

VIRTUAL EDUCATION OR VIRTUALITY OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The so-called globalization and technification of societies, along with the advent and mass proliferation of the so-called Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have allowed that the "virtual" education under the open and distance modalities - 'the non-traditionalists or conventional' be the offensive methodological response with which more and more countries are facing, through their respective public and private policies, the challenges arising from the right to universal education, coverage and flexibility, that population growth requires in face to traditional and presential educational systems.

Hence the relevance of "virtual" education for its great variety and methodological dynamism, emerging as a panacea, but with still no clear strategy because of the myths and prejudices associated with its hermeneusis, offering to expand opportunities of access to the groups socially marginalized or neglected, and to those whose time and space-needs so require, ensuring and improving the quality of educational services provided, applying the technological developments to the teaching-learning process and encouraging innovations and educational contemporary practices, holistically and creating a "virtual reality," a simulated environment in which you plunge, the virtuality of education.

Our interest and claim in this reflection proposal aims to present the origins, debates, influences, interpretations and realities –both in educational institutions and in various texts and contexts, such as human life itself- posed as opportunities for learning and knowledge building, support and collaboration networks, and their eventual becoming.

Keywords: *Latin American History of Education Journal, virtual education, virtual education myths, prejudices over nontraditional education, reality and universal right to education.*

EDUCACIÓN VIRTUAL O VIRTUALIDAD DE LA EDUCACIÓN

La denominada globalización y la tecnificación de las sociedades, junto con el advenimiento, proliferación y masificación de las denominadas Tecnologías de la Información y Comunicación (TIC's), han permitido que la educación "virtual", bajo las modalidades de la educación abierta y a distancia -'las no tradicionalistas o convencionales-sean la respuesta metodológica ofensiva con la que cada vez más países enfrentan, mediante sus respectivas políticas públicas y privadas, los retos derivados del derecho a la educación universal, de

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cobertura y flexibilidad, que el crecimiento demográfico exige ante sistemas educativos tradicionales y presenciales.

De aquí la relevancia de la educación “virtual”, por su gran variedad y dinamismo metodológicos, perfilándose como una panacea, aunque aún sin estrategias claras debido a los mitos y prejuicios que conlleva su hermenéusis, al ofrecer ampliar las oportunidades de acceso a los grupos sociales marginados o desatendidos, y a aquellos cuyas necesidades espacio-temporales así lo requieren, garantizando y mejorando la calidad de los servicios educativos prestados, aplicando los desarrollos tecnológicos a los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje y estimulando las innovaciones en y de las prácticas educativas contemporáneas, de manera holística y generando una “realidad virtual”; un medio simulado en el cual se puede uno sumergir –la virtualidad de la educación-.

Nuestro interés y pretensión en la presente propuesta de reflexión tiene como objetivo el de presentar los orígenes, debates, influencias, interpretaciones y realidades -tanto en instituciones educativas como en diversos textos y contextos educativos, como la propia vida humana- planteados como oportunidades para el aprendizaje y la construcción de conocimiento, de redes de apoyo y colaboración, y su eventual devenir.

Palabras clave: *Revista Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana, educación virtual, mitos de la virtualidad educativa, prejuicios sobre la educación no tradicional(ista), realidad y derecho a la educación universal.*

EDUCAÇÃO VIRTUAL OU EDUCAÇÃO VIRTUAL

RESUMO

A denominada globalização e a tecnicidade das sociedades, junto com o advento, proliferação e massificação das denominadas Tecnologias da Informação e da Comunicação (TIC's), permitiram que a educação “virtual”, sob as modalidades da educação aberta e a distância – as não tradicionalistas ou convencionais – sejam a resposta metodológica ofensiva com a que cada vez mais países enfrentam, mediante suas respectivas políticas públicas e privadas, os desafios derivados direito à educação universal, de cobertura e flexibilidade, que o crescimento demográfico exige sistemas educativos tradicionais e presenciais.

Daí a relevância da educação “virtual”, por sua grande variedade e dinamismo metodológicos, perfilando-se como uma panaceia, ainda que sem estratégias claras devido aos mitos e prejuízos que modificam sua hermenêutica ao fazer ampliar as oportunidades de acesso aos grupos sociais marginalizados ou desassistidos, e aqueles cujas necessidades de espaço e de tempo assim o requerem, garantindo e melhorando a qualidade dos serviços educativos prestados, aplicando os desenvolvimentos tecnológicos aos processos de ensino-aprendizagem e estimulando as inovações nas práticas educativas contemporâneas, de maneira holística e gerando uma “realidade virtual”; um meio simulado no qual se pode submergir a virtualidade da educação.

Nosso interesse e pretensão nesta proposta de reflexão têm como objetivo o de apresentar as origens, debates, influências, interpretações e realidades – tanto em instituições educativas como em diversos textos e contextos educativos, como a própria vida humana – apontados como oportunidade para a aprendizagem e a construção do conhecimento, de redes de apoio e colaboração, e seu eventual devenir.

Palavras-chave: *Revista História da Educação Latino-americana, educação virtual, mitos da virtualidade educativa, prejuízos sobre a educação não tradicional(ista), realidade direito à educação universal.*

INTRODUCTION

The myths² of the namely globalization³ and technification of societies, along with the advent and massive proliferation of the so-called Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)⁴ have allowed "virtual" education modalities –both open and at distance, understood as those non-traditionalists or not-conventional⁵, to be the increasingly offensive answers by which countries face, through their respective public and private policies, the challenges arising from the right to universal education⁶; in other words, those of coverage and flexibility that population growth of its diverse populations and their development needs face to traditional educational systems, the eminently presential.⁷

Therefore, "virtual education" –open and at distance- is seen as a remedy to these challenges, offering expanding opportunities for access to marginalized or neglected social groups, as well as other social groups whose space-time needs so require, ensuring and improving the quality of educational services provided, applying technological developments to the teaching-learning process and encouraging innovations and educational contemporary⁸ practices; in an holistically way.⁹

1. Virtuality of education

From here it is worthwhile to clarify some misleading and similar notions closely related to the title of this paper, "Virtual Education or Virtuality of Education." Firstly, says José Ferrater Mora, as the scholastic tradition but also those of many modern authors have used several Latin adverbs as technical terms to define the meaning of their expressions. Such is the case of the word *virtualiter* ("virtually").¹⁰ Hence, Ferrater reiterates' that something is enunciated "virtualiter" when referring to the cause capable of producing it. "And, as an example of such use, states the following: "The effect is virtually in the cause." So, without making a stop upon ontological¹¹ or metaphysical questions, the cause of "education" is the human being, man and woman, who attend the production of "something" that, for purposes of our discussion, is called "education". Thus, the virtual also evokes that which can

² Joan Ginebra. *La trampa global. Neoliberalismo, neocapitalismo, neocolonialismo* (México: Panorama, 1998), 9-32.

³ Bernard Guillochon. *La globalización. ¿Un futuro para todos?* (México: Larousse, 2003), 28, 44-56.

⁴ Joseph María Albaiges, *Un viaje por la historia en 365 días: hitos, anécdotas y acontecimientos en un día como hoy* (Madrid: Viceversa, 2010), 123.

⁵ Antoni Zabala, *Enfoque globalizador y pensamiento complejo* (Barcelona: Graó, 1999), 66-79.

⁶ Luis Orcí y Víctor Martínez (coord.), *Los Derechos Humanos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales. Hacia una cultura de bienestar* (México: CNDH, 2007), 22-45.

⁷ Edgar Morin, Emilio Ciurana and Raúl Motta, *Educación en la era planetaria* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 2006), 34-42, 83-89.

⁸ Hugo Aboites, *La medida de una nación* (México: CLACSO-UAM-ITACA, 2012), 13-31.

⁹ Enrique Gervilla, *Educación en la postmodernidad* (Madrid: Dykinson, 2010), 33-49.

¹⁰ José Ferrater Mora, *Diccionario de Filosofía* (Barcelona: Ariel, 2004), 1381.

¹¹ Luz García Alonso, *Ontología Metafísica* (México: UCIME, 2010), 9-21.

produce an effect, although it does not occur, since it is implicit, tacit, of the implied or apparent.

If, on the other hand, the "education" is the action and the effect of educating, or the way a persona has been educated,¹² this leads us to the place where the "real" faces with the "virtual", the "reality" with the "virtuality".¹³ From where the virtuality is, then, the eclecticism of the human: the real, the symbolic and the imaginary.¹⁴ But, will they truly such strife? The truth is that no, there is no such difference.¹⁵ Let us see why. If education is the process of socialization of the members of a community in order to integrate them into the norms and values prevailing in it; if special education,¹⁶ in turn, is one addressed to mentally and physically handicapped, ensuring their social and laboring integration, then there is no distinction between formal, virtual, special, etc., education, on the understanding that all "education" is teaching and learning. Now, who teaches and who learns? Well, simply, those who are willing and able to. It is that simple.¹⁷

All of it, leading us to two essential notions of education, that of "teacher" and "student". The first word, the "master",¹⁸ synonymous of "teacher", "facilitator", "advisor", "coach", etc., traditionally undertakes to the person who has acquired a number of scientific and practical knowledge, teaching them to others. In other words, the person "entitled" to give or provide education –whether it is primary, in the case of parents (though nothing and no one taught them to be), the schooling¹⁹ –from elementary to upper-, or the person who engages in some art or occupation with authority. In these meanings, teachers are from our parents or guardians, friends, mates but even and increasingly, other beings, inanimate and inorganic, from our first toys as infants, to those as adults, being among them various utensils and appliances, gadgets and technological tools, typical of our age: the computer or lap-top, i-phone, the blackberry, television, guitar, X-play, etc.²⁰ Yahoo, up to the figuratively called "life", our teacher!²¹

And then we have the student, who becomes the act of the "study", of studying. That, too, though deceptively traditionally considered, who attends and enrolls in a school, whatever the school level. The self-taught, for example, are not usually included in these term-limitations of our language. And as we mentioned before, if even life itself is our master, there will be "students" who learn from it and others who do not. Where, therefore, to study

¹² Ana Teresa López de Llergo, *Educación en valores, educación en virtudes* (México: CECSA, 2001), 23-57.

¹³ Adam Lashinsky, *Inside Apple* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2012), 8, 18-19, 174-185.

¹⁴ Carl M. Grossman and Sylva Grossman, *El psicoanalista profano* (México: FCE, 1967), 152-157.

¹⁵ Víctor Figueroa Garciadiego, *¿Educas o malcrías?* (México: Talento Zetta, 2011), 7-11.

¹⁶ Rubén O. Scandar and Roberto M. Paterno, *Dificultad de aprender* (Madrid: EDIBA Europa EON, 2010), 5-24.

¹⁷ Sergio González (Comp.), *Pensamiento complejo. En torno a Edgar Morin, América Latina y los procesos educativos* (Bogotá: Magisterio, 2000), 48-62.

¹⁸ José Pedro Landaverde y Leonardo Kourchenko, *El desafío del maestro en el siglo XXI* (México: IMU Ediciones, 2011), 51-56.

¹⁹ Lidia M. Fernández, *El análisis de lo institucional en la escuela* (México: Paidós, 1998), 11-30.

²⁰ Josefa Galván, *Aprendizaje Integral* (México: Grupo Editorial Tomo, 2006), 119-128.

²¹ Debbie Ford, *El secreto de la sombra: cómo reconciliarte con tu propia historia* (Madrid: Obelisco, 2010), 28-41.

means the work to assimilate and to develop a science, art, craft, etc.,²² but it is also developing the comprehension to understand something, either through interaction, memorization, entertainment, and even leisure. In this regard, says the "Team Edition" *Harvest of words*, under the title "The sign of curiosity",²³ which, as we previously said, the deceptively traditional student is defined as:

"Student: We used to call it to anyone who is enrolled in a school, but not so, because there are many people (children, youth and adults) who are enrolled in school and are not students. To study is also a mean to analyze, to reflect over the learning, to make discussion over our point of view, to accept that we ignore something and, above all, to be willing to deepen or to rectify our views. Therefore, we agree to call students to all of those who dedicate themselves to study (either in school or anywhere else). So if we only identify this activity with an educational institution we miss to enjoy it in many other occasions. Because to study unleashes our curiosity and interest in what we want, whether in one place or another and no curfew: in this way, the words "student" and "to study" reach their true meaning.

To study is, therefore, an activity that involves applying the powers of the mind, and perception, intelligence, and memory, in order to learn something. In addition to their application, studying frequently involves performing other supportively activities such as writing, manipulating writing, experimenting, excavations or dissections, etc.

Read: transform a set of signs printed on the threshold to deploy your thinking, through the path of understanding and curiosity. Understanding to continue the reading and curiosity to continue with new texts."²⁴

This being so, then, education, or rather, the virtuality of education, has accompanied human beings since its inception and will continue doing so.²⁵ Because in that virtuality the space-timely and rigid is not involved but, on the contrary, the flexible, always open and available, the real, the symbolic and the imaginary, making a way through those barriers.²⁶

2. Virtual Education

Maybe it is the myths, prejudices and high expectations that which more could undermine the "virtual" education,²⁷ open and at distance, conceived exclusively as school and a face-to-face education, both at home and abroad.²⁸ While this offers a wealth of opportunities not only for education but for other activities (interaction, information, entertainment, etc.), it is equally also true that the so-called Information and Communication Technologies (ICT 's) and the Internet have transformed the relations, cognitions, and human habits and

²² Cyril Aydon, *Historia del hombre: 150 mil años de historia de la humanidad* (México: Planeta, 2011), 21-39.

²³ Juan Manuel Contreras Colín et al, "El signo de la curiosidad", en *Cosecha de palabras: Filosofía. Paradigma*, eds. René Nájera Corvera, Yvonne Catín Cid, Israel Ramírez, Benito López Martínez (México: UACM, 2008), 11-12.

²⁴ Contreras, "El signo", 11-12.

²⁵ Jack Welch and John A. Byrne, *Jack straight from the gut* (New York: Warner Books, 2001), 24, 99, 106.

²⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Obras completas* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1996), 208-216.

²⁷ William Gates, *Business @ the speed of thought* (New York: Warner Books, 2000), 36-72.

²⁸ Clara Isabel Carpy, *Miradas históricas de la educación y la pedagogía* (Madrid: Díaz de Santos, 2011), 65.

customs,²⁹ creating positions both for and against, about the benefits and paradigmatic changes toward virtual education and, therefore, to the virtuality of education.³⁰

The two major aspects surrounding this dispute revolve, first, to understand the "virtual" education, open and at distance, as the overwhelming that is and will continue revolutionizing especially traditional education and the emerging non-traditional, both in the private and the public sectors, either through the chat, videoconferencing, streaming, forums, all of them in *real time*, blogs, smartphones, tablets, the endless social networks, and countless computer gadgets³¹ that, even making an analogy to the recent named Spring revolutions such as "Jasmine" –in the Maghreb region (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, etc..) make us remember the old Jules Verne's futurism, with its multiple and famous works, or more unlikely as the Blade-Runner, Terminator, Under Control, Matrix or Inception, perhaps glimpsing the *end of human history*, which was meant by Fukuyama³² at the end of the last century.

On the other side there are those who refer to this whole computer and communicative paraphernalia as a substitute or henceforth good,³³ lets say more of the same, but enhanced, broadened the range and supply of leisure,³⁴ consumerism³⁵ and planned obsolescence.³⁶ In other words, just as the radio has not ceased to exist by the alleged caused due to the pseudo revolutionary television,³⁷ in the same way, in these Magrebianas Springs which were talking about above, was used more by the need to maintain the revolutionary "rhythm" than for the massiveness of the IC technologies, defined as discarded or outdated, prematurely, as was analogue mobile telephony. So, in the same way as many of us continue to make math in an arithmetic and mental way, without a calculator or another device, in the same way the "doings" intertwine and overlap, just as in the Conjunction Theory. When does the human being stops learning and teaching? Only when he feels as a perishable or a "finished product". Only then.

3. The myths, prejudices and realities

For example, offspring of painting and photography, and heir to the literature, being the cinema a human experience and reality as eclectic as humanity itself, sometimes nearly as "real" as the illusion of another life almost palpable, throughout its short life it has been said that its future not only depend on the creativity and innovation of the human gender

²⁹ Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, *Superfreakonomics* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2011), XI-18.

³⁰ John Elliot, *El cambio educativo desde la investigación-acción* (Madrid: Morata, 2005), 23-29.

³¹ Abel Cervantes, "Tecnología y diseño: la era de los gadgets", *La Tempestad Universitaria Review*, Vol: 7, No. 49, (2011), 16-20.

³² Francis Fukuyama, *El fin de la historia y el último hombre* (Bogotá: Planeta, 1982), 11-32.

³³ Alan Greenspan, *La era de las turbulencias* (Barcelona: Ediciones B, 2008), 9-32, 409-460.

³⁴ Juan Brom, *Para comprender la historia* (México: Grijalbo-Mondadori, 2003), 47-65.

³⁵ María Fernanda Canal, *Cómo reconocer estilos* (Madrid: Parragón, 2007), 31-67.

³⁶ Montse Ulloa, "Obsolescencia programada: motor secreto de nuestra sociedad de consumo" *Mira (Miraflores) Review*, Vol: mayo-junio (2011), 6-8.

³⁷ Carlos Avilez, *Una historia como cualquier otra* (México: Rhythm & Blues, 2010), 54-56.

itself,³⁸ but of its capacity and maneuverability, rebellious, to the industrial mercantilist conventions that have always stalked over it.³⁹

Thus, from its beginnings more than a century, curiosity and attraction as fair or circus, local, the so-called seventh art has advanced significantly to achieve the recognized and commendable position that holds today, hard-won and even challenging Louis Lumière's own mantra about "the cinema was an invention without any future" and where currently there are more than twenty international festivals.

Having dispensed with the word, but never of the image, its eclecticism is also given to consecrate it to science, technology and art, through pictorial narrative representation, unlimited, meticulous, a timeless space, whether being conscientizing, entertaining, informative or alienating of human historicity and its infinite "dream factory."⁴⁰

In the case of "virtual" education, open and at distance, it is exactly the same. Under the technology or technological neologism, both the theories and techniques of countless sciences, hard, human, administrative, social, etc., have allowed us not only the practical use of scientific knowledge, the epistemic one but also, the equally despicable called *common knowledge* or *popular* –the doxas-. In such a way that in these systems and processes involving humans under its characteristic eclecticism, the institutions or organizations, sometimes even living organisms and, naturally, the machinery, all forming what has been called the "Information and Communication Technologies"(ICT's) and the "knowledge society".⁴¹ In turn, as it can be seen from the above, this fact or facts themselves create events or historical records,⁴² as it is the same human being and culture or cultures. From here, one of the main barriers, impassable, globalization in its homogenizing character.

So, as regards Edgar Morin, the progress and technical and technological findings have accompanied humans since their origins in their various characters and complexities⁴³ influencing each other and interacting in a constant flux and evolution.⁴⁴

Under the pedagogical and cognitive⁴⁵ aspect that holds "virtual" education, open and distance learning, and the emergence of the acclaimed "competencies", the "significant learning" and so on, on the hand of the globalization⁴⁶ process, the dialectic undertaken by those being for and against it, turns, firstly, the question of whether or not "sailing"⁴⁷ enhances learning or not. Of identical type, if online interactivity generates or not, learning. Followed by the dilemma of whether to seek information on the Internet is also easy or not.

³⁸ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitud* (Barcelona: Debate, 2004), 17, 219, 345, 366, 384.

³⁹ John Keneth Galbraith, *The Triumph* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968), 76-92.

⁴⁰ Ray Kurzweil, *La era de las máquinas espirituales* (México: Planeta, 2000), 122-132.

⁴¹ Hugo Roberto Tricarico, *Didáctica de las ciencias naturales ¿Cómo aprender? ¿Cómo enseñar?* (Buenos Aires: Bonum, 2010), 28-56.

⁴² Andrés Roemer, *Enigmas y paradigmas* (México: Limusa, 2003), 89-98.

⁴³ Edgar Morin, *Introducción al pensamiento complejo* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 2007), 9-23.

⁴⁴ Edgar Morin, *Los siete saberes necesarios en la educación del futuro* (París: UNESCO, 1999), 44-83.

⁴⁵ Paulo Freire, *La educación como práctica de la libertad* (México: Siglo XXI, 1974), 13-47.

⁴⁶ Jorge Wagensberg, *Ideas sobre la complejidad del mundo*. (Barcelona: Tusquets, 2003), 12-41.

⁴⁷ Cristofol Trepal, *Didáctica de la historia y multimedia expositiva*. (Madrid: Graó, 2010), 34-39.

Then we come to that by which the school or institution with Internet is questioned if it is still the same, more modern or not having it. Then makes its appearance whether communicating on-line (online) results in improved human communication. Then we go on to greater things, such as if the Internet hipermediality, say its nonlinearity, favors the learning processes.

On the other hand, the multireality of educational Web sites, asks someone, can be applied to different environments and contexts. Also, if the elasticity and flexibility of the Internet makes any content to be worked out under its auspices.⁴⁸ Under this assumption it is said that Internet will transform traditional education to distance education, interactive and interconnected. Not saying that the Internet generates learning, transforming people. And, more specifically, that the Internet allows the profess@r planning class activities under the shelter of his cloak,⁴⁹ that supports the development of projects, which is a great research tool or favoring multi and interdisciplinary learning. And, well, the list is endless. Thus, the virtuality of education is, in turn, virtual education, open and distance learning, although not in formal terms under which it is usually cataloged.⁵⁰

For something it is at issue in the main forums and global agendas, whether or not to censor Internet, to filter or dispense its contents and possibilities. It appears that the decision-making process that led Internet from the military exclusivist arena to the consumer market debates, today, in the scenographic looking mega and hyper international consortia and money lords who, with the help of the governments of the nation-state, condescending and unconditional, which auto proclaim their self *Power Groups*, such as the G-3, G-5, G-8, etc..., etc..., for the sake of their own "securities national "and" public securities ".⁵¹

CONCLUSION

Therefore, Virtual Education offers us today an ocean of possibilities for achieving not only the mentioned vaunted millennium goals by international organizations but also to harmonize and bring into play the real *unity in diversity*, characteristic of human beings, throughout countless cognitive processes, real, symbolic and virtual. For if all human experience is, by definition, teaching and learning, construction and deconstruction of knowledge, we then say that virtually all of it is education, so widespread. Thus, the virtue of education becomes, as we said above, in the broad potential exhibited by the Virtual Education in these, its beginnings.

What we are sure of is that the Internet, with the help of the virtuality of education has been, as it was the radio, television, film, teletype, fax, personal computer, and a host of many technical and technological advances, a paradigm shift. Shift which paradigm will focus more on creativity, innovation, strategies, methodologies, conducts and behaviors both of those which/who teach and those who/which learn, in order to achieve proposed Virtual Education, Open and at Distance, more suited to the needs of humanity and, above all, consistent with the Right to Universal Education. The once self-education, as always, is

⁴⁸ Gordon Graham, *Internet. Una indagación filosófica* (Madrid: Frónesis Universitat de Valencia, 2001).

⁴⁹ Gordon Graham, *Internet. Una indagación filosófica* (Madrid: Frónesis Universitat de Valencia, 2001).

⁵⁰ George Novack, *Para comprender la historia* (México: Fontamara, 2006), 38, 57.

⁵¹ Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Peor que la guerra* (México: Taurus, 2011), 298-314, 306, 566, 600, 603.

still alive today in the twenty-first century through the virtuality of education as a Virtual Education of the human gender.

Only man is capable of performing the feat of making what we call Virtual Education in the virtuality of education for the achievement of literacy and the Universal Right to Education. Goal that we are sure, will result in the efficiency and effectiveness of humanity for a much more friendly, sustainable and peaceful world, for a planet. Because otherwise, there is nothing we differ from animals and other inferior beings whose communities often live and live with much more peace than our own, the human. Come along for the human creativity and innovation in sake of Virtual Education for it to be turned into the virtuality of the global education.

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