

Letter from the director

Peace and education

Ignacio Restrepo Abondano

As it is well known, education has its ultimate root in latin *educere*, meaning “to get out”, “to draw”. In analyzing this concept, education becomes the process by which one takes out of the learner –little by little– whatever makes him a worthy human being, able to live in society; hence, sociable, friendly, helpful, truthful, honest, master of his/her passions; in short, worthy in its deepest sense.

This is what serious educators have always called “formation” of the learners, of the persons themselves. But for those for whom education has no deep meaning, this is only instruction in math, social sciences, language and many other subjects such as the ministries of education include in the school, college or even university syllabus. No one can deny that instruction is absolutely necessary, but for those who are not highly trained, instruction falls flat, and so we find white collar thieves, drug traffickers, disseminators of pornography, pedrasts, hackers, usurers, those who run pyramid schemes, and all kinds of undesirable people who make any country unlivable.

If we look for those model societies, of which there are not so many in the world, we know that there is a direct relationship between levels of education and quiet, balance, and, in short, people who live peacefully.

Colombia is a country that has failed to live in peace. If we analyze our political history after the war of independence, we find, since the September Night, all kinds of political dissensions that for the second half of 1800 become true battles since Radical Olympus and at least until 1905. And this does not mean that differences have not continued until 1930 when the interparty violence breaks out, and then, the violence carried out first by bandits, and then by guerrillas of all kinds until today.

It is missing, or we do not know who has written a detailed history of education in Colombia and its relationship to violence in the country. But we do know, from many other registers, the general precariousness of our education and of qualified teachers to form and train leaders and, even more, middle and lower classes, especially in the countryside, where people are cannon fodder for the outlaw movements and hordes which at the beginning of the Republic, swelled the so-called “armies”, before the military career was professionalized in the nation. And we know that while Jacobo Arenas was an educated person, ‘Tiro Fijo’ and most of his henchmen –with some exceptions,– never set foot in a school worthy of the name.

Peace, whether Havana agreements are signed or not, is far from being established in Colombia, until we have a solid foundation in education. And while there is some knowledge about the need to educate, it takes a few years before this conviction constitutes a critical mass in the country. And many years more for mass education to be a reality in cities and in the countryside so we have a consistent foundation for true peace.