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**SCOPE FOR A PEDAGOGY OF COMMITMENT**  
**Immigration in Úbeda.**

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**Abstract**

The pedagogy of commitment comes about through an experience of contact with situations of exclusion that alter the way we feel, think and behave. The shift in hermeneutic place from which we interpret the reality is crucial to shepherd our reflection towards a transformative action. A specific experience may trigger personal and institutional processes that enable us to navigate through the different generations of transformative education.

This pedagogical revolution pivots on experience; although experience is but the launching pad for a reflection that shines the spotlight on the causes of inequality and poverty and which compels us to transform the reality. This article gives an account of a process that has guided us from actions with a first generation DE approach to institutional transformation through a Unit of Committed Action (UAC is the Spanish acronym) in which the university institution, in partnership with other organisations and immigrants, seeks to address a specific social reality by altering the way we comprehend the university's teaching, research and social endeavours.

**Key words**

Development Education, transformative education, pedagogy of commitment, immigration, social justice.

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<sup>1</sup> **José Luis Soto Soto** is a professor at the Holy Family University Centre of Úbeda (Jaén, Spain). Graduated in Philosophy from Comillas Pontifical University (UPCo), and Theology from the Centre Sèvres in Paris (France), and holds a Master's Degree in International Migration from Comillas Pontifical University. His areas of interest include theories of justice, education for justice and ecological philosophy.

Contact: [jlsoto@fundacionsafa.es](mailto:jlsoto@fundacionsafa.es)

**Beatriz Pedrosa Vico** is a professor at the Holy Family University Centre of Úbeda. Graduated in Pedagogy and holds a PhD in Education Sciences. Her areas of interest include: Improvement of coexistence, Inclusive School and Interculturality in the classroom.

Contact: [bpedrosa@fundacionsafa.es](mailto:bpedrosa@fundacionsafa.es)

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## Introduction

Discussing human experiences that are capable of transforming people and institutions seems ill-suited in a world in which technique and experimentation carry most weight. Experimentation is the pedestal upon which scientific method is built, and experimental sciences seem to be solitary in their capability of approaching knowledge on the basis of the techno-scientific paradigm. That said, it seems pertinent to distinguish between experiments and experiences. Both experiments and experiences are tied to facts, yet the latter encompasses encounters, emotions and feelings that urge the individual to behave in a certain way. When discussing education we should share experiences and not limit ourselves to experimentation. We must relate our experiences, continue dreaming and strive to transform society.

We wanted to begin with a personal experience that has been capable of inspiring an institution. Evidently, there was already an institutional substructure in place that facilitated the transformation of this personal experience into an institutional project. However, experiences are what stimulate people and institutions, thus we are compelled to unveil those which make us better, more aware, compassionate and committed. Facilitating and participating in experiences accords well with Ignatian and Jesuit pedagogy, continuously eager to respond to the context and facilitate an experience upon which we reflect, with a view to taking action to improve the reality.

In this article we begin by defining our reflection with the different development education approaches, then we give an account of a one-off first generation DE experience that mobilised us as an institution. Next, we reflect on the importance of experience for a pedagogy of commitment that enables us to navigate through the different DE actions and, last but not least, we present the plan, the collective action that is underway and which is giving rise to a personal and institutional transformation.

## Six development education approaches: one framework to interpret the experience

It is important to remember that experiences are what they are and not what we think they should be. Perhaps a stimulating experience is not necessarily a fifth or sixth generation transformative education experience, which some have already begun to discuss. The different generations according to M<sup>a</sup> Luz Ortega Carpio (2008)<sup>2</sup> are:

1) Charitable assistance approach: this focuses on addressing food and humanitarian aid needs. It is not the norm to question the causes, thus it cannot be considered as a development education approach; otherwise "it would raise awareness that could lead to development education" (2008, p. 27).

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<sup>2</sup> Ortega, M. (2007), *Estrategia de la educación para el desarrollo de la cooperación española*, España: Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación.

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- 2) Developmental approach: this promotes the concept of cooperation without questioning the prevailing model of development. It seeks to directly help those in need and to enable communities in the South to develop on their own. M<sup>a</sup> Luz Ortega states that "by not having an impact on the structural causes behind poverty, this approach helps evade the responsibility of the North" (2008, p. 27).
- 3) Critical and solidarity-based approach: this goes from the assistance approach to the structuralist approach that seeks to foster a "new International Economic Order". This approach "raises awareness of global issues, such as demographic growth, environmental degradation, etc., and highlights the idea of global interdependency" (2008, p. 27).
- 4) Human and sustainable approach: issues such as "armed conflicts, human rights, immigration, gender, racism, environment and sustainable development, etc., are central topics of development education in the 90s" (2008, p. 27). Changes via this approach rely on both the South and the North.
- 5) Global citizenship approach: this seeks to promote coordination between organisations of the North and the South through national and international networks that are capable of political impact to transform unjust structures. It also encourages the empowerment of the most impoverished and vulnerable groups (2008).

According to Lozano Raya (2009)<sup>3</sup>, it is now time to discuss a critical sixth generation with previous generations. The former would be responsible for promoting the post-development approach and would pave the way for the seventh generation:

1) Post-development approach: the sixth generation emerges as a critique of the limits to the fifth generation approach still focused on a developmental perspective. The sixth generation defends the need to decolonise the imaginary and step away from the economy-based paradigm (Lozano, 2009). This approach is influenced by the principles of degrowth that consider continual growth impossible in a planet with limited resources. It involves transforming our lifestyles and fostering a culture of austerity, given that we will only eliminate poverty if we break away from the logic of accumulation. The definition of this approach according to Lozano (2009, p. 75) is the following:

Proceso político-pedagógico que, partiendo de una descolonización del imaginario, pretende salir del paradigma economicista en el que vivimos y cuestionar las relaciones de dominación/opresión propias de nuestras sociedades para emprender el camino del *cambio social* a través de la construcción de nuevas estructuras sociales y nuevas relaciones interpersonales. [Political-pedagogical process that, building on a decolonisation of the imaginary, seeks to tear away from the economy-focused paradigm in which we live and to question the domination/oppression binary inherent to our societies to embark on the path towards social change by means of erecting new social structures and interpersonal relationships.]

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<sup>3</sup> LOZANO RAYA, Julián (2009): [¿Qué educación para qué desarrollo? Pistas de reflexión para la sexta generación de Educación para el Desarrollo](#). (Memoria presentada en vista de la obtención del título de Master Universitario en Educación para el Desarrollo en la Universidad Pablo de Olavide). Publicada bajo licencia Creative Commons Reconocimiento-No comercial-Sin obra derivada). pp. 59-75.

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The experience that served as our stimulus mainly involved exposing ourselves to and becoming familiar with the actual situation of seasonal immigrants in the city of Úbeda. We did not start by questioning the causes behind the conditions of poverty and vulnerability of the immigrants, or the cultural roots of inequality, or the ideology that forms the basis of the lifestyles behind the North-South gap.

All we did at the beginning was observe. Establish contact. Listen. Talk. It was not difficult to get underway. All that was missing was to reach out. From this point on, things began to stir and a process of institutional transformation got underway. What we uphold in this article is the importance of the experience of contact in the process of personal and institutional transformation. An experience that must be followed by reflection which later becomes a transformative action. An experience in which heart, head and hands converge.

**An experience of contact with immigrants from Úbeda: the seeds of an institutional plan.**

When I began to work as a professor at the Holy Family University Centre of Úbeda I discovered a charming city. Its narrow, weather-beaten streets, its striking renaissance buildings, its noises, smells, the patina of time in squares and stately homes. Úbeda is one of the most beautiful towns of Spain, a part of the heritage of humanity, engulfed by a sea of olive trees that in the cold months of winter attract hundreds of immigrants seeking to collect their fruit. Many sub-Saharan Africans arrive bursting with enthusiasm, seeking olive farming jobs and a wage to keep them and their families – often living far away in their countries of origin– afloat. If forecasts for the season are hopeful, immigrants arrive to the province in droves. Úbeda, being one of the largest towns of the province, "receives" large numbers of immigrants each year.

So far, so good. We can even look at the situation as a major opportunity for those coming from afar in the search of a better life. Especially for those who are unemployed in our country. But the reality is another story. At least the one I experienced.

Going back to my first year in this city, one night returning home, I think in November, after finishing work in the Holy Family University Centre I stumbled upon several immigrants sleeping on cardboard boxes. I was shocked. At first I could not fathom this because I am from a town in Granada where I had never seen anyone sleep rough, and less so in such low temperatures like that night. The thermometer was pushing freezing point. The number of foreign men was shooting up each day. In the mornings, on the way to work, I had to pass a bus station. It was alarming to see how they gathered at the station to drop off their belongings and wait for someone to hire them.

Perplexed and saddened by the situation, I began to ask my neighbours and colleagues some questions. Everyone concurred and said it was normal around that time of the year. And it was something that happened every year. I felt that something had to be done. I could not sit back and passively observe this shocking situation. My partner and

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I gathered winter clothes and some coats. A few days later we distributed them out among the men. It was dreadful because there were so many immigrants and not enough clothes. In the end we deposited the bags and they took care of the rest. It was a horrible experience. A lot of people needed coats but there was not a lot of clothes. This was the first time I came face to face with the situation.

With the arrival of new immigrants the following year, I was lucky enough to be able to volunteer with the Holy Family University Centre of Úbeda and distribute milk and muffins. An endeavour that has been carried out by a brotherhood in the city for many years. Despite being an action that was strictly charitable assistance, it seemed truly positive and essential, so I was encouraged to take part. The first nights were tough, really tough. I could not believe that there were so many sleeping on the streets. It was a year of bountiful harvest, so there were hundreds of immigrants. Helping to hand out hot milk and muffins gave me the chance to get to know them on a deeper level and find out more about their situation. Most of them took hold of the glass of milk, shivering and freezing cold. Other volunteers and I began to take note of the clothes that they had to spend the night on the street. The three of us on duty that night were devastated. We failed to see how they could sleep on cardboard and with only one blanket when it was 2 or 3 degrees outside. Some of them were better equipped with a few blankets and a hat. That said, would any of us endure 2 or 3 months sleeping rough in such low temperatures? That night was awful, just like the rest, because you have to go home and leave so many people on the street in inhumane conditions. What could be done? How could we help ease their situation? We started asking them one by one what they needed in terms of clothes or blankets. This helped us get to know their stories and background a bit more. From that moment on, year after year during the olive season we gave out blankets, hats, socks, trousers, etc., on a one-to-one basis to meet the actual needs of each person. This opened my eyes to their true struggles for survival. Their stories are incredible. Each one of them could be made into a book. There are graduates, guys who speak three or four languages, fathers who have had to abandon their homes and families to provide a better future for their children. They have crossed Africa to escape hunger and war to carry on living and to help their families.

Moved by their appalling situation, this endeavour by associations, brotherhoods and anonymous volunteers only provides them with heat at night. Yet this ordeal happens year after year. Every year immigrants seek work in a town in where the shelter only offers 46 places. And restricted by the rule that prevents them from staying more than three days. It is not in their best interests to leave the cash machine or porch where they are sleeping for shelter from the icy cold winter nights. They would run the risk of losing their place to someone else and then being in an even worse situation following the three days. Some can afford rent but struggle to find a house because landlords are reluctant to rent to seasonal workers. Many find work without accommodation provided by the business owner. This means that there are men who after working 8 hours in the field find themselves with nowhere to go. Nothing more than a few cardboard boxes. Others, even more unlucky, fail to find work or a place to take shelter".

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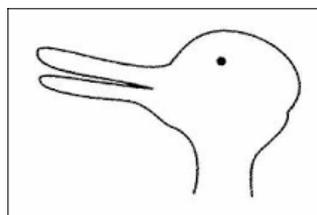
Tired of the situation, a group of professors from the Holy Family University Centre of Úbeda, in collaboration with Vicente Manzano-Arrondo, author of the book "La Universidad Comprometida" [The Committed University], began to think about what could be done through the university. We wanted to put the university at the service of the world, so we began with three questions: What do we want to transform? What do we need to know to transform it? What should we research to find out what we need to know? We are aware that giving out coffee, food and hygiene kits does not suffice. Indifference is not educational and we understand that to educate on commitment we have to engage from an institutional standpoint. Thus emerges the project and our motivation to educate through a pedagogy of commitment. Not doing so would be dismissing the university's obligation to serve the people.

**The pedagogy of commitment as a response.**

*Experience as a way of learning.*

We wanted to start this article with an experience. Our interpretations of reality are conditioned by our experiences, the same way our experiences are conditioned by our interpretations of reality. The world is not viewed the same way from a hut as it is from a palace (this is the conditioning factor of experience), yet the experience we have of living in a hut or in a palace depends on past ideas, cultural patterns, meanings that emerge from a certain context that does not depend solely on us (this is the conditioning factor of our interpretations prior to experience). When we learn something it alters our view of the world, the same way a change in perspective or hermeneutic place tends to lead to learning.

The experience with which we began this reflection is an experience that changes the individual and one which can trigger a transformation of the reality. Wittgenstein, in his "Philosophical Investigations", shows a drawing (which is simultaneously both a duck and a rabbit) to demonstrate that there are many ways of seeing things. Each view depends on the perspective from which it is held.



First we see the duck and then the rabbit, or vice versa, or see nothing but the duck or nothing but the rabbit or, perhaps, we do not see either or. There is no way of looking at something from a neutral perspective, instead our way of seeing the world is conditioned by our previous experiences. It is extremely important to recognise that there are aspects of reality that do not make any sense unless framed within a "language-game" (according to Wittgenstein), a context (according to Gadamer), or a certain narrative (as claimed by Rorty). What can be tremendously encouraging for each

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and every one of us who devote ourselves to teaching is knowing that in order to expand our students' universe of meaning, it is enough to facilitate a change in hermeneutic place, i.e., a change in context that enables them to look at the world in a different way and that invokes feelings of compassion<sup>4</sup> that encourage them to take engaging and transformative action. This is the essence of true learning. Freire (2002, p. 74)<sup>5</sup> said:

“No puedo estar en el mundo, con las manos enguantadas, solamente *comprobando*. En mí la adaptación es sólo el camino para la *inserción*, que implica *decisión, elección, intervención* en la realidad. Hay preguntas que debemos formular insistentemente y que nos hacen ver la imposibilidad de *estudiar por estudiar*. De *estudiar* sin compromiso como si de repente, misteriosamente, no tuviéramos nada que ver con el mundo, un externo y distante mundo, ajeno a nosotros como nosotros a él. [I cannot be in the world decontextualised, simply observing life. Yes, I can take up my position and settle myself, but only so as to become aware of my insertion into a context of decision, choice and intervention. There are insistent questions that we all have to ask and that make it clear to us that it is not possible to study simply for the sake of studying. As if we could study in a way that really had nothing to do with that distant, strange world out there”.]

Freire encourages us to get involved in the world and to study with a commitment to the reality. Freire's way of grasping experience goes beyond its meaning within the scientific-technical paradigm, which is tied more to a method of observing the reality that enables us to extract laws that help explain the world. To Freire we are more than external spectators of the world - "we are the world" and we cannot study as if "we were in no way connected to it". Making a commitment is living mindfully that the world is not a foreign object and that we cannot study from an outside perspective, but rather acknowledging the fact that we interpret the world from a certain hermeneutic space. The experimental approach of science places an emphasis on verification, meanwhile the experience that Freire refers to is more akin to commitment. Verification calls on our cognitive dimension, whereas commitment calls on our cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimension. It is not a matter of dealing with these two ways of understanding experience, but instead reclaiming the other approach to experience that reminds us that we are never mere observers and that learning is closely connected to these experiences we call subjective but guide us towards "seeing how" others see the world and in turn behave. We tend to think that things can only be how we see them. If I see a duck, it is a duck and nothing else; however, when we change our perspective and become open to other interpretations, we engage in other narratives - the world before us is completely revamped and new.

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<sup>4</sup> Well-understood compassion is linked to "suffering with" and emerges from empathy and ethical sensitivity. Ethics no longer only concerns good judgement, but also good heart. The book by Adela Cortina "Justicia Cordial" [Cordial Justice] is interesting, as it highlights the importance of sensitivity and not only ethical reason in the exercise of justice.

<sup>5</sup> Freire, P. (2008), *Pedagogía de la autonomía [Pedagogy of Freedom]*, Buenos Aires, Argentina: Siglo XXI; p. 74

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Experience according to Dewey (1971, p. 153)<sup>6</sup> "is both active and passive (...). When we experience something we act upon it, we do something with it; then we suffer or undergo the consequences". In other words, Dewey believes that we only learn something from experience when we suffer the consequences of what we do. He gives the example of a child who touches a flame and burns his hand. He only learns if he understands that touching the flame resulted in a burn. The problem is that for some time we have thought that knowledge is a purely "spiritual" activity that is disconnected from contact with reality. Dewey (1971, p. 153) said that:

“En las escuelas se considera ordinariamente a los que se instruye como espectadores teóricos que adquieren conocimientos, como espíritus que adquieren el conocimiento por la energía directa del intelecto. La misma palabra alumno ha venido casi a significar no al que está disfrutando experiencias fructíferas, sino al que está absorbiendo directamente conocimientos. [In schools, those under instruction are too customarily looked upon as acquiring knowledge as theoretical spectators, minds which appropriate knowledge by direct energy of intellect. The very word pupil has almost come to mean one who is engaged not in having fruitful experiences but in absorbing knowledge directly”.]

The pedagogy of the 19th and 20th centuries places huge importance on experience in learning processes. That said, and despite the fact that the importance of experience is concentrated in the pedagogical theory of the last two centuries, in practice, we remain stalled on traditional school methods that see pupils, in the words of Dewey, as "theoretical spectators" that learn "absorbing knowledge directly".

*The pedagogy of commitment: a means to handle reality.*

We are a university centre engaged in a particular reality. We are in the world and we are the world. We are part of this microcosm from which we interpret and address reality. However, the ultimate purpose is not simply to take charge of the reality, according to Ellacuría (Senent, 2012, p. 47)<sup>7</sup> we have to accept, carry and handle it:

“El hombre se ve forzado a *hacerse cargo de la realidad*; ya no le basta con sentirse estimulado y responder a los estímulos, sino que ha de enfrentarse a las cosas como realidad. Esta es la función primaria de la inteligencia y no ejercerla debidamente es ya principio de ineticidad. El hombre se ve forzado a *cargar con la realidad*; la realidad, primariamente la propia, pero también todo el resto de la realidad, no es algo que queda fuera de él, respecto de lo cual sólo tuviera una función contemplativa o interpretativa. La realidad es la primaria responsabilidad del hombre, al hacerse cargo de ella, debe cargar con ella, ponerla sobre su propia existencia. El hombre se ve forzado a *encargarse de la realidad*. La realidad se le da al hombre como encargo; el gran encargo del hombre es su propia realidad con la que tiene que ser y la realidad de la historia.

<sup>6</sup> Dewey, J. (1971), *Democracia y educación*, Buenos Aires, Argentina: Losada. S.A.

<sup>7</sup> Senent, J.A. (2012), *La lucha por la justicia: selección de textos de Ignacio Ellacuría*, Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto.

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[Man is forced to take charge of reality; it is no longer enough to feel stimulated and respond to stimuli. Instead, he must tackle things like reality. This is the main function of intelligence and not exercising it properly has now become an unethical principle. Man is forced to accept and carry the reality; the reality, primarily his own, but also the rest of reality, is nothing beyond him, thus he only had one contemplative or interpretative function. Reality is the key responsibility of man, when taking charge of it he must carry it, putting it ahead of his own existence. Man is forced to handle reality. Reality is given to man as an assignment; the great assignment of man is his own reality in which he must exist and the reality of history".]

It is not simply a question of intellectually apprehending the reality, but rather allowing it to have an impact on us, carrying it, transforming it, taking charge of it. The pedagogy of commitment seeks to transform the reality and not just how it is understood. However, in order to commit to the reality it is important to allow it to affect us, to feel "compassion"<sup>8</sup> for the suffering around us. The questions emerging from our reality help us discover the meaning of our work. As Freire says, it is not about *studying for the sake of studying*. Studying is making a commitment to the world, asking ourselves the questions that prevent us from remaining idle.

Vicente Manzano-Arrondo in his book "La Universidad Comprometida" [The Committed University] (2012, p. 16)<sup>9</sup> states that it "involves, among other aspects, dismantling sealed compartments such as science and art, or reason and emotion. The list of barriers to overcome includes the obstacles between University and the neighbourhoods, between what we want to say and what we can listen to, between the arrogant I and the ignored others, between science and ethics". The committed university is willing to break down walls and interact with others, because this approach to the "ignored others" enables us to ask questions that engage us in the struggle for inclusion.

In our case, it was a colleague at the Holy Family University Centre who made the first move. Her concern about the exclusion of immigrants who arrive to Úbeda to collect olives prompted us to take steps toward a plan that engages the entire centre. Her personal experience led her to speculate about what could be done institutionally. We acknowledge that the Holy Family University Centre must service society in accordance with the Ignatian pedagogical model of experience-reflection-action. Ignatian pedagogy seeks to develop competent, conscious, compassionate and committed individuals (ICAJE, 1993)<sup>10</sup>. To this end, the Society of Jesus sets forth an educational model comprising five steps: context, experience, reflection, action and evaluation (ICAJE, 1993).

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<sup>8</sup> In the abovementioned sense of "suffering with", totally unrelated to paternalism, but rather the root of true commitment.

<sup>9</sup> Manzano, V. (2012), *La Universidad Comprometida*, Bilbao: Hegoa.

<sup>10</sup> Consejo Internacional de la Educación SJ (ICAJE). (1993), *La pedagogía ignaciana: un planteamiento práctico*

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a) Context: it is crucial to work from the reality of our pupils, from the context they are a part of and their perspective of the world. Their experience will always be conditioned by their context, what we called their hermeneutic place, the "place from which" they interpret the reality. This sets a type of teacher-pupil relationship, since we cannot discover the context of our pupils if our relationship is cold and distant. Without doubt, the majority of our pupils have not had the chance to experience a first-hand testimony of an immigrant. They are clearly unaware of the circumstances that force the immigrants to leave their countries of origin, or the conditions under which they currently live, their dreams and expectations, their perception of the host society. Creating a bridge between these two worlds together is encouraging other interpretations of the reality.

b) Experience: experience brings the whole person into play, their mind, their heart and their will. We are not talking about a strictly intellectual experience, but rather an experience in which the feelings motivate us to take action and in which our mind defines the strategy to follow to ensure our action is fair and effective. In Ignatian pedagogy "...affective as well as cognitive dimensions of the human person are involved, because without internal feeling joined to intellectual grasp, learning will not move a person to action" (ICAJE, 1993, no. 42). Direct experience has more of an impact on individuals than vicarious experience. Interpersonal relationships, service projects, discussions, etc., can alter the way we understand the reality. However, direct experiences will have to be enriched with vicarious experiences such as simulations, role playing, use of audio visual materials, etc., which enable us to further explore the subject of study (ICAJE, 1993).

C) Reflection: reflection helps us discover the true meaning of the experience. It allows us to understand more clearly, understand the sources of the sensations I experience and understand the implications of what I have grasped for my life, my city, my country or for the world. It involves achieving personal insights and coming to some understanding of who I am and who I should be (ICAJE, 1993). Experience and reflection should go hand in hand for true learning to occur. And the educator, in their teaching, is required to know how to participate in both experience and reflection. Think of the causes of what is happening, the consequences, the alternatives, the means of achieving a specific goal, the way in which others see the world will undoubtedly be a necessary action to transform the reality.

d) Action: "Ignatian reflection, just as it begins with the reality of experience, necessarily ends with that same reality in order to effect it. Reflection only develops and matures when it fosters decision and commitment" (ICAJE, 1993, no. 60). The ultimate goal of education is to build a fairer, more sustainable and humane world. Educating for justice and solidarity is educating for the purpose of securing commitment to the transformation of society. In this particular case, what we aim to do is help improve the situation of immigrants in Úbeda. Knowledge of our pupils' context, the experience of contact with immigrants and the reflection on this experience should contribute to transformative action that engages the whole person: their mind, heart and will.

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e) Evaluation: this entails evaluating the progress made as individuals involved in transforming the reality. We do not only evaluate content if what we seek to do is comprehensively develop the individual. This type of evaluation is undoubtedly more complex since it entails reviewing behaviours and considering hard-to-measure aspects. To this end, we have to place a lot of importance on the dialogue and self-assessment of the pupil, on the collective achievements, on the group evaluation in which the different agents involved are included. The evaluation should help us discover how we can continue developing and growing. It is not enough to give a simple good or bad review; instead it is essential to recognise success and determine the direction in which to go to pursue further growth. The risk of a poorly executed evaluation is the atrophy of our mind, our heart or our will. Unfortunately the current system places a lot of emphasis on the cognitive dimension, tending to neglect feels and behaviours. Thus it proves extra challenging to educate on compassion and commitment.

From the perspective of University Social Responsibility (USR), it is impossible to comprehend the University beyond the commitment to society. A socially committed university guides its teaching, research and social projection with a view to creating fairer, more humane and sustainable societies. Manzano (2012, p. 340) defines these three core areas of the University in the Unit of Committed Action (UAC):

A Unit of Committed Action is an action that has been designed to promote, directly and simultaneously, education, construction of knowledge and social transformation. It is an action that is implemented with the same three objectives and whose processes and results are evaluated from the same three-pronged perspective. The basic questions in the dimensions of planning, action and evaluation are the same: what educational processes and results does it initiate? what knowledge does it build? what transformation of the socio-environmental context is associated with this action?

The experience of our colleague Beatriz led us to ask ourselves, what do we want to learn?, what do we want to research and systematise?; what reality do we wish to transform? In other words, the unit of committed action is the way in which the university coordinates what characterises it (teaching, research and social transformation) in a collective, intra-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary action to serve the common good. To this end, it will be necessary to implement the pedagogy of commitment –that which is discussed in this article–, which is based on experience and which, through reflection on this experience, decides to take action to transform the reality.

**The "immigrant project": a change in our way of educating.**

*A change in our way of thinking, feeling and behaving.*

The pedagogy of commitment seeks to change the way people think, feel and behave in order to create more just, peaceful and sustainable societies. People are the brains

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(thinking), heart (feeling) and hands (action), and none of these dimensions can be neglected in order to give rise to an unmistakable personal and social change.

In everything that we undertake we employ thoughts, feelings and actions. That said, certain atrophy or hypertrophy of one of these aspects may take place. A reflection that does not touch our heart runs the risk of hanging in mid-air without allowing us to pursue the path that goes from compassion (suffering with) to commitment. Reflection alone does not suffice. Commitment is the result of both cognitive and emotional involvement that drives us to get on with the task of transforming what is holding us back. Emotion alone does not suffice. Emotion or pure sentimentality without analysing the reality and without reflection can lead us to blind and ineffective action. In order to seek alternatives we must slowly analyse what is happening. Action alone does not suffice. An action stripped of emotion and reflection more often than not conceals intentions that are unrelated to social transformation. We can join collective actions that do not convince us or that leave us emotionally indifferent, but which offer us or society an advantage.

We started this article with a narrative because the trigger of this project is a specific experience. Paul Ricoeur reminds us in his book "Oneself as Another" that for W. Benjamin, "the art of storytelling is the art of exchanging experiences" (Ricoeur, 1993, p. 166)<sup>11</sup>. Ricoeur states that "the narrative can finally perform its functions of discovery and transformation with respect to the reader's feelings and actions" (Ricoeur, 1996, p. 167). Retelling an experience allows us to discover a way of looking at the world that changes how we think, feel and behave. For this reason, the "immigrant project" by the Holy Family University Centre of Úbeda seeks to provide an experience that motivates the whole person, all dimensions.

### *What does this experience entail?*

#### *Looking outwards.*

We are professors from the Holy Family University Centre, a Society of Jesus centre affiliated with the University of Jaén where the Bachelor Degrees of Early Childhood Education and Primary Education are taught. The first thing that we had to do was look outwards, on to our city's streets. Last academic year, a group of professors and I from the Holy Family University Centre of Úbeda met with professor Vicente Manzano-Arrondo after reading his book "La Universidad Comprometida" [The Committed University] to attempt to answer three questions that the university must ask itself with regard to its teaching, research and social transformation responsibilities: 1) What do we want to transform?; 2) What do we need to know; 3) What do we need to research? In our scenario we acknowledged that the vulnerability of seasonal immigrants in the city of Úbeda was an opportunity to raise awareness, conduct thorough analysis and secure engagement from the entire educational community and host society. Our commitment

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<sup>11</sup> Ricoeur, P. (1996), *Sí mismo como otro*, Madrid: Siglo XXI.

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was focused on improving the reception conditions of immigrants in our city. We were unable to answer the other two questions alone.

*A collaborative vision.*

But we were not the only ones pursuing the objective. Many associations and bodies in our city had been striving to achieve the same thing for years. Through the methodology entitled Participatory Action Research (PAR) we seek to transform something via citizen participation and via research that helps us define the strategy for action. After presenting the project to various agents, we had to go through different stages: a) negotiation with the different social agents to b) define the topic and objectives to be able to c) establish the joint work plan (CIMAS, 2009).<sup>12</sup>

We met with Caritas, Cruz Roja, Social Services from the City Council of Úbeda, Local and National Police Service, a manager from the shelter in Úbeda, an archpriest and several brotherhoods. The notion of building a network with a participatory action research project (PAR) had a positive response from everyone. The key demand made to the Holy Family University Centre was to lead the necessary research to secure better action with regard to the reception of immigrants. This task is in keeping with the request that the Society of Jesus issues to its universities to conduct research from the perspective of the poor (S.J., 2014, p. 29)<sup>13</sup>:

Taking on research from the perspective of the poor and deliberately seeking their well-being create and cause a fundamental change in our approach to knowledge. Reality is not seen the same way when viewed from below as when viewed from above. The researcher does not choose the same questions or analyse them the same way, nor do the same consequences become relevant. Thus, it is important to make explicit the presuppositions from which research begins and to hold on to them.

Before putting the idea forward to our students, the formation of a core group of volunteers with which regular work on implementing the project would be carried out was still pending. We thought that the follow-up committee could be formed by different key players involved in receiving immigrants: associations and NGOs, the City Council of Úbeda, immigrants, brotherhoods, business owners and representatives from the educational community of the Holy Family University Centre of Úbeda. However, once the follow-up committee was set up the first question we had to ask was 'where do we start?'

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<sup>12</sup> See: Alberich, T. et al (2009) Manual de metodologías participativas [Handbook on Participatory Methodology], Madrid: CIMAS.

<sup>13</sup> Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat of the Society of Jesus (2014), The Promotion of Justice in the Universities of the Society, *Promotio Iustitiae*, nº 116, p. 3-55).

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*Where do we start?*

We chose to start from the experience, given that contact with immigrants is what would lead us to ask the right questions. The background outlined at the start of this article highlights that experience is what changes people and institutions, and that initiating from a feeling of compassion is a solid starting point for a project that seeks to transform the reality. We are professors on the Bachelor's Degrees in Early Childhood Education and Primary Education. Our centre does not offer Bachelor's Degrees in Social Work or Social Education, or others that perhaps initially could be more in sync with our goal to improve the reception conditions of immigrants in the city of Úbeda. That said, we were fully aware that transformative education is not entirely confined to certain specialist subjects. The challenge is to create a bridge between the university and the problems in society and to allow ourselves to react to them. On this basis, we are required to alter the way we educate, conduct research and respond to these types of social issues. Vicente Manzano-Arrondo draws attention to the importance for a university to cater to the needs of society and to focus less on itself (2012, p. 59):

“La actividad institucional ha de ser objeto de un cambio mucho más profundo que los anteriores [en la dimensión educativa y en la dimensión investigadora de la universidad]. Se ha construido centrada en la resolución de retos internos. La universidad se rebela, sale a la calle en contadas ocasiones. Sus actos reivindicativos son anecdóticos. Pero cuando ocurre se trata de una defensa de lo suyo, de un celo inconfundible para no cambiar, para no perder derechos o privilegios. [Institutional activity must be subject to a much more radical change than those that have come before (in the educational and research dimension of the university). It has been built with a clear aim on resolving internal challenges. The university rebels, hardly ever taking to the streets. Its demonstrations are anecdotal. Yet when they do take place, it seeks to protect what belongs to it, revealing an unmistakable zeal to prevent change, to hold on to its rights and privilege”.]

As a preliminary step to take in this academic year, we have set ourselves the task of rethinking the practices of different subjects in order to promote an experience of contact with immigrants in Úbeda. This experience will enable us to obtain information, raise awareness of the difficulties experienced by seasonal immigrants in our city and, simultaneously, understand these subjects through the prism of commitment and transformative education.

The follow-up committee plays a pivotal role in this process to ensure we remain centred on the primary goal to improve the reception conditions of seasonal immigrants in the city of Úbeda. Fieldwork and listening, quantitative, qualitative and participatory studies, participant observation, analysis and organisation of proposals with the subsequent planning of comprehensive and sustainable actions, and lastly the activation of strategies and actions (CIMAS, 2009), should help improve the situation of the immigrants.

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**In closing.**

This is just the beginning, but a beginning that builds from an experience of the heart and which has the ability to mobilise an individual and a whole institution. We would like this narrative to be able to "perform its functions of discovery and transformation with respect to the reader's feelings and actions" (Ricoeur, 1996, p. 167). We are part of an era in which the term experience within the educational sphere identifies with experiment, with verifying initial hypotheses via a purely cognitive process. However, as seen above, experience can embrace the whole individual in their cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions. On account of this, in order to initiate a change we must facilitate an experience that changes our way of seeing the world; in short, we must make a commitment. This is why the Society of Jesus highlights (SJ, 2014, p. 21):

“how important it is for university students to engage in contact and service experiences with poor communities so as to become familiar with their reality, not only theoretically, but vitally. The transformation of ethics and values is fuelled by the primordial event of stepping outside of oneself, acknowledging the other and proclaiming them as a person. The Ignatian tradition teaches that no significant change occurs in the individual unless their own sensitivity has been transformed”.

The pedagogy of commitment builds upon commitment, engages all dimensions of the individual including cognitive, emotional and behavioural, and fosters personal change as the path towards global justice. Yet without disregarding the fact that personal changes are influenced by institutional transformations that lay a substructure that ultimately facilitates a change in people.

We began with an outline of a specific one-off experience, like all experiences, because we believe in the transformational power of experience and in narrative as a conduit for sharing them. Perhaps this is the essential component of our role as educators: facilitating and participating in experiences that make us more competent, conscious, compassionate and committed. This undoubtedly poses a challenges for our education system☉

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