

EDUCATION FOR LIFE: PARTICIPATION IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF A COMMON

The great challenge of our time is to build and nurture sustainable communities. Increasingly often environmental, social and existential crisis among others, evidence unsustainability of the development model. Face this systemic crisis involves recognizing the need to create new structures and organizational forms that include a new education, that primarily respond the paradigm shift to be predators of life to be supporters of life in the broadest sense. Today free learning and education for life are key to move towards knowledge societies capable of generating coherent change to different contexts and needs and achieve a sustainable present, by recognizing and regenerating connections and relationships with the land, the society and our inner being more harmoniously.

Build new structures and organizational forms that integrate learning centered on regeneration of life is fundamental. Beyond the concept of sustainability, recognizing us in an interconnectivity, involves building sustainable communities, about how to sustain these communities and how we sustain life in community—starting from working in own contexts and with peer. We urgently need to learn to be community and being community, learn to sustain life as entities that participate in it.

This transformation requires assuming education as a common, recognizing that education is constantly evolving into a learning by doing of society as a collective and alive entity, that from the exchange of interests, motivations and change needs, continuously generates new learning, ideas and knowledge. Current educational systems, although they are meant to teach about life and work occur outside of a real environment, in its structure aren't integrated to the social network, and its content doesn't involves the understanding of life and its relationship with work. Are based on a curricula that in most cases is the same for any small town that for any big city of the world, and is virtually the same education for one than for another. Its homogeneity keeps it away from the stream of life, limiting a true learning that to respond to genuine interests and a necessary change.

How can we reclaim the possibility to learn and to live on this planet?¹ And in this sense, how can we live and work with a greater purpose?² The way we learn is deeply connected to the way we live. We live learning and decide how to live from our learning, or before the lack of a genuine learning we fail to decide how to live. Releasing learning is how to reclaim the possibility to learn, this requires that learning be integrated into every area of life.

It cannot understand a real learning dissociated from life, free learning is the learning of life. Recover the possibility of how to live is intimately linked to a holistic understanding of life, assuming that we are all integrated and are participants in the weave of life. The approach of education for life establishes the need to understand how life is sustained and how we cooperate in this sustainability from the multiple and diverse ways in which we live, recognizing and interacting ones with each other and with nature. As Satish Kumar mentioned, we cannot live apart, we need each other. The journey of education is learn to work together like the biggest challenge we face as humanity³.

The initiative of the *Free Learning Communities for Life*, takes up this discussion. Seeks to integrate free learning into family life and into a community scope about the regeneration of life; starting from the premise that until we are willing to take responsibility for everything, we cannot change anything. Its conformation arises as a participatory learning process from the meeting and exchange of ideas and development of new knowledge about how to care for the interest and desire to learn, on how we propose us and we propose to children learn in freedom and dignity, on how to propitiate a real parenting and new ways of conviviality, and on how to cultivate the joy of life and to relate differently with life.

But what do we mean by sustainability of life and what new structures and forms of organization required? How does a new organization can establish more harmonious relations with life? How do we face educational and non-educational systems dissociated from the weave of life, that promote competitiveness and individualism away from collaboration and cooperation in networks?

For Fritjof Capra the basic pattern of life is the network through which all relationships and connections are supported through a continuous collaboration, "Ecosystems are living networks of organisms; organisms are networks of cells, organs and systems; cells are networks of molecules. Wherever we see

life, we see networks. Living networks in human societies are networks of communications. Like biological networks, they are self-generating. Each communication creates thoughts and meaning, which give rise to further communications, and thus the entire network generates itself".⁴

Education is an active part of society. When the integration and participation of a large number of people are involved, it is able as a community to generate new knowledge, and as participants of knowledge communities or knowledge societies be capable of generate the change that is required from own contexts and needs front of the biggest challenges of these days. UNESCO recognizes that emerging societies will be societies in which knowledge be shared in order to remain conducive to human and life development, "A knowledge society must ensure the sharing of knowledge as a common good, must be able to integrate each of its members and promote new forms of solidarity with the present and future generations"⁵.

The conformation of the Free Learning Communities for Life —*one in Mexico City and other in Tepoztlan* — sets the questioning of whether it is from the creation of small learning communities based on a holistic view a first sustainability practice, if the construction of an own community is a first learning for the regeneration of life, if retrieve this possibility, as we grow and learn in relation to others, is the beginning of a new common structure that contributes to the conformation of an education for life. Friendship is a starting point to sustain life and generate new structures, it is an engine of interconnection and networking, is the new venture and the beginning of any project. Like networks, is the pattern by which we overcome individualism, indifference and anomie state.

¹ Gustavo Esteva, "*Unitierra, the Freedom to Learn*". Activist promoter of the post-development and founder of the "*Universidad de la Tierra*".

² Jhon Holt, "*Instead of Education: Ways to Help People Do Things Better*". 1976. One of the main promoters of free learning and education without schooling.

³ Satish Kumar, "*You Are, Therefore I Am: A Declaration of Dependence*". Green Books Ltd. 2002. One of the most important educators of the twentieth century, and a representative of the deep ecology and a new education for life, founder of Schumacher College and Small School, editor of the British Magazine Resurgence.

⁴ Fritjof Capra, "*The Web of Life*". Featured thinker who integrates science, spirituality and concrete actions for social change. Director and founder of the Center for Ecoliteracy in Berkeley, California.

⁵ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, "*Towards Knowledge Societies. First World Report*". 2005.