



COLECCIÓN
TEMAS
DE
HOY

THE BOLIVARIAN EDUCATION

The bolivarian education

Colección Temas de Hoy

© Ministry of Communication and Information

Av. Universidad, Esq. El Chorro, Torre Ministerial, Pisos 9 y 10.
Caracas. Venezuela.

www.mci.gob.ve

publicidad@mci.gov.ve

First edition, September de 2005

Graphic Design

José Luis Díaz Jiménez

Juan Carlos Pérez Escaño

Legal Deposit: lf7120058002948

Published in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

The bolivarian education

"The essential purposes of the State are the protection and development of the individual and respect for the dignity of the individual, the democratic exercise of the will of the people, the building of a just and peace loving society, the furtherance of the prosperity and welfare of the people and the guaranteeing of the Fulfillment of the principles, rights and duties established in this Constitution. Education and work are the fundamental processes for guaranteeing these purposes."

*Article 3.
Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela*

A Past of Exclusion

Today, the Venezuelan educational system follows a different way, essential to build the new society; that is to say, the Republic that was born in 1999, with a Constitution that reverted the neoliberal and elitist trends that prevailed in Venezuela; but, above all, the new Magna Charta aims to leave behind an enormous social debt. The greatest debt this oil producing country got into was not with the International Monetary Fund, or the World Bank, or other countries of the world: it was with its own people, plunging it into ignorance and making it the victim of the negligence and selfishness of knowledge.

Although there existed a legal framework that compelled the State to provide the sovereign people with education, it was always more convenient to silence, bury consciences and suppress any revolutionary thought. Master Simón Rodríguez (Samuel Robinson) used to say about education: "It is connected to the development of social virtues; love for one's country, which translates into common well-being, and love for productive work, understood as a liberating activity".

In the past, the country did not represent a common good; it was the property of just a few, of the "Masters of the Valley". They understood that the only way to abuse a people was to make it blind, excluding it, repealing its rights and closing any possibility for it to acquire the tools needed to complain.

However, those tools existed. The Constitution of 1961 declared in article 55 that the State had to provide the means so that everyone could fulfill their right to study. Moreover, in article 78, it assumed the responsibility to create and maintain "schools, institutions and services, sufficiently supplied in order to assure the access to education and culture, without any other limitation than those derived from vocation and aptitudes".

However, apparently, or according to the results, most Venezuelan's vocation had to do with poverty, and were simply incompetent to continue with their education. In addition, they loaded them with guilt, pointing at them for not continuing their studies, for "deserting", but they did not recognize that no one could learn under such circumstances like poverty, hunger or violence; that most do not desert, or abandon knowledge voluntarily.

The Fourth Republic created alphabetization or literacy plans for minorities, like the Consejo Nacional de Alfabetización (National Council for Alphabetization), the Servicio de Alfabetización (Alphabetization Service), or the Labores de Alfabetización del Instituto Nacional para la Cooperación Educativa (INCE) (Alphabetization Efforts of the National Institute for Educational Cooperation) which were not even financed by the State, but the banking and industrial sectors, to finally show 70 thousand alphabetized citizens in ten years.

The pitiful sample of pseudo-generosity of the Venezuelan political leaders gave the result -for the year 2001- of one and a half million Venezuelan men and women who didn't know how to read or write. Most of them thought that the government's alphabetization or literacy teaching efforts were mere gifts, and that they were the only ones to blame for their situation, unable to realize that reality was very different: it was a duty, a governmental obligation to take care of these needs.

Education in the Bolivarian Venezuela

Education is a human right and a social duty, it is compulsory and gratuitous, and constitutes at the same time the essential root of democracy. It is oriented to the full development of personality to achieve a decent life, able to go by with an ethical evaluation of labor and with civic participation awareness in decision-making. However, in order to bring this concept to reality, the presence of a humanist government, not leaded by businessmen or home country peddlers, was a "must". We needed a government fully conscious of the enormous differences between the people who share the Venezuelan nationality, and willing to work on it.

Since 1999, the bolivarian government has become the guarantor of a government of law, justice, equity and real access to the rights of the less favored (a process in which the demagoguery is now part of the past), for its continuity, coherence and final objectives.

Throughout the history the venezuelan democracy, political leaders only threw crumbs to the hills to obtain the popular favor, in order to preserve themselves in power. Today, the interest of the boli-

varian government is different: It is to refund the Republic, to hand down a country of equals to its future inhabitants, to build a new model of society, with its own citizens; and the only instrument possible to achieve such goals is through an education able to grow in consciousness.

The bolivarian government is offering venezuelan men and women the necessary tools that will protect them from becoming the victims of a State that violates their rights, their principles, their hopes and their resistance. As Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, president of Brazil, said: "It is necessary to give the fish, and teach how to fish".

Although this plan refers to the decrease in hunger in that country, it also embraces de hunger for knowledge of a people that lived ignoring what its leaders were doing with its national wealth, with its riches. So we taught them how to read, how to write, and how to live. They will become citizens who will not serve as instruments for anyone, who will pass on those teachings to their children, who will know the value and power of learning, who will not depend on anyone.

Education for all

The bolivarian education rises in contrast to neocolonization, transculturization, alienation, elites and exclusion. It generates a new State-Family-Society relationship, where the school is the perfect space to concentrate actions and becomes the main organized form of the State's power, promoting participation, achieving the necessary changes in institutions and culture, consolidating the model of endogenous and sovereign development, reaching the correction of imbalances, and the environmental sustainability, in order to attain an honorable life standard.

All these factors are tightly linked to this new paradigm of education, in which man becomes the center as a social being, able to actively respond and participate in the transformation process that the venezuelan society is living today.

Education is conceived as a human continuity that attends teaching and learning processes as a complex, human, total, and integral unit; it has levels and modalities that correspond to the development timing inherent to each age, in its physical, biological, psychological,

cultural, social and historical state. These consecutive periods include the previous one, to create conditions like aptitude, vocation, aspirations, and ambitions, and not leaving them at random. It is a humanized and progressive conception; whose beginning from the maternal womb constitutes a process that feeds the continuity and hopes for a school life, minimizing the possibilities of exclusion. Therefore, education is turned into permanent instruction, in the observance of an unavoidable duty, expressed in articles 102 and 103 of the Constitution, for the concretion of a person's conditions: to be, to know, to do and to live with.

Within the revolutionary process, the bolivarian education is the system that dissolves, through the missions, the social debt generated by the system of exclusion, and creates the model of social equilibrium with continuing programs; from gestation, with *Proyecto Simoncito* (initial education for children from zero to six years old); *Bolivarian schools* (from six to twelve years old); *Bolivarian high schools* (teenager and youngster education from twelve to eighteen years old); *Robinsonian technical schools* (professional middle education for young adults); and the *Bolivarian University* (professional education for young adults and adults).

In order to guarantee the entry, continuance and pursuance of every one in the educational system, the State, together with the family and society, universalized the right to education as a human right and a fundamental social duty. Such was the birth of this integral system, for all.

Initial Education: Simoncito

Having the universalization of preschool education as the fundamental goal, with an orientation of justice and social equity, the social government created a project directed to strengthen the integral and pedagogical attention of boys and girls, since gestation to six years old. In Simoncito, care, education, recreation, protection, sanitation, nutrition and health care appear as the major components of global attention. Teaching influences the strengthening of integral development and learning, under the responsibility of the family and educational performers, specially trained for such purpose.

The notion of initial education encompasses the maternal stage, from zero to three years old, and the preschool stage, from three to six years old. It orients its actions with the joint participation of the school, the family and the community, through conventional strategies, like integral educational action within the classroom; and non-conventional, like integral educational action within the family and the communitarian environment. The purpose of this project is the integral development of children, until entrance to the first grade of elementary school -with equal opportunities regarding the required learning in order to decrease the risk of dropping out and exclusion-, to guarantee their right to a full development, in accordance with the notion of citizens who are willing to make up a democratic, participative, protagonic, multiethnic and pluricultural society.

The starting point is the fact that children's concepts are developed and learnt within the family environment, at school, and in their community. The first years in the life of children constitute a very significant period, which may enable them to reach the optimum development of their capacities, and fully exercise their citizenship. Therefore, the State guarantees the social rights of children, in equal conditions and opportunities.

Armando Rojas, vice-minister of Asuntos Educativos del Ministerio de Educación (Educational Matters of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports), explained that initial education provides a great number of benefits to the population, like the decrease of social, cultural, economic and gender inequality; it reduces and prevents child abuse; it contributes with the decrease of death and morbidity rate; it supports the strengthening of the family as the primary institution of socialization and organization of communities; and it increases the school success favoring the children's development in the stage of maximum growth and cortical maturation.

Rojas explains that, once preschools become Simoncitos, after being provided with classrooms or maternal environments, together with medical doctors and advisers, the framework for a happy and correct maternity is achieved: "Under those conditions -for example, affection- we are able to give consistence to the human being, which will serve the children as a support throughout their life, enabling their continuous development according to their living standards".

The initial education is not carried out by a State willing to kidnap our conscience and our children; it is a State that recognizes and fulfills its constitutional obligations, that orients its citizens in bringing up their children, so that they may lead a better and more honorable life in the future; this initiative is based upon human solidarity nature, thought, basis, grounds and spirit; it represents an answer to the needs for development.

Elementary Education: Bolivarian School

Armando Rojas explains: "The Bolivarian School is the continuation of Simoncito. However, it is not a traditional school, but an integral school where children receive nutrition, homework assistance, recreational assistance, cultural dynamics, and a complete schedule that extends the previous one".

The Bolivarian School project responds to the need generated by diverse factors, such as: school exclusion, malnutrition, grade retention, poor school performance, loss of local-national identity, the need for continuous instruction of man and women, and the economic and social transformation of the country.

Therefore, the Bolivarian School must be in accordance with the historical moment of transformation our country is going through. This qualification implies, among other things, to guarantee its human, ethical, democratic and quality essence for all, gratuitous and compulsory, as an inalienable right of every citizen, who subscribes to the conception of a teaching State, which is considered as the State's obligation to offer an essential and fundamental service that must be guaranteed to all the citizens. The Bolivarian school is a transforming tool of society, it is participative, democratic; all members of the community participate in the decision-making. The school is from, in and with the community; it is the summit and source of communitarian participation; it is a model of integral educational attention that promotes social justice; it is an example of permanent pedagogic renovation; and besides, it struggles against the educational exclusion. Therefore, it contributes to the improvement of the living standard in the communities.

The new school is a space for human and communitarian growth, but also for integral education, for technological innovation, for communitarian work, for health and for life, or production and productivity, for the alternative communication, for the Information Technologies and Communication (TIC) and for peace.

Integral Adolescence: Bolivarian Hing Schools

The Bolivarian High School is the banner program directed to attend teenagers and youngsters integrally. Its main goals are to guarantee their access and continuity in the educational system as the fulfillment of their rights. At this stage, native peoples, rural populations and bordering populations are given priority. High school is combined with the system of goods and services and, in addition, integral attention is offered to these human beings who had been traditionally abandoned and turned into an object of marketing and privatization, which characterized the neoliberal education.

The execution of the Bolivarian High School plan is being achieved at this historical moment to complete the structure of the bolivarian education as a human continuity, favored by the advances of the curricular debate that encompasses seminars on endogenous development, as well as the integration of the various areas of knowledge for the development of competences and values.

Another advantage has been the structuring process of the educational model enriched by solidarity, multiple experiences from the missions (Robinson, Ribas, Sucre, Barrio Adentro and Vuelvan Caras), and the banner programs Simoncito, Bolivarian and Robinsonian technical school, in their different contexts.

The Bolivarian High School covers the integral attention of the life period between thirteen and eighteen years old, and corresponds to the continuous education of the new republican, half way between the Bolivarian School and the Bolivarian University.

Armando Rojas, vice-minister of the MED (Ministry of Education and Sports), comments about the Bolivarian High Schools: "We created an experience to reach them by 2003, it was the Bolivarian seventh year. We made an evaluation, and that gave us the support for

the Bolivarian High School. Then, a special structure was created, an educational space within the conditions we are living in today".

Education for Work: Robinsonian Technical Schools

They are based upon the diversification of young peoples education, with impact and effect upon the productive sector, and giving priority to the development of farm, technical, commercial, industrial, farming and agricultural schools. In September 1999, the MED reactivated the technical schools, calling them "Robinsonian" (after Samuel Robinson). The experimental character of these schools was then granted. Through these Robinsonian technical schools, education and research is combined with the system of goods and services production, in a way that contributes to strengthen labor education for production.

In the Robinsonian technical schools, teenagers and youngsters are taken care of as strategic subjects for sustainable development. The constitutional status that it implies makes it necessary to reactivate the technical education, under the idea of giving the high school graduate the possibility to be educated and trained to work; which, in turn, emerges as a guarantee to consolidate the productive economy, in addition to the possibility to proceed with a higher education.

Such schools strengthen the social economy, from the place and within the framework of endogenous development. They are spaces to learn while doing, and teaching while producing. The project of the technical schools relies upon four objectives: improvement of infrastructure, curricular transformation, maintenance, and permanent strengthening of a center of technical-professional education. The scope of this project is based upon the commitment of the integral education of youngsters and adults, to face productive labor and the autonomous development of the country.

The refoundation of the technical schools in Venezuela is an element of priority within any national recuperation plan. The development of the country's productive sector is an indispensable requisite for its economic recuperation, and it depends greatly upon the availability of the competent technical personnel necessary to achieve such goal.

Students may choose among general mentions, and within them, a good number of mentions, according to the geographical features of the educational center and their vocation. To this day, there are seven specialties: Agriculture and farming, Arts, Social Promotion and Health Services, Industry, Commerce and Administrative Services, Security and Defense, and Bilingual Intercultural Education. The result of these technical schools will be the education of middle technicians with proper instruction levels, adequate to assume the current demands of the country's productive sectors, which will allow to fuel the development of strategic areas, as well as the insertion of the population in the productive apparatus, aspects that will have an effect upon the improvement of the living standard of the population.

The Missions: Systems of Inclusion

The education and working missions have become a network of fundamental strategies to accomplish the policies of inclusion. The universalization of the rights advances in the materialization of article 3 of the Constitution; in addition, the Missions provide for the protection and fostering of the social economy, whose means of concretization become ways to exercise the civic rights.

The legal and constitutional basis of the system of the missions is included in the abovementioned article, when it makes use of education and labor to impulse the full development of citizens. The missions must provide actions that simultaneously guarantee the social rights, inclusion, production and employment; as well as the political inclusion, guaranteeing participation and protagonism in public matters or affairs. The missions are interrelated among them at different levels. Although each mission may respond to the juncture, they have a "point of the spear" impact to produce structural changes.

The extraordinary alphabetization or literacy teaching plan Simón Rodríguez (or *Misión Robinson*) efficiently took part with the method "Yo sí puedo" (I can) and "Yo sí puedo seguir" (I can go on), in the eradication of illiteracy in Venezuela. Besides, the compromises acquired by the UNESCO member states -our country included- in the World Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien 1990); and in the strategic lines of the World Education Forum (Dakar 2000),

whose consensus resulted in the Dakar Objectives of Goals for the Millennium, among which they point out: "To increase from, now until the year 2015, the number of alphabetized adults in 50%, particularly women, and facilitate to all adults equal access to elementary education and permanent education". Our country has overcome this objective, since in January 2005, there were 1.371.000 people alphabetized.

On the other hand, *Misión Jose Félix Ribas* gives continuity to the elementary school education, and places youngsters on the right track to obtain their high school diploma, in order to avoid dropouts.

The extraordinary plan Mariscal Antonio José, de Sucre, also known as *Misión Sucre*, is an initiative of the Venezuelan State, whose purpose is to build up the institutional synergy and communitarian participation, to guarantee the access to university education to all those high school graduates without enrollment, and revert their condition of 'excluded' from the system of higher education.

This mission combines a vision of social justice with the strategic character of higher education for the sustainable and integral human development, national sovereignty, and the construction of a democratic and participative society, for which it is necessary to guarantee the participation of society as a whole in the generation, transformation, diffusion and good use of what is known and what is done.

University for all

In the past few decades of last century, the State progressively reduced its responsibilities regarding education, specifically in the level of higher education. In fact, investment in higher education in Venezuela, from 1989 to 1998, evidenced a decreasing trend; affected by the inclination to carry out budgetary cuts in all sectors of the social ambit, especially as a strategy to build the viability of the privatization project of higher education. In fact, investment in higher education in Venezuela, from 1989 to 1998, evidenced a decreasing trend. That brought as a consequence the accumulation of a huge social debt, because university enrollment suffered a standstill, which favored the exclusion of the less favored students; that is to say, those

(1) Action of two or more causes whose effect is bigger than the sum of the individual effects

coming from the poorest sectors. In fact, essays like "La exclusion de los pobres de la educación superior" (Fuenmayor, I. y Vidal, Y., OPSU 2000) agree with this statement, assuring that the income to higher education favored those sectors with higher incomes, the population of the big cities and the students coming from private schools. Simultaneous to that phenomenon, the official higher education sensibly decreased its participation in favor of private education.

However, since 1999, the trend of the last decades to the decrease of the public budget dedicated to education has reverted, rising from 3,2% of IRP, in 1998, to 4,6% in the year 2000; and to 7% in 2005, apart from the budget of the missions. It is a significant proportion compared to the rest of Latin America, which appoints an average of 4% of IRP to education, although we still have a long way to go in order to achieve investment levels like those of the European Union or the United States.

If we carry out a brief historic and social revision about the exclusion of higher education, we find that since the 1980's, the social composition of high school graduates that enroll in public universities in made up, increasingly by citizens coming from middle and high socio-economic sectors of the population, while very few high school graduates belonging to less privileged sectors of the population make it to the system of higher education. This trend contravenes the sense of social promotion that education must have, and fosters the deepening of the inequality gaps that exist in our social tissue.

The Minister of Higher Education, Samuel Moncada, explained that the university quota were reserved for a minority, for an elite that, on top of that, is not willing to allow the access of the people to knowledge, or having the poor walking through the gates of the universities as students, much less as graduates, arguing that "university is not for everybody, because not everybody is fit to enroll in college," they say. I interpret that everybody has a different aptitude, that is to say, some have the ability to become journalists, others may become economists, and yet others engineers. I had the ability to be a historian. Each one of us has a different ability, and must figure it out in order to develop our own human potential. They insist in saying there are people who have it, and people who don't. Who are those who don't have any abilities? The poor, because they're the ones

being left out, and they just don't care. That is an obvious racist, fascist, and excluding attitude, and I am totally against it."

The nuisance produced by the universalization of university education in some sectors, has driven some to oppose routine decisions like decree 3.444, arguing that it makes an attempt against the university's autonomy; whereas, in fact, it's just another excuse to intend to preserve an unsustainable order, a selfish order, hegemonic and reserved for just a few. From now on, those exclusion models will not take root in Venezuela. The time of the people has come.

Municipalization of the Education

As part of its fundamental guidelines, *Misión Sucre* applies the municipalization of higher education, that has a regional and local orientation, taking as a point of reference the communities' own culture, together with their needs, problems, cultural values, demands and potentials. It has to do with offering higher studies with social pertinence, with common sense and purpose, immerse in concrete geographies, but with a global vision; involved with the impulse and promotion of the endogenous and sustainable development of every region, so that the educational spaces may be expanded to every field of social life, and not just be restricted to the classroom.

This set of rules is an essential part of a broader vision that includes the mission as a process of social mobility, directed to guarantee everyone's participation in culture; the knowledge to build citizenship, to generate knowledge communities, and flexible and accessible spaces for constant learning. *Misión Sucre* is viewed as a joint effort of State and society to universalize higher education, and guarantee everyone's right to it. In order to achieve so, it is indispensable to transform its institutions, its logics and practices, to become a strategic factor in the construction of a new Republic.

Under this perspective, municipalization converges with the search for territorial equilibrium set forth in the Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Económico y Social (National Plan for the Economic and Social Development) to benefit, with a long-term perspective, a process to transform the population, as well as the investment and redistribution of wealth patterns. In accordance with norms that rule the

municipalization, the mission creates educational spaces in each of the municipalities of the country, so that the participating high school graduates are able to enroll in educational programs from the various institutions of higher education. In addition, each of these spaces will be built progressively, in a permanent learning center linked to the needs of education, research and consultancy of the population, favoring the social link of higher education and the work shared with the communities, companies, State organisms and non-governmental agencies.

These municipal educational spaces, or university villages, will be built progressively or may also be installed in headquarters of head offices of other educational institutions (in different working schedules from the usual), in cultural centers, military facilities or any other premises considered appropriate for the fulfillment of its purpose. The main features of a university village are:

- These are municipal centers of higher education where educational programs (careers) of different institutions, sharing academic resources (professors, consultancies, advice, meeting spaces and discussion, laboratories, information and documentation, practice centers, and cultural, sports and production activity) converge.
- In municipalities with a larger extension and population, more than one university village may be installed. Likewise, very close municipalities may share one university village.
- The Fundación Misión Sucre assumes the coordination of the university villages, together with the institutions of higher education.
- The provision of the villages and its conditioning shall be a joint effort between the organizations that converge in the Comisión Presidencial de la Misión (Presidential Commission of the Mission), with the participation of regional and local governments, regional development corporations, State and private companies, as well as communities.
- The functioning, maintenance and security of the university villages will rely upon Fundación Misión Sucre, in coresponsibility with the participants (students and teachers), communities, and local and regional authorities.
- The purpose is to enable high school graduates to study in their

own communities, and that university villages become part of the local community, so that communities integrate with them, contributing to their development and making use of their potential.

In every locality, Misión Sucre fosters the shared use of resources among the different governmental and non-governmental entities, and shall likewise be understood that productive and cultural facilities, laboratories and information centers, sports facilities and educational infrastructures are considered educational and technological instruments in the service of all.

Up to this date, three models of university villages have been developed, which respond to particular geographical features of the region or localities. They are guided by the potential of the population they will be serving, the need for programs in the region or localities and the number of existing higher educational facilities, or the lack of them. Forty-one university villages are already under construction.

In the end, the education proposed by the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is adjusted to the mandate of our Magna Charta. It is a human right and a fundamental social duty. Just as ministry Aristóbulo Iztúriz said before the National Assembly: "It is a collective right. It is not an individual right, therefore it is not optional, and the State has the obligation to assure the inclusion of all its citizens. Hence, it guarantees its gratuity and facilitates the access to all the people, to the different levels of education."

Directory

Minister of Communication and Information

Yuri Pimentel

Viceminister of Communication Management

William Castillo

Viceminister of Communication Strategy

Mauricio Rodríguez



**Bolivarian
Government
of Venezuela**

Ministry of
**Communication
and Information**

