

**Presentation by Vernor Muñoz, Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, to the First  
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As we are commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, I would like to begin this brief presentation recalling that this Magna Carta of Humanity, as Eleanor Roosevelt called it, not only comprised a body of rights but also a series of obligations Essential for states.

Certainly, it is a set of interrelated obligations, which today call for solidarity and the affirmation of the human rights of millions of Dalits living in conditions of segregation. In some regions, Dalits communities reach barely 10% of literacy, and in cases where students succeed in enrolling, they are victims of exclusion processes that prevent them from completing the school year.

We have witnessed the lack of opportunities for the Roma population, whose exclusion from educational opportunities is expressed in unemployment rates above 70%. This exclusion was manifested in the European Court's decision of November 13, 2007, which establishes that the segregation of the Roma population in special education centres is discriminatory.

Indigenous communities continue to suffer assimilation that dramatically annuls their worldviews, and also systematically eliminates their languages, cultures and traditions.

Afro-descendant communities, which struggle against the stereotypes of intolerant societies and migrants, refugees and stateless people, who do not find educational responses adequate to their needs.

Lesbian students and homosexual students, who continue to be expelled from universities and colleges and people with disabilities, continue to be relegated to the absence of a truly inclusive education that respects their rights and responds to their special educational needs.

It would be difficult to list all the communities and people who in certain circumstances become social minorities and who, because of this condition and the existing prejudices, are victims of insensitive public policies and of societies that fail to accept diversity as a necessary social option for the construction of egalitarian and pacifist communities.

The same term minority is perhaps inadequate, since in our world there are also social and economic minorities, mainly, who do not suffer any type of discrimination and who, rather, make efforts not to show their privileges.

In any case, the conceptual and operational framework of the right to education, which involves the already well-known scheme of state obligations known as the 4 A's (affordability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability), implies the constant interrelation of these components. This framework is neither sequential nor linear and its interpretation must not reproduce the kind of mechanistic rationality

that has characterized conventional education systems (which are essentially patriarchal, utilitarian and segregating).

When it comes to combating discrimination in the field of education, and especially in terms of the social minorities that have been and are discriminated against and excluded, we must insist on the danger of concentrating only on access to a model that is in itself already predominantly undemocratic.

Recalling the words of Zafaroni, we must say that pretending that a member of a minority learns to live in freedom in a school that is segregating or insensitive to diversity, is something like pretending to play football in an elevator.

Access itself is not only not sufficient for the realization of the right to education, but may also have a more devastating effect, by forcing a student to live in an environment (a programme and a school practice) that attacks their dignity and their rights.

Furthermore, the school is not an isolated cell. On the contrary, it almost always reproduces the discriminating environment of the community in which it has been inserted. However, it is also true that the school has a potential for change that other social institutions do not have, so that public policies, affirmative actions and a growing awareness about the inability of the "standardizing" educational model can enhance educative action towards the construction of active citizenship, committed to the rights of all people.

It is worth mentioning, however, that the school cannot solve the problems that politicians do not want to solve either, but the attention of these problems necessarily goes through the implementation of the legal principles established by the main instruments of international human rights law.

Among them, the Universal Declaration remains a cornerstone in the realization of human rights.

In the preamble to the Declaration, it is wisely stated that ignorance of rights has been the main cause of the suffering of humanity.

Therefore, it is explicitly emphasized in the preamble to the Universal Declaration that human rights learning must be the central effort that calls upon the governments of the world and is indispensable for progress towards peace and equality.

Cognitive processes reflect and model cultures. If all peoples do not participate in this cognitive ecology, education inevitably loses its legitimacy, not only because these peoples lose their cultural base, but also because their learning becomes trivial and become into mere subjects in service of markets and employers.

The learning of human rights goes beyond school, certainly, but it implies it completely. It is for this reason that we must work in depth by giving back education its meaning, its object and its mission.

It is okay for us to fight for progress in schooling, in access. In fact, if we look at UNESCO statistics, we know that we have made progress in this field. However, it is also true that so many educated people had never killed so many others. We had never before caused so many environmental problems

and so much spiritual degradation. Therefore, it is urgent to focus on giving a new meaning to education, so that educational opportunities are a common good for all, and that these opportunities mainly involve the construction of people committed to the rights of others, it is worth saying , People responsible for the happiness of all.