties associated with the implementation that will correspond to the teachers a*ccording to the way of conceiving them, will be generated different ways of evaluating them: some will rescue a more quantitative vision (for example, the efficiency or cost - outcome approach) and others a more qualitative view focused on internal processes and the optimization and transformation of the educational process* (Guzmán, nd, p.4).

Table 2:
*Comparative positions PISA 2019-2012*

| COUNTRY | POSITION 2009 | POSITION 2012 | POSITION 2015 |
|---|---|---|---|
| ARGENTINA | 58 | 59 | 40 |
| BRAZIL | 53 | 58 | 62 |
| CHILE | 44 | 51 | 45 |
| COLOMBIA | 52 | 62 | 57 |
| MEXICO | 48 | 53 | 56 |
| PERU | 63 | 65 | 63 |
| URUGUAY | 57 | 55 | 48 |

Source: Own elaboration based on data OECD, PISA 2013

Then, it will be arrived at the measurement that is carried out through external tests or national censuses, in which normally Latin America has not gone well.

All this, it is possible that there are few things in which the different levels of a country agree on the subject of education, but, at least in what it is said in public, it will be accepted that quality is a goal and that with it will be achieved the principle of equity that is the basis of the educational act ever since. The reforms aim to avoid differential treatments that end up benefiting sectors with higher incomes, but this is inevitable if you do not live in school with the different actors that are economically stratified in society. Intersectoral policies, compensatory programs, positive discrimination, increased resources from national and international incomes, agreements that achieve State policies, among others, are strategies that must be implemented.

In addition, a concern arises that comes from the already remarkable growth of the populations in the big cities and from the transformations that occur in the ideology about the future which individuals have from what the modernity offers; This issue must be addressed as a tutelary measure of the societies, sometimes without being possible to think about quality, even though as already indicated, this word is always present. *To put it briefly: educational systems are facing the challenge of incorporating the members of the new generations, who come from socio-cultural sectors that until now were alien to them and also children and young people whose subjectivities have been formed in dialogue with societies that are technological and culturally very different to those referred to in the pedagogical proposal of the school (Tiramonti, 2016, p.168).*

Since the governments have advanced in recent years around the implementation of these initiatives but must also have a strict monitoring of what happens in the classroom, because that is where the hidden curriculum is put into action and can avoid that the processes of generation of new looks of the educational act occur. In addition, there is a latent truth that has been identified from the political point of view: *the capacity for anticipation requires an agreement that guides the behavior of the actors in terms of national goals* (Tedesco, 2016, p.86), which is not always easy to achieve, especially when the renovating ideas do not take into account the bases. In this tangle it is possible that is at risk *a school that makes available to all the inhabitants of the*

*country, without distinction of wealth, race or religion, the knowledge and values necessary to participate in a competitive and supportive society* (Aguerrondo, 2017).

According to ECLAC reports, except in Colombia and Chile, the rest of the countries of Latin America continue without establishing policies to encourage teachers to change their attitudes in the classroom; they continue to allocate most of the budget towards higher education and they do not have a process of evaluation by stages and with definition of priorities.

The international organizations advise to invest in high impact strategies, but with the certainty that this investment is effective for the goals of the countries. That is to say, that the only salary increase for teachers should not be given if it is not accompanied by the location of the most qualified ones in the first levels, namely the preschool and primary school; Also, it is important the constant feedback of the processes through tests that reach the teachers, increases of time in the school day of the students, special support for rural education and specific resources funds for institutions with certified achievements.

## MANAGEMENT OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The meeting in the classroom – face-to-face or virtual- that takes place between the teacher and the student is an experience that marks the life of human beings, not only because the first one has certain factors of power that society has attributed to him/her and that today are quickly demystified, but because this encounter generates in one and another great variety of feelings, anxieties and conflicts. That is why we must change the schemes that make education focus on the simple reproduction of contents. Teachers must change the pedagogical intention of their actions and the interaction with their students; must move away from situations in which the only thing that is requested is the correct answers of the activities carried out, have to be habitual the reflections to the group. The task cannot have a single way to perform correctly (Murillo, Hernández-Castilla & Martínez-Garrido, 2016).

Today, the citizen should be a compendium that revolves around justice, respect for the other, the organization of processes in search of knowledge, social, economic and community balance. It is glimpsed a citizen of knowledge who is an individual but who lives in the group from a social base (Buendía, Espinosa, Agustín, Martínez and América, 2007). It seems then a difficult task for the teacher to reach citizens who can meet these ideals, but that is precisely the factor that must be taken into account when viewing each student as a particular being with different learning characteristics and times, not as a part of the mass that makes up a certain group. Unfortunately, in the face of a general lack of analysis of the pedagogical dimension of school work, teacher improvement is the result of attending compulsory courses, distance training systems or the generalization of a system of exams for students and for teachers (Díaz and Inclán, 2001).

While it is true that currently the competitiveness of countries with respect to the global market for goods and services makes investment in education must be high, there are according to Molina, Amate and Guarnido (2011), a number of factors to have account in this type of investments: economic, demographic, political and institutional. In the first instance, if the population growth figures are cross checked with the levels of literacy, it ends up by stating that in general, the training indexes increased during the 20th century, favoring the incorporation of different cultural aspects to the heritage of each person; With respect to the political, the left has their electoral wealth in the lower classes, so they direct spending to public education, while the right parties intend to reduce the tax payment of the upper classes, so they invest less in education; Finally, with respect to the institutional aspect, contrary positions are found around the advantages and disadvantages of centralization, due to the spending destinations and to the possibility of decreasing the items.

Table 3
*Literacy rate Latin America 2013 in population percentage.*

| COUNTRY/YEAR | 2015 |
|---|---|
| Argentina | 98.1 |
| Brazil | 92.6 |
| Chile | 96.6 |
| Colombia | 94.6 |
| Ecuador | 94.5 |
| El Salvador | 87.6 |
| Guatemala | 79.1 |
| Honduras | 88.4 |
| Mexico | 94.5 |
| Panama | 95 |
| Paraguay | 95.5 |
| Peru | 94.4 |

Source: Own elaboration based on ECLAC data.

In the particular, the student with his varied ways of learning, product of the intelligences that are his own and of his constant or transitory difficulties, requires a personalized treatment that is difficukt to achieve in the regular classroom that only responds to the policies of State; the teacher should be concerned with the construction of more participatory and inclusive learning environments, taking into account that the use of ICT is an opportunity that allows us to advance inclusive educational processes.

Perhaps for this reason Reimers (2000) invites that the equality of opportunities that is gestated in the political act, in search of a more equitable society and with social justice, take into account the participation of all the actors of the educational act: central and regional governments, private and public institutions, communities, parents, teachers and students.

Although the relationship between training and productivity does not have a necessary one-to-one verification, *a direct relationship between education, employment and income is presumed, and in this relationship different social actors participate: workers, employers, education system, physical capital and human capital, among others; The conjugation of all these factors favors the economic development of the countries* (Villalobos and Pedroza, 2009, p.284). It is not understandable from this perspective that basic, middle and higher education in Latin America is not the main concern of governments; not only in the expenditure that goes to this line, but in the importance that is given to the State policies in relation to the formation of all the citizens. For example, a country like Colombia, which in the current century has been increasing the money to be spent on education, decreases investment in research and avoids generating tax rebates for those who wish to train at the master and doctoral levels.

**TEACHERS WITH DEMOCRATIC ATTITUDE**
In spite of the fact, that the State generates a series of standards from which it has been thought from the macro level the general compendium of knowledge that each area has to present to the students, and in spite of the fact that Higher Education Institutions -HEI- must generate standardized curricula that have to be met under penalty of losing opportunities for accreditation of programs by the ministries of education of each country, it is the teacher who has to fulfil the construction of thought structures in the students, which leads them to be responsible for the organization and management of learning environments that avoid exclusion of any kind. This is a rather expensive task, especially if we consider that the goal is to develop a thought that allows to analyze, synthesize, compare, abstract and generalize (Santos, 2008) the knowledge or learning of a certain area.

A classroom currently must allow spaces in which to discuss the actions, procedures, goals and intentions, this without abandoning the general guidelines that are a requirement.  Some authors have explored this topic:
1. *From a democratic and critical education, the classroom would be in contact with the social reality, would educate to act in it and would offer many more valuable and meaningful possibilities to those who make little sense to their schooling* (Martín, 2009, p. 42).
2. *It is committed to a liberating, contestatory and proactive pedagogy that transcends the personal through the promotion of critical and social awareness, allowing the individual to develop skills and knowledge, elements with which to free, problematize, question and propose actions of change that result in their individual and collective transformation* (De Márquez, 2009, p.96).

3. *Real democracy reinforces the students' feeling of belonging in the classroom and in the school, feeling that the subjects related to the evaluation have been a shared decision, where the ideas, concerns and opinions of the students have been taken into account.* (Murillo & Hidalgo, 2016, p.9).

4. *As the collaborative learning is fostered in the classroom, it will be experienced social and emotional growth of the students* (Gómez, 2015, page 149).

5. *The participatory process consists in creating a truly cooperative atmosphere in the classroom, in the relations of the students with each other and with the teaching staff. Although the change is minimal, the teacher reformulates activities and sessions according to the needs of the participants in the classroom* (Martín, Martín & Mayo, 2014 p.9).

6. *Today we can perceive that there is a contradiction between the type of education that is provided in schools, and the model of society to which it is formally hoped, because schools are not institutions that were born in democratic societies, that have their origin a democratic vocation* (Delval & Lomelí, 2013, p.22). In relation to this, with the constitution and brought to the reality of democratic classrooms, it is common that the reforms that reach the teacher feel like external messages, giving him the classroom as the only space through which he can see them as a reality.

The above is a problem because in this way the teacher will hardly feel the task to fulfill as his own. *The only way to socialize the reform is to generate a broad training program, which requires the empowerment of a considerable number of people who do not always manage neither to engage in the fundamentals of this nor properly transmit such principles to teachers in service* (Díaz and Inclán, 2001). Moreover, from the training received in higher education to become a teacher and from the slogans of the pedagogy, it is difficult for teachers to accept reforms that start from the budgetary and not the pedagogical, as is the case of those that have formulated for Latin America.

Then, the democratic classroom that is thought by researchers in education and that some reforms propose, it is not assumed as proper in the classroom by the teacher. It is only given as an individual intention or it is perceived as a goal almost utopian. The insistence from the state policies regarding the transformation of the classes processes taught by the teachers at the different levels becomes one of the reasons for the classroom not to admit the change in a general way, so that the schools must live the democracy of the classroom only as the experience and model of some "advanced" teachers.

Also, it should be noted that teachers from Latin American countries are constantly being doomed to receive a low salary and international organizations have considered requests for wage increase as a valid factor in negotiations between unions and governments; nevertheless, the promise of a worthy stipend has not come true. This lack of motivation towards the employee make that resistance to the implementation of new practices be high, which in many cases does not detract from the teacher's interest in carrying out their work by trying learning spaces that meet the expectations generated by their work in the 21st century.

There is an ideal that states that learning environments should be seen from the multidisciplinary, as this will allow the teacher to address the educational problem from different points of view and the student to find alternatives of appropriation, consensus and motivation to approach knowledge. The scenarios in which the educational act currently takes place have placed the teacher before new challenges that force him to assume commitments around the social, which despite being given from the origin of the profession, have apparently been forgotten by the faculties of higher education which train teachers, in pedagogies, and train professionals in general.

*Before the "school" form existed, societies learned and socialized through other cultural agencies such as the family, the brotherhoods, the artisan guilds where the knowledge of the trades was transmitted to the new generations* (Duarte, nd); nevertheless, in addition to the fact that the evolutionary conditions of society have allowed an organization that establishes goals and specific ways for the educational act, the current world has radically changed the demands made to education. With regard to the people who must train, the teachers and the institutions that group them, are bound to respond to the knowledge society, whether this is based on the reform or on the need that the environment imposes; Young people today are seen as citizens of the world, so many of the factors that will place them positively or negatively in society, are given by their ability to interact through the tools that must be incorporated into their being by the institutions that educate them.

Historically, education has had the purpose of transmitting the cultural and social values of the people, in addition to the minimum requirements to live in society, adapted to the economic and political systems. So, the requirements that today must be developed in individuals to live in society transform the skills that teachers must master. Adding to the existing ones, the training in ICT use, the recognition of knowledge with respect to

interculturality and intraculturality, the leadership and the synchronization with the accelerated change of knowledge, as well as the mediation, dynamization and participation of the knowledge construction process (Buendía, et al., 2007).

The learning environments are now multiple, not only in different educational acts but also in a single teaching purpose, that is to say, that the nature of current students and their particular vulnerabilities invite us to approach the attempt to bring them closer to the domain and the competence in knowledge in different ways. Since Lucié Sauvé (1994) the environment is addressed as a problem, resource, nature, biosphere, livelihood and community space; each of these visions poses a way of assuming the relationship of knowledge and of the individuals that are part of the educational act with the world.

All of the above implies an accelerated change in the educational context, in which, for example, the validity of knowledge is re-evaluated by its vertiginous transformation, weakening the image of the institution as the only means to obtain learning, with which the objectives and the means that it uses in its work must be directed towards new directions or fall into oblivion. In many cases, due to his constant contact with the information of the web, the student knows, albeit superficially, evolutions of the knowledge that his teacher does not manage yet.
However, the new educational demands that the knowledge society poses to education and that responsibilities with the vulnerable require of institutionally and teaching, make an open and flexible curriculum indispensable, but with contents selected from different curricular conceptions which allow the greater number of mental operations (to attend to multiple intelligences) and that make possible to sustain the cultural bases of humanity by motivating openness for the diverse. The essential contents of a certain knowledge must be chosen verifying the context and consensus, as well as its validity and relevance in the reality and in the epistemology of each science (Escamilla 2007).

The foregoing must be related to the educational environment, that is to say, with the favorable conditions so that the projected learning take place, which generally causes problems in Latin American public institutions where investment in infrastructure is low. But in turn environments must make possible for every individual, without distinction of personality, gender, disability or any type of vulnerability to access it.

As mentioned by Duarte, *the educational environment ... is established in the dynamics that constitute the educational processes and that involve actions, experiences and experiences for each one of the participants* (nd, p.12). This environment must address the own particularities of each school but without neglecting the need to be part of the city, the nation and the world. With the means currently available to students, flexibility, problematization, critical thinking and particular needs are aspects that cannot be ignored, because they are already immersed in educational dynamics and because they are part of the intrinsic being of the students.

It is clear that websites and resources for education and research have been strengthened and continue to do so; multimedia, podcasts, chat, Second Life, hybrid websites and academic search engines can be used at any educational level. But the above can lose strength if, as happens in some HEIs, computers are still seeing like typewriters or instruments for information search; This is the reiteration of a classroom in which is intended to deliver knowledge without the intermediation of the peers who are at my side and without the participation of the peers who accompany me from all over the world through the information and communication systems.

The redefinition of the teaching profession is a task that pertains to the educator himself, this without neglecting that relationships in the school cannot be understood from parameters of isolation (Torrego, 2008), but from the opportunity that represents a time of change. *Unfortunately, the school structure is fundamental because it can be conceived to pigeonhole educational work, to respond to the approaches and needs of the formal organization of the system; in many cases it can be oriented towards "nothing happens"* (Díaz and Inclán, 2001); the government finds in it a value that cannot be lost and that has to conform to established norms from itself. In a way, the unification that the reforms aim at conflicts with the complex social system that ICTs establishes to us as a future.

The world of cyberspace allows to program, navigate, write, build, experiment or communicate. These functions illustrate the new experiences of human beings with the machines, made possible by the current information and communication technologies (García, 2003, p 5), the teacher cannot get away from this as it will take him away from his students; in the worst of the cases eager to be linked to technological proposals but almost always immersed in them fully. Currently in the consumption, the teaching function is intimately linked to information and communication technologies.

In fact, the way in which the educational act is organized, that is, the construction of the environment in which the tasks of teaching and learning will be developed, must be dynamic and democratic, must recognize the learning goals, but must not bring certain routes that will be followed; This being so, current technologies are already given by circumstances as part of education. It is the group that visualizes a strategy and puts it into action and it is the group that determines when it is time to change it or vary it with a view to continue advancing towards the objectives.

With the aesthetic act that allows the sensitivities of students and teachers to be combined in harmonic movements that result in the appropriation of knowledge, the awareness will be reached towards the joint task of learning, the construction of that playful awareness that gives as a result joy (Duarte, nd. P.13). The symbiosis generated must bring with it technology, as students will request it or, in very isolated cases, the teacher is obliged to incorporate it in order not to alienate his student community from the general walk of the world.

Sometimes we find sad or apathetic faces in our students when executing the actions that we indicate, perhaps this fact is presented because we have not made them part of the proposal they are making. The collective construction of the educational environment allows to generate recreational activities that can be perceived as *voluntary occupations, exercised within certain limits of time and space, which follow freely accepted rules, but absolutely obligatory.* (Duarte, nd, p.14), that playfulness makes the educational environment a vital space in which knowledge is the element of encounter.

**THE TEACHER AS LEADER OF A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**
Somehow it might seem what has been said up to this point goes hand in hand with the dismissal of the teaching profession that is sought from many governments and from some sectors of our society; however, it is important to go back to Torrego (2008) who by quoting Salvador (1995), emphasizes over the role as specialist that meets the teacher in the educational institution. A role that should lead to become a learning facilitator, counselor, manager of coexistence and structural part of the organization to which he belongs. Also Bernal, Marcos and Valdés, follow the same line to indicate that the teacher, as an active subject of the school is a catalyst for processes, develops in himself collective skills, management, proposal, collaboration and institutional impact (2017, p.58).

The above is positive, insofar as the teacher wishes to assume the broad scope in which he must function, since that stagnant criterion according to which he was considered as possessor of the knowledge, is already revalued. *Of course, it follows that the development of thought is only possible in the activity, contributing to this the communication that is established between humans through language* (Santos, 2007, p.318). *Making our schools spaces in which not only is taught but in which teachers learn, represents the great turn we need. And for this, nothing better than understanding that it is the right to learn from our students, the principle that should guide training* (Marcelo García, 2002). At present, knowledge is a good that is available to all those who pursue it, that is to say that the knowledge of formal and factual sciences is available, for which the teacher must dedicate himself to guarantee that the student's autonomy to approach them can be executed with a guarantee of success. This work can be only carried out by someone who knows fully about his specialty, but who is also knowledgeable about *the teaching methods and the evaluation that is more coherent with the classroom work model that is intended to be carried out with the students* (Torrego, 2008, p.6).

In the 21st century it is considered that the world economy has moved in its transformation from an information society (flow of messages) to a knowledge society, the latter is considered as the main resource of growth, competitiveness and employment (Madrigal and Camarena, 2007). With this, it is hardly obvious that the investment made by nations in education will result in a particular and general growth, that is, a benefit for each of those who wish to advance in the educational scale and also for the generality of those who belong to a determined country, be they teachers, basic and middle school students or any other professional. However, the teacher as a leader of a learning space, especially in the Latin American region, must be clear that innovation is not achieved by the novelty of technological application, but by the application of criteria to achieve new formative and communicative scenarios, in other words, there must always be an alternative plan when resources are not present (Rodríguez, 2017).

When mentioning that education for a person must start from desire, not necessarily it leaves out only those who prefer other ways to build their future, but that sometimes, when the conditions are not given, it is possible that the option of education should be discarded. Poverty and inequality can affect the accumulation of human capital: for poor families, investment in education can be unattractive, especially because of the opportunity cost of children and young people who can work at home or receive remuneration at the labor market (Cotte and Cotrino, 2006).

Based on this, the teacher must be prepared to be able to make determinations about the strategies and didactic means to be used, the way in which he must dispose from the near and distant environment, the way in which the group and individual activities will be worked, the times to be handled with regarding each topic and the intervention that he will have in each moment of the class. It should also incorporate the contributions of students and ICT, in order to link the student to wider contexts than the local ones and allow them to illustrate their shortcomings so that they can be intervened in a convenient way.

The criteria for evaluating the process and not the product must have been established beforehand, although one should not be separated from the other. That is to say, if an adequate organization of the different stages that a given course follow, it will have already incorporated the moments in which the teacher will verify the progress of each student with respect to the proposed goals. This constant monitoring allows the individual or collective failures in the acquisition of a certain competence to be corrected and it will enable all students to obtain the expected final product - a product that may coincide with what the teacher expected or present variants of agreement with the particularities of each student-. *From the perspective of teachers it means changing the conception that training is necessary only at the beginning of the professional journey and become aware of the imperative need to be up to date requires a dedication to one's personal and professional training* (Sánchez, 2006, 107 ).

But it will also be important that the class can be given according to that planning, which corresponds to the ability to lead that is possessed. The teacher's leadership in the classroom is something that gives him his status from the beginning: he is the expert in a certain topic, in addition to be acting as the instructor and authority; That leader may well be taken as a factor that achieves the cohesion of the group, as long as you have this ability. Leaders in schools with higher performance are distinguished from their counterparts by their personal involvement in the planning, coordination and evaluation of teaching (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2016). Otherwise, it is possible to distribute roles, since it may be that the leadership that some students have among their peers, positive or negative, can be used for common benefit.

The students tend to immediately perceive the insecurity and dissatisfaction of the teacher, this from the way in which they face the group, either using an authority granted or assuming it as part of their work but sure to be able to share it in certain moments. It is also clear that the same model of authority does not work equally in all groups and that the teacher's experience will be fundamental when it comes to make malleable the way he interacts with his students. Between the educational actors and the people of different organizations are established links  at a different level of cohesion while the common interests are maintained; however, when the circumstances change, ruptures may arise that hinder collaborative and cooperative work, the disconnection between the actors prevent communication and the exchange of information for the fulfillment of institutional purposes (Gavotto, Morales, Monge & Castellanos, 2016, page 172).

In short, the students must assume the teacher as part of a team that has common goals and is able to agree on the paths to follow and to achieve them. The cohesion around the objectives is a fundamental part of the work that the teacher exercises when trying to get all their students to reach them, always trying that the environment in which their class is carried out fosters the learning experience, to build knowledge from the collective and with support in respect. When an integrated environment of human beings has been shaped, in which adequate and comfortable coexistence is achieved for all, it is possible that the conflicts are addressed with maturity and can even be incorporated into the learning, *empowering them to become opportunities of personal growth and improvement of relationships* (Torrejo, 2008, p.16).

Now, the teacher is the representative of a society and an institution, so he must assume what they are asking for, contributing from his perspective but respecting what has been chosen as the ideology of what is right.

In spaces where virtual education is favored, in fact the criteria of homogenization disappear, and the role of the teacher, based on technological resources, goes into favoring a more particular approach to the interests and needs of users (García, 2003, p 11); indeed, in this case the learning environment is given by the virtual resource and the teacher should try to incorporate other specific contexts of students in the physical environment but with the intermediation of E-Learning and M-Learning resources. This subject has advanced so much that the already recognized Taxonomy of Bloom, in the field of curricular design, have adapted the particular strategies that are applicable in the educational environment mediated by technology (Churches, 2013).

However, in short, the physical or virtual space in which the teacher performs his task allows the construction of a learning environment, that is to say, that it has the propitious structure to generate it. The teacher then enters to play the fundamental role who must lead his modeling and functioning.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The educational reforms that have been established in Latin America since the eighties have not had the continuity required to evaluate the possible results to obtain. Each government has served its interests or strategies without taking into account those of its predecessors. In a process that aims to increase the qualification standards of the population, which end with obtaining a competitive human capital and in line with the world's economic expectations, the efforts end up being vain and this is reflected in the results of the international standardized tests.

The requests of the international organizations have not had greater effects in the reality of the classroom, a part of the interference is given by the teacher that is torn between the determinations of the ministries and the needs that must be attended before the constant technological advances. Public education is debated between policies, resources destined to infrastructure and the particular appreciations of teachers in the classroom, in the so-called hidden curriculum; only the actions that start from the universities that train the teachers, the training of the staff already hired, the investment in technology and the constant monitoring of the policies, can allow that in the medium term the results are obtained that as a nation are constantly stated.

The classroom is the fundamental place in which the educational act becomes real, there reforms should be visible but from the perspective of satisfying the needs of the contexts of students and what 21st century society asks for the teacher. Current technology offers the opportunity to bring classrooms from remote places closer to cutting-edge knowledge, which is developed in the best institutions in the world. The connectivity and the resource given in updated computer equipment, is an unbeatable opportunity for the democratization of knowledge. Classrooms today must be seen as educational environments, spaces in which the construction of knowledge is given through consensus and democracy. All the activities that are thought for the classroom must be agreed with those who participate as students, thus identifying the resources to be used and the routes to be followed. Values, attitudes, theoretical contents and the development of skills and competences are the object of development in today's student. People who are trained for the future must be prepared as citizens of the world, that is, they must recognize their own culture to take it into account as a starting point, but also, they must be prepared to adapt their knowledge and skills to environments, places and different challenges. Information and communication technologies play a fundamental role in the transmission of knowledge and debate around their different perspectives of appropriation. In regions of the world where the support of the governments in this sense is not consolidated, the backwardness continues and motivates the loss of possibilities of development for the human species in general. The teacher must act as a leader in the learning environment, encouraging community life and the democratization of ideas. The topics to be discussed in a classroom must be shared in advance, so that students prepare their interactions and take on the role of knowledge managers.A regular classroom to which the design of a learning environment has been applied encourages cooperation but allows the teacher to demonstrate individual processes around the acquisition of competences. The resources available in it are broader and the learning action starts from different perspectives, in most cases closer to the student than the simple teacher-student relationship.

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