

# The philosophical principles Ficeméa draws upon

*« Nobody teaches anybody else, or themselves, people teach each other using the world around them. »*

*Paolo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

## Introduction

Ficeméa is a movement of activists working in educational, cultural and social organisations. These organisations take action in their respective fields thanks to committed activists. Member associations work with a wide range of audiences from multiple fields to organise and carry out educational action based upon new education principles. Ficeméa members take part in development and defend against social conquests

The philosophical foundations for new education were thought up in a very different political and historical climate. Pedagogical thinkers and activists from diverse countries with very different existences have given them a universal dimension. In defending its principles new education transcends social context and reality, social classes and the question of national belonging.

New education can only be thought about from an international perspective placing humanism at the heart of its politics. This values freedom of initiative, creativity, expression, emotional well being and self-development both in one's relationships and the wider environment.

Our approach to education creates situations in which

everybody – child, young person, adult – can become more conscious of his or her environment, take ownership of it and participate in change and transformation. This, in a spirit of individual, collective and social progress.

New education, in theory and in practice, plays its part in transforming society and influencing relations of power and force, organisational structures and individual freedom. This is a move towards more equality and greater individual and collective power.

New education, which aims to give everybody the ability to become emancipated, can only be brought to life from a political viewpoint.

Emancipation is understood in terms of an individual's life but remains inseparable from a collective sense of emancipation and that of social transformation towards wider equality.

Only applying this logic to one pedagogical approach will only satisfy those that uphold more traditional educational objectives. It is, by its nature, 'subversive' in the sense that it tends to make society more equal and fair.

The foundations that new education can be built upon draw on ideas of freedom and political concepts that have their basis in secularism and are enriched by our own thinking. These ensure we remain open towards other people and that there is respect for tolerance and diversity of thought.

## **The four pillars of new education**

Environment creates a person. Experience and activity are a product of owning one's private and public narratives. Drawing upon one's individual and collective journeys enables an individual to develop an active self, empowered to act in the world.

## **The environment**

This draws upon Henri Wallon's wide concept of environment and its social, biological and ideological impact. Environment plays a key role in education and creates the possibility for a person and/or a group to own his/her environment and to transform it.

Playing an active part in one's environment is obligatory. All 'remote learning' is to be banned.

Only an in-depth knowledge of one's living environment can lead to a person's fulfilment within it, both individually and collectively. A person's surroundings must encourage and enable action.

Environment is a combination of history and the geographic and social territory in which a person acts and is able to exert power. Human beings are in a constant dynamic with other actors who exert different forms of power (political, institutional, social, cultural, economic, legal...) Different actors' real and effective participation enables the individual and his/her community to create meaning together centred upon inclusion, empowerment and the development of notions of public and private.

## **A person's position**

A person is seen as having a history, background, needs and wishes and is seen as able to make his/her own decisions. All beings can pursue and make progress along their personal path with the support of others. Knowledge is not really acquired without personal development and therefore self-knowledge.

Recognising a person as an individual and paying attention to and respecting his or her personal responsibility (which is not to be confused with an individualistic approach) is essential. Notions of choice and planning should not be removed from those of freedom, which have also fed into new

education.

That is a basic principle of new education. It is a founding principle. Today Ficemea's work on acceptance, otherness, benevolence and welfare feeds into that, whether it's in a social, cultural, philosophical or cultural context. We also need to take back the idea of trust, which contributes towards benevolence and adds depth to it.

## **Collective life**

Taking part in collective life is considered a self-development tool that contributes towards emancipation. New education is based upon this dialectic between individual and collective – between singular and plural.

We prosper when we are part of a collective framework that emancipates and allows each and every one of us to create a reality that is constantly changing and moving towards greater freedom (without that being an empty word). Individual choices should feed into the collective, without being manipulated or annihilated.

Underpinning these notions is the question of an individual's social positioning within groups, whether these positions are taken, allocated, granted or gained.

## **Activities**

Activities and experimentation are fundamental to any education work. Activities are an essential part of staff training. They enable culture to be acquired as an experience of reality-based transformation.

Activity must run through all of our practices, whatever the theme, field or stakes. But these activities must retain, or even build upon, the individual's own projects which are built around and fed by the collective energy; activities are based around pedagogy that is rooted in invention and reality-based

experimentation.

Now, the stakes are even higher where activities are concerned: they touch upon self-development and the repercussions that can have on the transformational power of groups. There's an almost urgent need to bring back learning through doing, to symbolically hold children and young people's hands so that they can better access knowledge by making it themselves

## **Active education methods**

Training plays a central role in sharing active education methods.

A trainer's skills don't stop at the relaying of information alone but extend to his or her ability to run with original approaches. Approaches that can then be managed and developed into a new ways of understanding.

Our ambition in terms of training is to support social actors as they reflect upon their experience of the world: to remove stereotypes from this and to develop fluid educational practices. These practices are to be constantly reworked and questioned, moving beyond routines and best practice and adding an element of surprise.

During the training process one's experience of the world is transformed. People are required to develop cultural references, question their existing ones and to reinvent others. Migrants experience the same process. The training relationship must enable the transition between these states. All training therefore creates an intercultural space.

Active education is a process that allows each person to develop their behaviour and skills and to broaden their knowledge. This is a constant and ongoing process, a lifelong

journey. Education fundamentally revolves around personal experience within a collective heritage which is constantly changing (living environment, family, society, world)

As we see it the purpose of education must be that of training emancipated, responsible, critical citizens who stand together:

- An emancipated citizen is one that is able to consider stereotypes and come to his/her own conclusions, to act in his environment and to make the most of his/her potential
- A responsible, critical citizen is able to participate in society's evolution through his/her own aspirations and values in the context of social progress.

This conception rejects an instrumentalisation of education that

- trains economic, cultural or political agents to conform with the needs of a system,
- standardises consumer behaviour for market economy, or any other political model with the same objectives.