

FOOTPRINT ARTICLE 4

He has telescopic vision, the skin of a turtle,
a chameleon's tongue and the nose of a caterpillar.



Preparing our imagination for the 5th Congress

I Escaped Routine/ To Pilot My Voyage/ Because The Cubicle Where I Lived/ Has Turned Into A Landscape. I Was An Object/ Waiting To Become Ash/ One Day I Decided/ To Listen To The Breeze/ To Go Skating/ Holding On To Your Shirt/ No One Convinced Me/ I Was Convinced By Your Smile/ And I Went After You/ Following My Instinct/ If You Want Real Change/ Well, Change The Way You Walk... ("La vuelta al mundo", translated into English as "Around the World").

I'm not sure why, but this old song by Puerto Rican band "Calle 13" was going around in my head when I was coming into the 5th Development Education (DE) Congress. It was funny to think that even though we called it that, we were rather in what we now call an "uncongress" and also that, although we called it DE, actually this was the term that we, the participants, used the least on a daily basis. And if we used it, it was more like a tribute to our history rather than terminology that we thought of as being very appropriate.

But today we started this new Congress with the uncertainties raised by a group of clowns that in previous Congresses drew absurd conclusions. The title was a phrase that had been much repeated by them in 2014: "The revolution is good, very good ... but it is not easy going". This conference (or whatever it was) was a gigantic exercise to question every DE practice, even putting a metaphorical and actual clown nose on them and expressing a very serious idea so that we could see it from a different perspective. It had been over eight years since the last Congress and lots had happened in some areas and very little in others. We were even going backwards in some. In much of them we had become dogmatic and in others we had gone so deep into them that we had forgotten where it was in the complex landscape of reality.

¹ **Colectivo VillaQuién** is described as a crazy and meaningless initiative led by a group of experience apprentices who want to change the world with an elephant that listens to them. Some question whether it really exists and others question whether the current reality should exist. They consider themselves to be educators who have so much to learn that they question whether they have multiple types of intelligence. They are still in search of at least two of them, and they do so with great determination. Among the publications that they would like to have published we can find: "La Educación para el Desarrollo en los programas del Canal Cocina" (2012, Ediciones del Huevo Frito) and "Utopía del discurso y su epistemología en infantes de 0 a 3 años en las guarderías internacionales de Naciones Unidas" (2015, Routelove). Some of its members attended the 4th Congress at Hegoa and have sent us this text, which they recommend is baked for 15 minutes at 200 degrees of excitement. *Contact:* Email: colectivovillaquien@gmail.com, Twitter: @ColVillaQuien.

PREPARANDO NUESTRA IMAGINACIÓN PARA EL V CONGRESO
PREPARING OUR IMAGINATION FOR THE 5TH CONGRESS

This thinking exercise with a clown-nose on was done by all participants at the Congress which, this time, instead of doing the same again, had asked us to attend in person. There are still about three hundred of us, as in other meetings, but this time we were almost "kidnapped"... emotionally... The "Unlearning Commission" had mentioned how important it was that people from many different sectors were present. A good number were educators from schools like me. We had already overcome the idea that some people in the last Congress had of "burning formal schooling", getting past the proclamations and setting to work.

It had been meant for global educational spaces to be created in the past ten years instead of reproducing the social system with all its flaws and virtues. The latter would be the foundation along with the practice of improving on those defects with children from anywhere on the planet. This happened with thinking and learning processes, denunciation and mobilisation but mostly with the exercising of the imagination needed to create a better world. It is something anyone under the age of six can deftly manage before they then slowly lose that ability due to educational practices (such as for example, putting them in rows in class, like buns in an oven).

This change was based on the conviction with which we accompanied educational processes: the "battle" was to be played out in the territory of these educational ventures. Although there were others in the legal, economic and financial, and political fields... the area where it would be decisive was in this one. It gave us the (metaphorical) oxygen to reach this highest peak without suffocating. In this sense, we had already overcome the formal, informal and non-formal difference, because it was about having a dual vision: first, that any intervention has a more or less important role in the learning process of each one of us (which would need to be measured) and second, that this educational potential has to come first in any planning (meaning a pedagogical view of events: what do we want to learn? What takes us out of our comfort zone? What is our just and inclusive society built upon? How does it affect the future? What is the process in which it takes place? What kind of questions are generated? What do we learn from this venture?).

All of these questions therefore made sense from any perspective and intervention (informal, awareness, communication, mobilisation, non-formal, formal...) and the intensity of their responses and their development are what really give that measure and that strength to the fundamental construct of the empowered person and society (and that which in turn continues). With a cautious smile, I remember the questions that we asked and the aims that we had at the time: What will the inspector say?... And to meet the programme...? the formal structure is too oppressive... we try to make something fit them... it is impossible for changes to take place... we will try to raise awareness... I do not know how to think if it is not in the form of content... what is educational...? pedagogy for specialists... and how do we evaluate this? And many more like this...

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To open our minds, it was necessary to contact people who think very differently to us and these made up another large number of the people who were "invited" to this Congress. They were only characterised by the fact that in their different disciplines and learning styles they were astonishingly able to be divergent. They were "the bomb" so to speak, thinking critically and creatively. This is necessary because a meeting like this that happens every 10 years is fundamentally about visualising the evolution that DE needs and how it had happened in the previous steps. Thus our "uncongress" shook up our uniformities and dogmas (leaving the very basics, if there were any) and prepared us for a changing, complex and surprising world. It is curious to think that the word "congress" is associated with the Latin "congressus" which literally means a "coming together". Even then we notice the least important meaning; that of meeting. Our "uncongress" leads us to the more poetic part of the word "gressus", which is also the nominative and vocative of "the ability to walk", or even "feet" or "footprint". There have been many footprints left in the last ten years and we want to retrace them and see where to head towards (without the need for us to all go to the same place... or no place at all!) and we will do it straight away...

Moreover, with the approach that I mentioned, there are also the people at the Congress who have applied this capacity to learn from the diversity of their lives and experiences. It helped us to have these people from minority groups, groups in difficulty, and excluded groups for very different reasons. There were also experiences from everyday life: this morning, one person in our group bumped into the shoemaker from his neighbourhood... and it was exciting. This selection of people involved from many different sectors gave a distinguishing feature to the thinking space that we started. Three groups from different schools (one of them an infant school!) were even going to do projects about what happened at the Congress (some of us had done it at another meeting and it was impressive to see the drawings of the 5-year-old children - Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) had been inverted... !-).

I think I know now why I remembered the Calle 13 song. I refer to the end of the lyrics *If You Want Real Change/ Well, Change The Way You Walk... ...* (and more parts). The hope of this Congress for us is to study the relationship between the theory and practice in DE that we've connected in recent years. The real connection was not the ideas (which are essential) or the practice (the reflection on which is sometimes not carried out with the right tools). As it was said at the 2014 Congress when thinking about the processes, it was necessary to end the dichotomies. The way to end them was by actually incorporating reflective learning in the contexts of diversity and pluralistic coexistence. We have grown a lot in that sense in recent years.

Another tremendous Calle 13 song now comes to mind. It is called "Así de grandes son las ideas" (This is how great ideas are). I would like to leave you with the notion from the lyrics of a very critical song: ideas help survival, but they do not change reality:
*In the prime meridian in the central zone/ close to the limit and far from the end/
between two valleys, with clear skies/ over a field with a star-speckled horizon, /There*

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is a factory, small yet immense,/ belonging to a wise old man who survives because he thinks.

Knower of many tricks,/ the old man is a mixture of the best of the leftovers./ The world exploded and was left deserted, and the old man / inherited the best from everything that had died./ He has telescopic vision, the skin of a turtle, / a chameleon's tongue and the nose of a caterpillar. ©

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