

Letter from the director

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Our education, at least on the primary and secondary levels, is at a disadvantage compared with that of almost all highly developed countries and even countries of medium development like Colombia; the last year Pisa test is a definite argument in this respect.

The point is that while we have slightly improved in reading, science and mathematics, the other countries that are compared with Colombia grew at a faster rate, which means a relative backwardness for us and this seems to increase with each new measurement.

A reporter asked the current Minister of Education about who was responsible for this situation, and the vast majority of answers, according to the minister, blamed directly to national government.

It is possible, we think, that blame indirectly lies with the government, not having driven for some time now, efficient public policies in education. But we cannot deny that unionized teachers, who refuse –even with strikes and street violence–, any assessment, bear the greatest responsibility for the poor educational preparation of our youth.

It is not necessary to insist on unsuitable pedagogical models. As rote learning all out of any effort in favor of analytical capacity. Neither on the material conditions of some educational, rural and even urban institutions, where the absence of teachers is supposed. Together with physical discomfort, lack of financial resources, etc.

But we do need to look at the fact that, because of these and other circumstances, the ability of oral and written communication skills, abstract reasoning and analytical ability of the students are a “rara avis” in our educational environment.

The deficiency in knowledge and intellectual skills with which our secondary school graduates come to the university, is a common complaint of teachers. With few exceptions, they cannot read or do not and, in case they do, they do not understand what they read. They have no idea of writing and frequently avoid facing courses involving mathematical reasoning. No wonder there is talk of adding one year to high school, because, in fact, the first year of the university has become a kind of undergraduate course, useful to insist on reading, writing, mathematics and the vocational guidance. It does not mean that a high school 12th grade will correct these problems, but it can be a way to fill some gaps that come from kindergarten.

What Colombian education is crying out for is an almost entirely. Paradigm change, which means to begin to transform the mentality of some teachers still applying systems overcome many years ago. The second condition is training these teachers in order to prepare the students to face each day a greater competition, preparation and comparison. This seems to be inexorably, one of the consequences of globalization that our traditional teachers do not seem to know what it is.