EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES, EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

PERSONAL MEMOIRS

by RICARDO DÍEZ-HOCHLEITNER

The history of UNESCO, similar to any other human institution, is the sum of the history of people who, under appropriate leadership and with adequate means, are devoted to the same ideals and goals.

The educational planning programme of UNESCO was initiated by means of my appointment in August 1958 as programme specialist, in those days, Educational Division in charge of the Major Project for Latin America (LAMP), headed by M. Dartigue, as part of the Education Department of UNESCO.

I had been in charge of the first national educational planning exercise in Colombia (1956-1957) following a Recommendation of the Inter-American Conference of Educational Ministers (Lima 1956). This was, in fact, a follow-up of the elaboration of a technical education plan prepared at the request of the first World Bank mission to Colombia (1954-55), while I was serving as professor at the National University in Bogotá. My appointment was made by Gabriel Betancour, Minister of Education during the early days of this work and, later on, ADG with UNESCO (see below). UNESCO’s co-operation was ensured by means of three TA experts incorporated in the staff of the National Educational Planning Office (J. Blat, J.A. Rodríguez Acevedo and A. Cruz).

The Organization of American States decided to promote the spreading in Latin America, in co-operation with ECLA, of the Colombian educational planning pilot experience, and entrusted me to this end with the technical preparation of an Interamerican Seminar on Educational Planning, held in Washington (June 1958). UNESCO was invited to co-operate through its office in Havana.

Dr Luther Evans, in those days Director-General, interviewed me in Washington early 1958 and invited me to join UNESCO to initiate a world wide programme in favour of educational planning, asking me to work in the Division handling Latin America educational affairs, awaiting for new budgetary appropriations during the 1958 General Conference, which became also the end of his mandate, while Mr V. Veronese was elected the new DG.

Malcolm Adiseshiah, the Deputy Director-General soon took the lead in favour of educational planning after having presented him with the following plan for UNESCO: (a) to organize regional conferences of Ministers of Education together with those responsible for economic development; (b) to train educational planners and administrators by means of regional training centres including later on an international centre or institute; (c) providing technical assistance to Member States.

Already in 1959, a first training seminar was held in Bogotá for Latin America future educational planners in co-operation with OAS and ECLA, which I organized. A first ministerial conference was held end 1959 in Karachi for Asian Member States, to which I accompanied Adiseshiah and introduced a report about educational planning potential. Also in 1959 an international seminar of experts was held
at the headquarters in Paris on educational planning and socio-economic development, while the recruitment of potential technical assistance (TA) experts was started and few pilot missions conducted.

In 1960, the UNESCO General Conference declared “educational planning” the top priority project of its programme, including educational administration. The establishment of regional training centres was authorized (in Santiago de Chile, Beirut, New Delhi and Dakar) and regional ministerial conferences planned to be held in Santiago de Chile (1962) as a starting point of a long etcetera (Tripoli, Abidjan, Bangkok, etc.) over the years to come, setting quantitative expansion goals as well as qualitative standards and financial plans. A very intense TA programme was launched in parallel, in order to advise Member States on the organization and running of educational planning units, including educational statistics and documentation services, as well as school buildings for educational financing aspects, among others.

The Santiago Conference was a special hallmark in this process, closely associated with ECLA in days of Raúl Prebish and René Maheu’s strong leadership. The Declaration of Santiago, fixing a goal of 5% of GNP to be devoted to educational development, marked a turning point due to the support of the US delegation, headed by Philip Coombs, President Kennedy’s Assistant Secretary General of the OAS Task Force, entrusted by the “Alliance for Progress” with producing a ten year educational plan for LA (“Perspectives of education development in Latin America”), while maintaining simultaneously my job at UNESCO headquarters already as director of the newly created educational planning Office (1962-1963).

Meanwhile, I was appointed by Eugene Black, the President of the World Bank, as first director in charge of investments in Education, starting in 1963. In these circumstances Gabriel Betancour was appointed UNESCO’s Assistant Director-General in charge of education, while Philip Coombs had been appointed, soon before, first director of IIEP in Paris. For my part, I requested to be shown in the status of leave of absence from UNESCO.

Soon after (in 1963) a co-operative agreement was reached between the World Bank and UNESCO, thanks to which UNESCO became the technical-arm serving as an associate in missions at early stages conducive to loans in the fields of education, in addition to co-sponsor the IIEP.

In 1965 I returned to UNESCO Headquarters as Director of the educational planning, administration and financing Department just established, in order to reinforce the co-operation with the World Bank and to expand UNESCO’s activities in educational policy formation, educational planning, administration and school buildings, by means of technical advisory services, ministerial conferences, training activities, seminars and technical advisory services, including more industrialized countries, particularly in Europe. In this connection, the holding of an International Conference on Educational Planning in 1968 was authorized by the General Conference, but after starting the preparatory work, I moved to Spain (May 1968) in charge of undertaking an overall educational reform (approved by the 1970 Bill).

In these endeavours, the active role of UNESCO was once more evident - after short term advisory missions to Spain undertaken by myself on behalf of UNESCO during the years 1966 and 1967 - with an International Advisory Board composed of personalities closely related to UNESCO and specialists on mission attached to a variety of projects (e.g. National Educational Research and Development Centre, assisted computer learning project, international seminar on prospective education, etc.), and myself on leave of absence status from UNESCO, in order to preserve my
independence within the political situation those days in Spain and until elected member of the Executive Board in 1970.

From this personal experience, I can certify about the visionary spirit that always inspired the work of UNESCO, and certainly in those days, but mainly the trust and faith one could find in Member States towards UNESCO as the best source for guidance in the promotion of Education, Culture and Science.

**Biography of the Author**

**Ricardo Díez-Hochleitner**

Former UNESCO staff member (1958-1968), Director of the Department of Educational Planning and Administration (1964-1968), UNESCO’s Executive Board Member (1970-1976), and Executive President of the Spanish National Commission (1969-1974). Also first Director in the World Bank (BIRD), on leave from UNESCO. Vice-President of the Santillana Foundation. President of the Club of Rome.