

Editorial

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Monographic number on childhood.

The publication of this monographic number devoted to childhood of the Latin American Review of Social Sciences, Childhood and Youth has been achieved thanks to the collaboration of the Department of Education and Culture of the Organization of American States, OAS; the Centers for Childhood Development of "Tierra y Libertad" Popular Front, Cendi, Monterrey, Mexico; and the Research Line on Childhood, Social Development and Public Policies of the Doctorate Program in Social Sciences Childhood and Youth of the Center for Advanced Studies in Childhood and Youth; within the framework of the alliance University of Manizales and the International Center for Education and International Development, Cinde. A similar issue jointly produced by the same institutions will be published yearly effective this date.

This monographic number on childhood articulates with the Second World Congress and the Ninth International Meeting on Early and Pre-School Education: Professional Formation and Development of Teachers and Educational Agents, to be held from September 23 to 25. This event is organized by the Centers of Childhood Development (Cendi) in Monterrey, Mexico; the Department of Education and Culture of OAS, the World Bank, the University of Manizales, Colombia, and the University of Saragoza, Spain.

The time for the publication of the issue on childhood is of great pertinence as the international community will celebrate the 20 years of the promulgation of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (ICRC) on November 20 of the current year. This instrument has been ratified by the biggest number of countries all over the world, Somalia being the exception, which subscribed it but has not ratified it yet and the United States, a country which has done none of both tasks, although an important debate about its need to do it has been taking place.

The ICRC is the expression of the comprehension of contemporary society on the basis that it is impossible to guarantee human rights if childhood and adolescence rights have not been guaranteed appropriately. Without a fair start of life, the fulfillment possibilities at present and in the future, as well as the individuals' social projection would be potentially limited.

Parallel to the political and ethical comprehension of the childhood and adolescence rights, expressed by the ICRC, which extends beyond its limits, a number of research studies from various disciplines such as neurosciences, pedagogy, psychology, sociology, law or economics have been produced at the same time. These studies illustrate the importance of working on childhood and

adolescence even before gestation as well as the various forms to do it. This research work has been reinforced in its main contributions and conclusions by the results from a significant set of longitudinal studies and evaluations on a number of varied programs and projects, which demonstrate the possibility of working on this topic and the multiple and positive ways of completing such work.

Besides, a world movement has been consolidated in this period, although still incipient, but concrete in various global and regional networks with emphasis on childhood topics or which have taken these topics to already existing networks, as it is the case of the *Consultative Group on Early Childhood, Care and Development*, the *World Forum on ECCD*, AMEI, the already existing World Organization for Pre-School Education, WOPE, the world network of specialized research centers on childhood, Child Watch, Crin; the regional networks for the defense of children's rights such as Redlamyc in Latin America and the Caribbean, Clacso groups, the Network of the Consultative Group for the Early Childhood in Latin America, etc.

The convergence of these efforts has been translated into an increasing comprehension of the urgent need so that childhood care can guarantee integrality, quality and inclusion. This action must be based upon the existence of public, national and local policies which, at the same time, become part of the societies' general effort to become more integrated, equitable, competent and peaceful.

To sum up, the conceptual advances in childhood, the evidence from research, the longitudinal studies and the evaluations, as well as the experience from programs and projects galore all over the countries, convince us about the responsibility of countries, of the states and of civil society to make childhood care a priority in their public agendas.

Nevertheless, a set of distinct factors conspire against the fact that those advances already mentioned have resulted in the solution of old controversies that prevent children to reach the levels that should be attained according to the advance of society. Besides, new risk factors and threats against the children's quality of life and their families must also be adequately cared.

The mentioning of some situations illustrates the above statement. According to some statistics from Unicef and the Bank for Inter-American Development, one out of each six children in Latin America, 18%, lacks such an elementary element that the society must provide as it is the Birth Certificate. Even worse, no more than three countries have the possibility to reach the universal coverage in the coming years, while other countries are endowed with significant gaps such as Haiti, with 30% of the population without the birth certificate, the Dominican Republic, 25%; Brazil, 24%; and Nicaragua, 19%. The disparities may be even greater within the countries when the differences between urban and rural zones or between indigenous, Afro-descendants or mixed-raced populations are considered.

The Childhood World State published by Unicef for the year 2009 states that the Neonate Mortality Rate in the region equals still 13, whereas in

industrialized countries equals 3. The NMR for children under 5 in Latin America and the Caribbean equals 26, with extreme cases such as Haiti with 76, while in industrialized countries it is 6.

The Survival Rate until the last grade in primary school shows an average of 84 for the region, whereas in industrialized countries it equals 97.

Different from these traditional difficulties, new problems deriving from events such as emergency intensification and complexity and their impact on childhood, the new forms of delinquency and the effects of phenomena such as bullying, sexual commercial exploitation, etc. keep on increasing while the care responding capacity of the various countries is not adequate yet.

This situation becomes day by day more complex when we analyze the fact that indicators such as those already mentioned result from a long period which is considered, by the majority of scholars and entities in charge of analyzing Latin American and world economy, as a new phase of economic expansion characterized by an accelerated growth of the economy in the United States, in many developed countries such as Germany, but also characterized by a relative delay with reference to other countries such as Ireland and Spain. Similarly, the dynamism of emergent economies, such as the Bric – Brazil, Russia and China – was the main actor. Accordingly, it is considered that the Latin American group had a relative recovery and growth phase.

Then the reflection to be done is as follows: if the achievements of our countries with reference to childhood were that modest or overtly disappointing during a period of positive economic performance as the one that ended in the second semester of 2008, what can we expect from a phase of the world economy such as that resulting from the burst of the estate sector in the United States in September 2008, its immediate generalization all over the world economy and its transformation in the worst recession of the world economy since the Great Depression in 1929?

The question is valid because research and experience have demonstrated that in the economic crisis processes, children and women become the most affected, as they are also in the adjustment or recovery starting processes. Family needs multiply because of the deterioration of the income and employment, besides the reduction of the governmental capacity and civil society. At the same time, the states try to increase their income, which implies, not only to reduce expenses – usually from the social perspective – but also to increase taxes and tariffs, among other measures.

We think that academy and everybody working on childhood should make at least two important reflections:

First, if advances in the knowledge on childhood and on how to work with it have been so significant, if there is so much evidence from the diversity of programs and projects on how to do it and from their positive results; if social consciousness about the importance of childhood has increased and it has been complemented with legal and constitutional frameworks such as ICRC that requires adequate attention on childhood from governments and many of these governments express their will to do it and talk about this topic in their

political declarations: ¿why is the advancement in this matter proportionally scarce and why has it sometimes gone back?

We believe that we should consider the following factors as some of the reasons for this to happen. One fact is that between political declarations and legal formulations, and the real governmental and societal actions there is a significant difference. We think that in many cases, with the perspective of speeches that incorporate many of the scientific evidences and the results from evaluations with reference to taking care of children, the real fact is that many programs, institutionality and the experience that has been accumulated so far are coming to an end. The above mentioned facts are replaced with alternatives which, actually, do not lead to the results expected, as it has been indicated by the low performance as reflected by the indicators already cited.

This situation is a great challenge to research and to the regional theoretical production on childhood. It is indispensable to contribute to closing the gap existing between knowledge and the design of policies and programs; and among political declarations, programs and actual actions. At the same time, we must accept that as work with childhood increases, it is vital to increase the knowledge production work with the aim to contribute to developing a better quality for those actions. The region has to advance in the production of more pertinent, systematic knowledge and related to the developments from direct initiatives with childhood.

Topics such as the comprehension of socialization, rearing guidelines and practices, identity and subjectivity, transitions between early and primary education, transitions between primary and secondary education; the body, children and adolescents' cultures, the peers' role, play, esthetics, violence, sexuality, disability, adultcentrism, power, etc., are events that require a judicious research work derived from the articulation of those who work directly with children (boys and girls), with those who formulate policies and programs and those who generate knowledge.

The second reflection is that this effort to generate knowledge, to design policies and programs, to promote childhood and family participation and inclusion, to stimulate social mobilization, has to be advanced at this moment when the international society undergoes a profound crisis.

Accordingly, we should consider that crisis from two dimensions. First, we should consider it with reference to its complexity and negative implications, especially for children and their families. Second, as the opportunity for the contemporary society to reflect with reference to everything we have done inadequately, incoherences and insubstantialities, the impertinence of apparent truths that have been naturalized before the public opinion as if they had always been like that or because they should be like that, etc.

As a matter of fact, we believe that the current crisis and the state of childhood in our region become an opportunity to identify what has not worked and has led us to the present complex and critical situation and what the corresponding alternatives are. It is time to articulate the knowledge and experience that have been obtained in the field of childhood to position such

aspects as the key axes in our countries' public agenda. At the same time, it is an opportunity that requires an ethical and professional commitment to find alternatives by those who work in the various fields concerning childhood. At the same time, such alternatives should aim both at protecting childhood, at protecting children from the worst crisis effects and at concentrating their attention on the elements necessary for the recovery process.

As contributions to these reflections by the Review, in this number, Ligia Galvis makes an important reflection about the International Convention on the Children's Rights twenty years later, in the section entitled Theory and Meta-Theory. She starts recognizing the children's rights from the XIX century until their approval and analyzes them through two central entities such as active children's rights tenure and integral protection. She concludes with the conceptual advances that provide elements for a holistic, dynamic and current interpretation of the convention on children's rights. Among these advances are gender, children's rights tenure, the adolescents' recognition of the world and the new looks at disability.

Also, from the perspective of rights, a research report on its inclusion in the syllabi at Colombian university programs aiming at skilling early age teachers is included. This report was carried out by researchers Nismé Pineda, Leonor Isaza, Marina Camargo, Clelia Pineda and Diana Henao.

The section of Studies and Researches contains seventeen articles classified in three main topics:

A) Fundamentals of development at early age

Professor Fraser Mustard, in his article *Early Human Development–Equity from the Start-Latin America*, presents a synthesis of the findings in social sciences and development neurobiology to demonstrate the impact of culture, environment and the quality of parents, caregivers and other people in contact with the children on their early age and their present and future development. He also illustrates how the acceptance of the importance of this impact has been increasing with reference to the comprehension of equity that starts with the life of the human being.

B) Child's Work

Maria Eugenia Rausky asks in her article, *¿Childhood without work or Working Childhood? Perspectives on child's work*, with the aim to analyze one of the discourses about the topic, a discourse that has been constructed by non-governmental organizations about child's work. She reviews both conceptual developments and policy proposals as well as the positions taken: abolitionism versus protectionism.

In the following article, Sebastián Urueña Abadía, Luis Miguel Tovar Cuevas and Maribel Castillo Caicedo analyze the "Determinants of child's work and schooling" from a case in the Province of Valle del Cauca, Colombia.

Luis Fernando Aguado introduces in his article a critical topic to the regional current situation by referring to a "Food Non-Consumption Index for Children in Colombia".

C) Orphanhood

Ernesto Durán Strauch and Elizabeth Valoyes report the set of situations with this condition that have reached a magnitude and complexity on the “Profile of Colombian boys and girls without parental care”.

D) Rearing styles and practices

Gloria Cecilia Henao López and María Cristina García Vesga analyze the “Familial interaction and emotional development in both boys and girls”. They conclude that the balanced style generates adequate and adaptive behaviors in the child and define this style as the most favoring the level of emotional comprehension of the boys and girls participating in the study.

The following article complements the previous one by referring to “Institutional and familial discursive practices on children’s rearing in eight Childhood and Family Observatories (OIF) in the province of Caldas, Colombia”. It was written by researchers Patricia Botero Gómez, Myriam Salazar Henao and María Leticia Torres.

Luz María López Montaña and María Olga Loaiza Orozco report a research study on the topic “International migrating parents and their families: Opportunities and new challenges”, from the reflection on the satisfaction of needs and familial interactions, when father or mother emigrates and their sons and daughters; boys, girls or adolescents become the responsibility of other relatives.

E) The Street

Brazilian researchers Tatiane de Oliveira Pinto e María de Fátima Lopes, in “Brincadeira no espaço da rua e a demarcação dos gêneros na infância”, analyze the street as a space for child socialization.

Ruth Pérez López and Miguel Ángel Arteaga Monroy, from Mexico, refer to some factors that nowadays hinder identity construction and the professional practices by the street teachers who work at civil society organizations in Mexico.

F) Transitions

Sara Victoria Alvarado Salgado and Martha Cecilia Suárez refer to the meaning of educational transitions as opportunities for integral human development, from the voices of boys, girls, family, community and institutions; rural and border indigenous communities. They illustrate their perspectives with the case of the Colombia Embera Chamí indigenous community.

Rosio Abello refers to the topic of transitions in her study “Constructing meaning on transitions at the beginning of schooling” and asks whether the researched institutions have or lack educational directives to enable transitions that will have an influence on the children’s capacity to learn how to learn and will contribute to guarantee their retention at school.

G) Quality of Pre-Schools

In his article, Jef J. van Kuyk analyzes two perspectives for curricular construction which he calls holistic and sequential, “Holistic and Sequential Approach to Curriculum: What Works Best for Young Children?”

With reference to the construction of alternatives before the early literacy

processes, in the article entitled “Traveling the way to the construction of written language with the magic rucksack”, Zulay Maldonado and Doris Guerrero Contreras describe the experience at the Congreso de Angostura Childhood Pre-School, at the Municipality of San Cristóbal, State of Táchira, Venezuela, with teachers, fathers, mothers and other related adults.

H) Body

The following article deals with the body: “Recognized body: Training for interaction without violence at primary school” and was written by researcher Ruth Milena Páez Martínez. In her article she identifies possibilities and bets for the interaction without violence in both boys and girls at primary school, thanks to the recognition of the body.

I) Sexual Exploitation

Leidy Bibiana Camacho Ordóñez and María Angélica Trujillo González analyze child sexual commercial exploitation, CSCE, as a subjective gain for boys, girls and adolescents participating in the research, before a history of economic and affective lacks.

Margarita Inés Quiroz Arango and Fernando Peñaranda Correa present the results of a research study aiming at understanding the meanings and responses from mothers with reference to their sons and daughters’ sexual abuse. They aim at generating some knowledge that is useful in the construction of pertinent policies and programs concerning this problem.

The third section of the Review, Reports and Analyses, includes the call for Number 1 of Volume of the journal, which will be a monographic issue about “Childhood and Youth in the street situation, lifestyles and social intervention practices”. There is a reference to the prize “Juan Carlos Portantiero 2008 II Support Fund Contest” for reviews on social sciences in Latin America and the Caribbean, with the corresponding cumulative indexes by authors and themes, as well as with their respective updates. Then there is a report from OAS: The Organization of American States, Development and education at early age. The Childhood Observatory at National University of Colombia presents a summary about its ten years of existence, and the Latin American and Caribbean Network for the defense of the Boys, Girls and Adolescents’ Rights, RDLAMYC, invites to the “First regional actions on occasion of the Convention’s 20 years”. From this perspective, the “Ibero-American Network for family Work” invites to the VII Ibero-American Conference about Families to be held in Montreal, Canada.

The fourth section, Reviewings and Recensions, presents the short essay by Ricardo Cicherchia about Francisco Chacón Jiménez and Juan Hernández Franco’s work entitled “Social spaces, familial universes: The family in Spanish historiography. Then there are two comments by Patricia Botero Gómez about “Representations and social sciences: an epistemological and methodological perspective”; and Eloisa Vasco, Sara Victoria Alvarado and Carlos Valerio Echavarría present “Justice, Moral and Political Subjectivity in Boys, Girls and Youths”. At the end, Patricia Botero, one more time, presents a note on her thesis “Childhood Conditions: Political Life Generations”.