
FOOTPRINT ARTICLE 1

DE congresses: the challenge in lighting the way to the new



One of the most anticipated events for all the people related to Development Education is the Congress hosted by Hegoa (with the collaboration of other platforms, institutions and people) in Vitoria. There is no "regularity" in the time between one call and the next as there is for other conferences. It has its own dynamics and "tempo".

The length of time between congresses has varied and milestones have been marked in the evolution of Development Education: six, eight or ten years depending on the nature of progress and thinking on concepts, methodologies, impact or areas of DE.

From 9 to 11 October 2014, we attended to the 4th Congress, the theme of which was "Changing education to change the world, for an emancipatory educational action!" and in the preparation of which more than 12 organisations participated.

There was a lot of enthusiasm and expectation, perhaps because of the current situation, the convergence of systemic crises and the imminent expiry of the structure in which the current models of coexistence, exchange and "development" are maintained. The big question from the educational approach was evident at all times: what and how we propose educational measures to modify this model and what elements are needed to build the new one?

Recognition should be given to the boldness in the organisation of the Congress to articulate different ways of exchanging experiences and thoughts. It is a model that combined workshops, keynote presentations, communications, working groups laboratories and especially a great deal of self-management and the organisation of the itineraries of the more than 300 participants so that we could interact and create opportunities to strengthen cooperation and learning.

¹ **Edualter** is a secular, independent and not-for-profit Catalan association founded in 1999. Its main lines of work are the systematisation and diffusion of teaching material and educational resources about peace, human rights, interculturality, gender equality and economic, social and environmental sustainability through a bank of resources (www.edualter.org), and the production of educational material and proposals on these topics. It also offers training and advice to other organisations, collectives and platforms, and promotes and supports networks, working groups and think tanks to encourage the collaborative construction of proposals linked to Development Education from a critical and transformative perspective.

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We mention the word boldness because managing to concentrate into a few days all of the thoughts raised and trying to outline future scenarios might have not been perceived as a challenge that many of those attending had to overcome. Or maybe the extent of the "assignment" could have even left a bitter taste in the mouth, but here we propose some ideas that can help to "sweeten" the challenge.

The four main topics discussed at the Congress were a great success in terms of the needs and "impulses" of those of us involved in DE (explicitly or implicitly). Focusing the educational work on power relations and the construction of political agency is a pressing need and is demanded, given the current situation.

"Politicising changes", as political scientist Joan Subirats said, claiming that we pay attention to what is happening in our surroundings masquerading as technical neutrality but what is changing is the essence of the politics of citizens: internet, virtual relationships, global mobility, new energy sources, access to meta-analysis (data, trends, etc.), new sovereignties, alternative ways to influence and show dissent.

The topics oriented towards the analysis of the DE process and towards communication as a tool for social transformation represent two of the "core areas" of thinking and in which solutions have been sought. We have made much progress, thinking has greatly evolved, and we have learned from actions and experiences. However, we need to return to that so that we can learn, share, stop being "in the margins" and take a necessary leading role that has not yet come about.

The expectations at this congress were to seek ways to move forward in these challenges. We believe that there was a "tsunami" of ideas and proposals and that it is now necessary to internalise and digest them, and, in the medium term, reach consensus and express what was achieved in the workshops.

Perhaps an effort that was overlooked due to the dynamics of the three-day "free-for-all" was the conceptual preparation of the Congress, with a document created with the collaboration of different agencies from the Spanish state and upon which much of the thinking was based. We believe that the creation of this document may have helped to clarify the different starting points in each debate (we encourage you to view the document and reread it here: <http://www.congresoed.org/documentos/>).

Along the same lines of retrieving knowledge, keeping the learnings of previous congresses alive and active should be encouraged. Their conclusions and proposals should be revisited and past challenges should be adapted and resumed, "theorising" from the host of practices (based on meetings and conferences related to the congresses) and especially encouraging more people to take ownership of this learning. The congresses also pose the challenge of sharing space with groups going

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through different moments of reflection and realisation, so having this knowledge clear and recognisable would greatly help to "pass it on" to more people.

Finally, an idea for the future would be to keep the focus on collaborative and shared work, extending the "sources" of thinking for this common discourse to all spaces where the entities, platforms, movements and people related to DE carry out educational activities.

This implies that the "ownership" of the next congress will be taken by those who may be the future protagonists: teachers, educators, trainers, theorists, families, public administrations, communicators, promoters, etc. Working so that each person involved in DE reflects on its practice and theory, and how it is experienced and felt. All this whilst sharing it in the most appropriate time-frame and manner, so that the joint construction is both continuous and permanent. Also that future Congresses represent the meeting place where the invisible bonds that hold us together in this dream can be strengthened.

Examples should be looked at of how changes are being made and alternatives sought in other areas, as this would help us move forward from being in the hands of other movements that share the urgency for change.

The P2P ethics, the interest in exchange, the need for an "open source" to outline this new pedagogy, a pedagogy that is shared and created collaboratively by all, an "anonymous" pedagogy, a pedagogy without "leaders" or "gurus", the teaching needed to discover and make "this world of shit made pregnant by another world" (Eduardo Galeano in AcampadaBcn).©