

**25TH ATEE ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
TEACHER EDUCATION AND GLOBAL CO-OPERATION  
A way for life-long learning  
RDC 16  
PAPER: NEW FRAMEWORKS FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM.  
TEACHER EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

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**INTRODUCTION**

There is plenty of evidence that because of the connections, which teachers are able to make across the curriculum, the learning is both more purposeful and significant. Nowadays a central concern of Social Sciences teachers is how best to explain a world which is in a constant increasing interconnection.

The paper entitled "*New frameworks for a new millennium. Teacher education and Social Sciences.*" is about the complexity of the new traditional order, which can't be only observed from a framework but from different and complementary ones. Teachers will need to provide local -part of the personal identity- as well as general frameworks for themselves and their pupils.

The paper is divided into three parts. The first one shows the lack of effective links among the Social Sciences and the difficulty in understanding the whole world from an unique point of view (state framework). The second part analyses the changes you can notice when subjects are integrated from frameworks like the European Union and the North-South relationship. Finally there's a need to identify structures where teachers can come together to exchange ideas, receive help and, above all, develop their awarenesses of the processes of educational changes.

The aims are to integrate Social Sciences into new frameworks, in order to understand our world interconnections, which include a wide range of elements for co-operation in the professional development of teachers.

**1. THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AT PRESENT TIMES**

The common use of the social concepts is today bigger than ever before thanks to the mass-media but the public opinion maintains very traditional concepts not according with the present of the Social Sciences. The mixture of interests (political, economics, cultural,...) produces a big amount of high impact information but it is also superficial, biased without continuity and very stereotyped. This information arrives quickly at lots of people, which react more passionately than in a reflexive way. However, and due to the power of the media system, this information is often received and accepted as the unique possible reality.

Teachers and students -consumers of these informations- have to connect this amount of knowledge with the contents of the curriculum and, unfortunately, this is a difficult and not always a successful task.

### **1.1. SOCIAL SCIENCES AND SECONDARY SCHOOL**

The complexity of the contemporary world has produced a variety of Social Sciences in the curriculum (but not an increasing in their timetables). Nowadays we can find particular branches (local history, demography, etc.) of the traditional subjects, like general History and Geography, as well as new subjects, like Economy and Sociology, although some of these subjects are not inside the Social Sciences Departments.

Probably the division of the knowledge into subjects is becoming less and less useful but there are not clear alternatives to them and the subjects of the curriculum are still on the base of strong interests of power. In a different approach it would be necessary to open the curriculum to new experiences and relevant problems.

The existence of different subjects makes very difficult but imperative to co-ordinate their contents, methods, and pedagogical materials. The point is not just a parallelism of contents but a share of methods, tools, materials and, the most important, the possibility of doing constant references among the subjects and from them to the present life. Through these references subjects will be able to support each other and students with teachers will find links among the formal studies, the mass media information and their own experiences.

We have, in this way, to achieve tools well adapted to the needs of our pupils and to the challenges of a common global future.

### **1.2. SOCIAL SCIENCES AND CONTEMPORARY WORLD**

Teaching about the contemporary world presents some specific difficulties that we can resume into three fundamental aspects: the concept of contemporary, the relevant facts, and the concerning contexts.

Very often the concept of the contemporary and the 20th century are presented as a synonymous. Time is always a very important point in the Social Sciences but it is also a personal experience. As the selection is the key of Social Sciences, the relevant facts are the object of their study but, teachers and pupils -being both of them actors of the Social Sciences with rights and duties- have different points of view about the relevant facts according to their different perceptions about the contemporary times.

Teachers point out and imagine from their own perceptions which are not always sharing by their pupils. According to this teachers are very often disturbed when pupils do not know, do not understand, do not place correctly "the easiest facts" but, surprisingly, pupils show unexpected corpus of knowledge, some of them unfamiliar for their teachers (computers, music, technology...).

To understand social concepts they have to be inserted in a reference/concerning context that, theoretically, is the nearest geographical space. However, for the pupils, the nearest context maybe is not that because most of the youth references come to the media audio-visual and are from far away geographical spaces. Therefore their references are not the same than the references of the previous generations. Besides our classrooms are more and more multi-cultural and contexts of reference will become more heterogeneous than ever before.

The New International Order, after the cold war bipolar scenery, has created a new international situation without a clear paradigm to separate the essential from the accessory. The speed, depth and complexity of the changes are obstacles for serious analyses but make clear the uselessness of superficial explanations. On the one hand there are not clear political and economic alternatives; on the other hand there are new roles for the states, the unions, and the civil and international organizations. Moreover new nationalism and religious fundamentalism are increasing the complexity of the local and international relation.

As a result this situation presents new aspects like economic spaces, conflicts, the increasing power of the mass-media, etc. which are producing changes in the use of the territories. The new geo-strategic scenery has brought back disturbances and alterations in the international balanced

situation. Some states are appearing and some are disappearing and these mean important changes in their population, production and needs. There are also new dimensions in traditional social concepts, like the sustainable growth, the human migrations, the agricultural and industrial production and distribution, the use of resources and the productivity, which can not be understand without taking their multiple links into account.

The big development of the technology has produced a "the facto" freedom in the movement of capitals -but neither in the movement of goods nor in the movement of people- that is producing a kind of revolution in the economic activities and a predominant role of the service sector. The increasing of the tourism and the influence of the audio-visual system are producing important changes in the supply and the demand and, consequently, in the use of the space.

All of these factors produce a decreasing in the power of the states as international actors. Today the state frameworks are very few adequated to teach Social Sciences. If we want to realize both the similarities and the differences in our world we have to carry out a large number of connections through new references, bigger and smaller than the state, to come out the local point of view and, at the same time, to interact different spaces from their own characteristics. These frameworks, however, can not substitute the state ones, which are still providing us with the most important amounts of information.

To achieve this goal it is fundamental to find frameworks where we can insert the contents of the Social subjects. The nearest frameworks -local, regional and state- are still vital but yet not enough in the present times. Conflicts, power, leadership, alliances, solutions... are different than before and can not be explained without the use of more than one framework, without new relationship frameworks, necessary to understand this new age where lots of characteristics from the previous period are still reminding .

## **2. NEW FRAMEWORKS FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Frameworks smaller than the states are vital but, because of their specific particularities, they are not the objective of this paper. In accordance with this other possible frameworks are the new regional structures, which

are appearing and growing around the world in order to overcome the deficiencies of the states and to take advantage of the new global situation<sup>1</sup>.

To make a brief, and far from exhaustive approach, to the necessity of new frameworks in the teaching-learning Social Sciences, we are going just to analyse the European Union and the North-South relationship.

## **2.1. THE EUROPEAN UNION AS A FRAMEWORK**

Historically Europe has not got a strong collective feeling because the Social Sciences have been focused on the states contents point of view. The European state history -not always shared by all the citizenship because the existence of nations without a state- was more based on the differences than on the similarities. There were cruel wars and conflicts among European states and some of them have spent centuries being enemies and rivals.

Europe is a geographical zone where the end of the millennium shows interesting aspects. Although loosing its political and military hegemony, during the cold war it could maintain an important role as a frontier and ideological reference between East and West worlds. In the New International Order Europe needs the consolidation of its international position, through a supranational organization compatible with the national identities.

The following is a brief description of the European Union as a framework in the secondary school curriculum.

Ours is a country which is now beginning to feel itself fully integrated within the European project, but there is a contradiction in our feelings about the European Union. It seems to be necessary, in terms of economy, but dangerous as a lost of our own idiosyncrasy. Most of the people knowledge about the European Union comes from the mass-media informations, which often are partial and tendentious -from demagogic accusation to institutional advertising- and produce reactions without solid basis. In a similar way our students perceptions are between an admiration without a critical reflection and a reject that, in any trouble, puts the blame on European Union.

As in the secondary schools curriculum the European Union has been studied just in its institutions composition, neither teachers nor pupils have got a good knowledge about the topic. But the European Union, till in its construction process, is a reality that affects our politics, economy, culture, society and ordinary life.

The European Union is essential in the community politics which have been transferred to from the member states -agriculture, cattle raising, fishing and transports- and it is very important in many other topics like demography, migrations, tourism, security, infrastructures, human rights, production and distribution, labour market, etc. It is becoming very important in foreign affairs where the role of the Union is increasing.

This is a framework -that provides a big amount of information and many internal and external projects- wherein the integration and combination of technological, cultural, scientific and political solutions are displayed to achieve and maintain permanent progress. It is also an important way in the construction of a new identity, both critical and responsible, to entwine spaces without losing the personal social, national, and cultural identity. Far away from meaning a loss of national or supranational -Mediterranean, Latin-American, western- idiosyncrasy we can see the European Union as a mean of maintaining and increasing our plural identities, all of them parts of an integral and interdependent world.

The European Commission, in its education papers, points out the great interest of facing the great challenges for the European: global economy, technological revolution and information society. To develop this approach in full teachers need to work through the concepts, the methods and the values -in all the educational levels- about and for Europe, using the key concepts of interdependency, identity and multi-culturalism.

## **2.2. THE NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONSHIP AS A FRAMEWORK**

The previous ideological world division into East and West is being changed by a new economic division into North and South. This one, whilst useful, is a bit confused division if you try to insert in it concrete states -rich countries with poor inhabitants- but all the other classifications patterns are fragmentary.

In spite of the spectacular economic growth, happened during the last fifty years, the inequalities are being increased, not just only between North and South but into the South itself. In the North there are living one third of the world inhabitants and they use two thirds of the world rent. The thirty per cent of the richest North people have got the fifty per cent of the North rent, whilst the thirty per cent of the South richest people have got the seventy per

cent of the South rent. These figures show clearly that, in terms of the development, the increasing of production is necessary but insufficient.

Co-operation for the development, instead of solving the unbalanced situation between North and South, has been historically used as an instrument in favour of the North countries foreign policies, through the opening of new markets and the allowing of cold war strategies.

There is a deep ethnocentrism hidden in our vision of the South, because it comes from the general idea that the North is the key to solve all the South problems. The results of this approach are maybe feelings of guilty or pity but the main character is always for the North, which has to act in order to well balanced the situation. Therefore the global world is being very unsuccessful in the task of solving global problems, but quite successful in solving partial problems, like improving the health, education and productions. This success is often paradoxical because it is followed by an increasing of population, bureaucracy, external debt, and corruption.

If we present the co-operation placing emphasis on the consumerism and the production growth the result is -no matter our altruist motivations- a co-operation in favour of the North because it is the only winner also in monetary terms. It is important to point out that the bigger amount of co-operation does not go to the poorest countries/people, but for the ones that are interesting for the North in terms of trade, security and international interests. The truth is that many of the North examples of co-operation to the South show lots of hypocrisy, lack of co-ordination and unclear long-term objectives.

North people can not change the South but they can change their own life conditions through their democratic rights. Co-operation is not the solution but just a tool to create nets of relationship, in order to profit both North and South, by being in favour of a mutual support and understanding.

Through the North-South relationship we can explain lots of essential aspects, which do not appear in the state data, to understand the present world, like the non formal economic activities, the subsistence economy, the oral tradition, the cultural differences and their link with the power structures, the familiar pattern and its role in collective and individual rights, the international and non governmental organizations, the existence of silent people (never appearing in the media nor in the statistical data sources) etc.



By way of examples: Demographic concepts like birth rates, mortality, expectation of life, etc. are absolutely connected with the socio-economic-cultural living conditions. It is the same with some of the causes and most of the consequences of the largest natural disasters -flooding, earthquakes, droughts, pollution- are directly linked with living conditions. Human migrations can not be studied without taking into account the, past and present, political, military, economic and cultural situation and the role of the mass-media in the origin of new perceptions and expectations, not only in the areas of emigration but also in the immigration ones.

Special attention must be paid of interdependence, as a key word for the present times, and we have to use this concept, in a critical and responsible way, in all our analysis of the reality. It implies, for instance, to link economic development with human development and with the social politics, and connect disarmament with development, being critic with the mass-media information.

In a return to humanism, North-South framework is an opportunity to widen our ecological, demographic, economic, social and cultural concepts, in a new way and under conditions of equality, in accordance with the lines of thought that promote a sustainable development for the twenty-first century.

### **3. THE TEACHER EDUCATION**

Taking into consideration the fact that we want to work efficiently using different frameworks, it is vital the interconnection and the team work among Social Sciences teachers. To do this we need a basic training that reinforce the democratic values and the connection among the different curriculum subjects.

In addition to the above this task is a must for the Secondary Education, where the students need to achieve an integral, guided, and flexible corpus of knowledge to grow up inside changing and complex societies.

Teachers education has to combine several frameworks, which comprised the widest range of information possible, concerning the challenges posed by an ever unknown future. It is not only essential to



identify causes and consequences but to ask ourselves how to do, here and now, in terms of cultural diversity, racism and any form of prejudice and stereotyped think. The first framework reference has to be always the one we know better, so the one on we can act. The rest of frameworks imply a critic and responsible approach.

Most of all it is necessary an interchange among teachers, from different levels of education and different social and cultural spaces, for the purpose of encouraging, themselves and their pupils, in the increasing of awareness concerning the problems and possible solutions available.

Through meetings and conferences teachers will be able to find specific solutions and a long-term co-operation. From these experiences we will obtain a high level of job satisfaction and an important amount of motivation, and also we will co-operate in the construction of a shared global and common future. A future where concepts such as recycling, creativity, recovery, innovation and support for sustainable development must prevail, embedded, at all times, with the framework of their own cultural and social behaviour.

Knowing the multi-casualty of phenomena it is necessary that teachers control the variables, organize the work into reference frameworks, and point out that, in the present times, fortunately there is not one solution but multiple, diverse, and changing solutions.

If things were different in the past and they have changed, they are also going to change in the future.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The reality of a global world cannot be achieved without the study of its interconnections, but they are very difficult to produce in the Secondary level of education where, very often, students and teachers seem to be lost into the increasing number of Social Sciences and the amount of their contents. However, significant pieces of information do not appear in the formal subjects because there is a kind of information not visible from the usual state data sources (like no formal economy, nations without a state, etc.).

Changes in the New International order are very important for the Social Sciences. On the one hand economic and political patterns are being reduced; on the other hand there are new roles for the states, the unions and the political parties and new actors like non governmental organizations, civil associations, etc. which have increased the complexity of the local and international relationship. To understand and explain this complexity we -as secondary teachers- need to use different frameworks, bigger and also smaller than the usual state ones. With them we will be able to link the daily life of our pupils with the mass media information and the real world.

With the local and the national frameworks, the European Union and the North-South relationship are very good frameworks to understand our present and future world and to develop a sense of responsible citizenship from the point of view of the criticism and the solidarity.

From this reflections we come to the conclusion that it is necessary a constant and increasing interconnection among the different Social Sciences subjects to take advantage of their possibilities and in order to achieve the complexity of our contemporary world.

To do that Social Sciences teachers have to be encouraged to work together, interchanging experiences and ideas. They have also to be provided with the tools, the spaces and the atmosphere where this work can be easily done.

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**ABSTRACT:**

There is plenty of evidence that because of the connections, which teachers are able to make across the curriculum, the learning is both more purposeful and significant. Nowadays a central concern of Social Sciences teachers is how best to explain a world which is in a constant increasing interconnection.

In the Secondary Schools curriculum the existence of different subjects makes very difficult but imperative to co-ordinate their contents, methods, and pedagogical materials. The point is not just a parallelism of contents but a share of methods, tools, materials and, the most important, the possibility of doing constant references among the subjects and from them to the present life. Through these references students with teachers will find links among the formal studies, the mass media information and their own experiences. We have, in this way, to achieve tools well adapted to the needs of our pupils and to the challenges of a common global future.

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<sup>1</sup> Some of these regional structures are basically economic (NAFTA, MERCOSUR; Asian Pacific Area). Other regions become from a geographical-historical-cultural basis like the Maghrib or the Mediterranean region. The Mediterranean area presents most of the advantages of a new framework to insert the contemporary world: European and non European countries, the European Union and the Maghrib, North and South relationship, area of migrations, new and old states, security organizations, mixture of religions, cultures and languages, etc.