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Fe y Alegría
INTERNACIONAL

70
years
Educating
hearts



FE Y ALEGRÍA
INTERNACIONAL
MAGAZINE NO. 21

XLIX
Fe y Alegría
INTERNACIONAL
CONGRESS
Challenges and
Opportunities for
Fe y Alegría
Popular Education



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Foreword

It is both a pleasure and an honor to share my reflections and admiration for Fe y Alegría in this foreword, following my participation in its 49th International Congress in Quito, Ecuador, in October 2024. A thoughtful and in-depth reading allowed me to truly experience the essence of the Congress, which is beautifully captured in this magazine. With humility and in deep alignment with our shared mission as works of the Society of Jesus, I offer my contributions.

In the first chapter of the Journal of the 49th Congress, the exceptionality and potential of Fe y Alegría emerge. It is exceptional for its 70 years of history, its scale, and, above all, its commitment to the vulnerable—the poor, those on the margins, and communities facing exclusion—always recognizing and valuing diversity while contextualizing its proposals. It is also exceptional for its ethical and political stance, firmly upholding the belief that learning is a right, not a privilege or a gift. This distinguishes the Movement from other philanthropic or religious efforts that view education for impoverished sectors as mere charity or welfare. It also sets Fe y Alegría apart from many state approaches, where education for marginalized communities is treated as a basic service—offering them less than the dominant sectors, expecting them to accept it without protest, and demanding compliance rather than empowerment. As General Coordinator Daniel Villanueva, S.J., aptly states, quoting founder José María Vélaz, S.J., it is about “acting for educational justice, understanding that this is a step towards structural justice.”

Its potential lies in its work across three interrelated levels. The first and most fundamental is the level of direct educational action, where its philosophy is continuously deepened through lived experience and reflection. The second is the regional or national level, where the goal is to influence public education policies—always grounded in firsthand experience and proven practices. The third is the global level, which seeks to mobilize the entire educational community, raising awareness about the right to learn and advocating for public policies that uphold this right.

Its potential also lies in its identity as a Movement. As such, it must embrace a framework broad enough to include and value its great diversity, yet clear and strong enough to provide a shared

inspiration, maintain coherence, and shape its identity. The elements of this common framework emerge in this chapter and throughout the processes before and during the Congress: the powerful vision of education as the right to learn and its holistic, integral approach. This holistic perspective considers the whole person—their needs, development, and well-being—placing them at the center of its work. It also extends beyond individuals to include entire educational communities, reaching beyond the four walls of classrooms and institutions. Equally essential are commitments to protecting our common home, fostering inclusion, respecting and celebrating diversity, and promoting care for life and peace.

At its core, Fe y Alegría envisions education as a transformative force, shaping individuals who can drive societal change toward greater social justice, peace, equality, democracy, and sustainability. This overarching framework defines the essential elements that must be present in every Fe y Alegría initiative while leaving room for innovative, context-specific solutions that drive meaningful transformation.

As a Movement, Fe y Alegría embraces continuous self-examination. It allows itself to be challenged—both by the pressing issues of the contemporary world and by the richness of its own internal diversity. This dynamism is also a key source of its strength.

There is nothing in the world quite like Fe y Alegría. Its uniqueness, potential, and ever-evolving nature give it a prophetic character—shaping not only its internal identity but also the way it is perceived beyond its own community.

In the second chapter, which explores the dialogue of knowledge in response to educational and social challenges, what stands out is the **culture of listening** that Fe y Alegría cultivates. This commitment to listening is reflected in the organization of the Congress as a process for generating collective thought. By listening to youth, learning communities, educators, and national coordination teams, Fe y Alegría shapes the substance of its educational work. Listening allows Fe y Alegría to define a central pillar of its mission: educational quality. Quality is what enables learning, and learning is the fundamental right the Movement seeks to uphold. This commitment to quality is inseparable from equity. It is offered without exclusions of any kind, requiring constant vigilance to ensure that external social inequalities do not infiltrate pedagogical spaces. Educational environments must not replicate socioeconomic gaps; instead, they must critically recognize and reject patriarchal, discriminatory, and racist attitudes. Positively, Fe y Alegría defines quality with equity by focusing on the whole person—acknowledging emotions, contextualizing curricula,

fostering dialogue rooted in empathy and openness, bridging the gap between theory and practice, and addressing the degradation of our common home. Educators play a key role in this process. Their ongoing, participatory training—accompanied by guidance and support—not only helps them grow as individuals and professionals but also equips them to navigate the pedagogical challenges that emerge. The dialogue of knowledge, expressed before, during, and after the Congress, should not be a one-time event but rather a permanent strategy embedded in every Fe y Alegría initiative.

In Chapter Three, *Mobilizing Actions*, we witness the power of Fe y Alegría—both in word and action—as a force for transformation. The Movement’s commitment lies in upholding the right to learn for society’s most marginalized, excluded, and vulnerable sectors. Every day, it works to fulfill this mission by providing children, youth, and adults with quality education that is both inclusive and equitable. But Fe y Alegría’s mission does not stop there. Precisely because it has proven that delivering quality education with equity to the excluded is possible, it has both the responsibility and the authority to speak out—to demand action from national governments. Its unique calling, now also embodied in the Global Campaign for the Right to Learn, is to shake the world’s education systems and push them to prioritize equity.

Fe y Alegría plays a crucial role in fostering the conviction—among governments and societies alike—that inclusive, high-quality education for the most vulnerable is not only necessary but transformative. It mobilizes individuals, communities, and institutions around the belief that prioritizing the education of those who have long been denied the right to learn—lifting the floor, providing more to those who have less—ultimately benefits everyone. Only in this way can education truly become a path to social justice.

Actions aimed at mobilizing governments and international organizations—such as those in the Campaign for the Right to Learn—require the active participation of the entire Fe y Alegría Movement. Students engage in local mobilizations, youth take the lead in the global campaign, educators document and systematize transformative pedagogical practices, and national teams reflect on effective models for their respective contexts. Meanwhile, national leaders within the Federative Assembly deliberate on global challenges, and at the international level, the Movement coordinates manifestos and concrete demonstrations that prove equitable, quality education is possible. These actions not only advocate for systemic change but also serve as powerful tools for educating in citizenship and social commitment, testing the transformative capacity of all involved. They take shape in learning communities where students, parents, teachers,

and school administrators collaborate; in pedagogical dialogue circles among educators; in discussion tables involving national teams; and in exchange forums for national leadership. These spaces are where Fe y Alegría strengthens its identity—both nationally and internationally—rooting its mission in liberation and transformation. Here, the holistic nature of popular education takes on meaning, embracing personal, community, and societal dimensions and reinforcing its role as an engine for change.

The final chapter offers a wealth of insights into the opportunities for Fe y Alegría to expand its influence and impact at all levels. It highlights areas for internal improvement, particularly the need to strengthen the foundation and coherence of its educational and pedagogical approaches. This can be achieved through systematic reflection, evaluation, and refinement—essential steps in redefining and re-grounding the Movement's model. At the same time, the areas identified for further exploration outline a path forward for intervention and inquiry. Internally, Fe y Alegría must continue enriching and deepening its approach to popular education. This includes not only understanding the communities it serves but also analyzing the forces that oppress them—the imposed ideologies, the intersecting and compounding inequalities they face, and the rights denied to them. Equally important are the educational actions that empower these communities: fostering critical consciousness, strengthening collective identity, and challenging the normalization of unjust realities. Another key focus is the construction of relationships that break away from the prevailing social norms—relationships that are rooted in respect for diversity, compassion, and the ethics of care. This perspective also demands an active response to suffering and its causes: inequality, poverty, environmental degradation and its consequences, classism, sexism, and racism. Now is the time to analyze how the fundamental principles of the Fe y Alegría model can be effectively applied across its diverse realities. These principles—integrality, quality, inclusion, equity, gender equality, interculturality, critical thinking, and a commitment to transformative action—must be woven seamlessly into every context in which the Movement operates.

Another major challenge within the Movement is the need to develop diverse and accessible ways to foster the continuous training of those who carry out and lead its educational work. These individuals must first educate and transform themselves in alignment with Fe y Alegría's core principles. From there, they must continuously refine their expertise in management, pedagogy, and community-building strategies—ensuring they can effectively engage students of all ages and adapt to various educational contexts. In this process, dialogue takes on a particularly vital role. Rooted in respect for knowledge and an appreciation of diversity, dialogue is a cornerstone of the

popular education method, reinforcing the Movement's commitment to collective learning and transformation.

One of the key opportunities highlighted in this chapter is the power of listening and participation—especially from youth. The richness of their vision and contributions, so evident in the chapter's account of previous work with them, have the potential to both challenge and enhance Fe y Alegría's educational model. As a result, young people take on a central role in its development. There is no reason why this immense potential should be limited to youth alone. The same transformative engagement can be fostered with children and adults alike, including national teams and coordinators, who have also demonstrated their capacity to contribute meaningfully. This potential deserves deeper exploration to further strengthen the Movement's participatory approach.

The need to address technological change also emerges as a significant opportunity. It cannot be ignored, nor can it be allowed to deepen inequities. The challenge lies in embracing its potential while critically examining its consequences—socio-emotional, cognitive, labor-related, environmental, economic, and social. Recognizing its ambivalence, Fe y Alegría must harness technology as a tool for inclusion and transformation while remaining vigilant about its broader implications.

Innovation is essential—there is no alternative in a world as dynamic as ours. Without innovation, there is no progress, yet not every innovation necessarily leads to better outcomes. That is why we must carefully design new approaches to achieving our goals, ensuring they are both relevant and effective. We must also respond to emerging marginalized sectors resulting from social and geopolitical shifts, such as migrant communities. Additionally, we must leverage technology to extend our reach—always ensuring that expansion does not come at the cost of quality.

Reflective pauses—such as those provided by this Congress—allow us to identify proposals and responses to the ever-evolving global challenges, with a particular focus on their impact on the most vulnerable. These reflections are grounded in an educational approach that seeks to empower and emancipate.

All of this is already present within Fe y Alegría. What remains is to articulate it more clearly, deepen certain aspects, and, in some cases, adjust our course to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness.

The Movement also has a significant opportunity to expand its reach. Fe y Alegría has much to offer the world, and this opportunity is already taking shape through the Campaign for the Right to Learn. The challenge now is to showcase, on a global scale, how equitable, inclusive, and high-quality education is not only possible but actively practiced—across diverse contexts and populations, always with respect for and appreciation of diversity. We must demonstrate to the world that the right to learn can be realized, even among the most vulnerable sectors, and that Fe y Alegría is a living testament to this possibility.

Alliances are key to this effort. Expanding Fe y Alegría's presence requires making its philosophy, mission, and achievements known across diverse spheres—academic, political, and multilateral. Strengthening networks and forging connections with like-minded organizations, both within the Society of Jesus and externally, will amplify its impact. Collaborations with international organizations and agencies—such as UNESCO and UNICEF—will further enhance its growing global presence. Governments and societies must come to recognize what Fe y Alegría has to offer. Building these strategic alliances will not only strengthen the Movement but also help position it as a vital force in shaping inclusive, quality education worldwide.

As for me, I hope this collective reflection within the Movement serves as both an inspiration and a catalyst for your daily efforts to uphold the Right to Learn.

Sylvia Schmelkes Del Valle

Introduction

Background

The Fe y Alegría International Congress is a pivotal moment for the Movement—an opportunity to build collective thought, strengthen identity, foster connections, and develop new responses to evolving contexts. Held approximately every two years, these Congresses serve as a privileged space for reflection, bringing together participants from around the world to engage in deep discussions on key themes and processes that shape Fe y Alegría as an international movement.

The following table presents the themes addressed over the past 12 years.

Fe y Alegría Congresses since 2012		
2012	Bolivia	43rd. Inclusive Education in the Fe y Alegría Mission
2013	Brazil	44th. Inclusive Education in the Fe y Alegría Mission
2014	Nicaragua	International Innovation Symposium
2015	Colombia	45th. Youth Cultures, Citizenship and Peace
2016	Peru	46th. Education, Citizenship, A Culture of Peace and Young People
2018	Spain	47th. Educating on the Frontiers
2021	Colombia	48th. Educators of Fe y Alegría in the New Frontiers

The 48th International Congress of Fe y Alegría held in Bogotá - Colombia in 2021, aimed to promote among educators the reflection on the new challenges of Popular Education in the 21st century, to enhance their role as subjects of transformation and generate the creation of a network that enables the work and the generation of collaborative knowledge. Reflection at the Congress revolved around three thematic focuses:

- Challenges and new frontiers of Popular Education in the 21st century.
- The role of the educator in the new frontiers of Popular Education in the 21st century.
- The need for networking in these new frontiers of Popular Education.

It was the first International Congress under the hybrid modality, virtual for most of the countries, whose representatives could not travel due to the restrictions of the pandemic and hold face-to-face conversations with the members of the educational community of Fe y Alegría Colombia.

Objectives and methodology of the Congress

At the General Assembly of the Federation, held in Sao Paulo, Brazil in October 2022, it was agreed that the 2024 Congress would take place in Fe y Alegría Ecuador, as part of its 60th-anniversary celebration. The Assembly also requested that the Congress be closely linked to the design and implementation of the Federative Public Action Campaign on the Right to Learn.¹

Subject

Building on the themes and reflections from the 48th Congress, as well as the challenges that emerged in the aftermath of the pandemic, the chosen theme was Challenges and Opportunities for Fe y Alegría's Popular Education in the Current International Context.

Target

To reflect on the challenges of Popular Education, deepen pedagogical approaches and educational practices, and generate mobilizing actions that enable the development of educational projects that guarantee the right to learn—continuing to transform dreams of social change into reality.

Modality and schedule

A work dynamic was established before, during and after the Congress.

¹ Fe y Alegría Extraordinary Assembly. Sao Paulo, Brazil

[ES ACTA OFICIAL Asamblea Extraordinaria v.2022-12-01.docx.pdf](#)

Pre-congress:

Virtual modality, work within the country and the creation of spaces for exchange between countries.

Congress:

Hybrid modality, face-to-face in Quito - Ecuador, with live broadcasting spaces (two to three channels) and virtual participation on the platform.

Post congress:

Virtual modality with a closing at the March 2025 Assembly

Schedule

Pre-Congress	Congress	Post-Congress
October 2023 August 2024	October 2024	November 2024 March 2025



Working Groups

The 2023-2025 Congress Commission, after analyzing and debating the Assembly's mandate for the 2024 Congress, organized the reflection into four thematic working groups: Learning, Pedagogy, Education and Global Education Challenges.

Learning

This working group brings together the educational community—especially students—to reflect on the right to learn. The roundtable dialogue focuses on the learner as the central subject of this right, emphasizing the belief that learning extends beyond educational institutions and structures. Key aspects of the discussion include the sufficiency and relevance of learning within teaching processes and how they contribute to both individual and social transformation. Another crucial focus is the analysis of the conditions in Fe y Alegría's contexts, ensuring they are favorable, relevant, and equitable to support integral, inclusive, and high-quality learning.

Pedagogy

Transformative pedagogies serve as the foundation for all educational action within the Movement. Reflecting on the challenges

of Popular Education through a pedagogical lens requires a dual approach: first, by examining contextualized and diverse practices within the framework of the Movement's mission and vision, and second, by drawing from other pedagogical models designed to address education in contexts of poverty and exclusion. This reflection involves identifying key pedagogical challenges and analyzing the transformative pedagogical practices currently being implemented across Fe y Alegría schools—practices that are proving relevant and impactful in advancing the right to learn.

Education

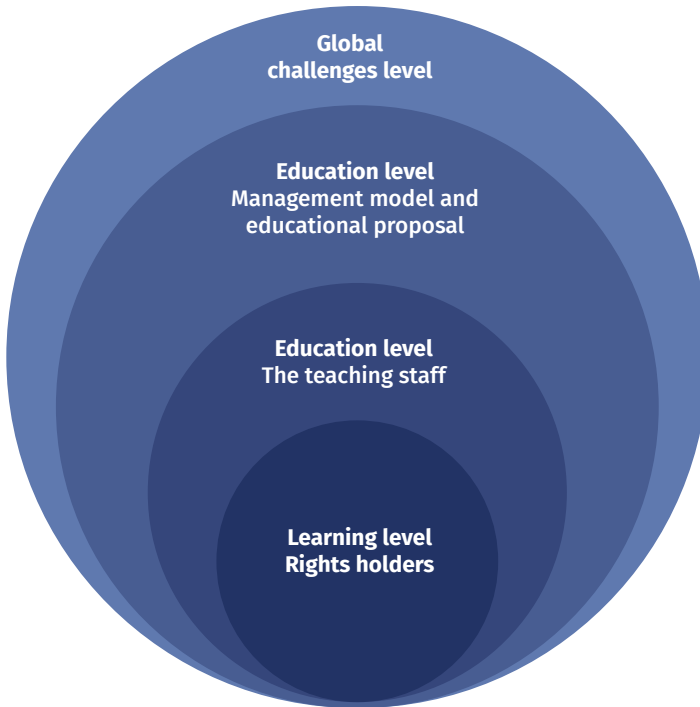
In today's context, education invites us to rethink its purpose by asking fundamental questions: Why do we educate? What kind of education do we need, and for what kind of society? What should we teach today, considering the flexibility of educational processes? These changes cannot remain in discourse alone; they must be translated into concrete, visible practices that continue turning the dreams of social transformation into reality. This requires identifying educational models that effectively respond to diverse realities, ensuring they are relevant and adaptable to the specific demands of each context.

Global education challenges

Fe y Alegría analyzes, identifies, and discusses global educational challenges and trends through the lens of Popular and Intercultural Education as a tool for social transformation. It engages in collective reflection on educational strategies and approaches that drive meaningful action—mobilizing comprehensive and coordinated responses to close educational gaps and strengthen the impact of the Movement.

Areas of Impact

The Congress aims to engage various stakeholders within the Fe y Alegría Movement in a collective reflection, fostering advocacy and seeking new solutions across all areas of action.



Global Challenges Level - National Directorates and representatives

Education Level - Management Model and Educational Proposal - Educational Coordination and National Teams

Pedagogical level - Center directors, pedagogical assistants and the teaching staff

Level of Learning - Entitled students, families, educational community

Methodology

Being a Movement means continuously questioning, remaining open to change, and constantly seeking new responses to emerging challenges. With this in mind, throughout the different stages of the Congress, we propose the following methodology for each thematic table: analyzing reality, engaging in knowledge dialogue, and identifying mobilizing actions.

Reality Analysis	Engaging in Knowledge Dialogue	Actions that mobilize us towards transformation
<p>Observe and analyze the reality and environment in which educators develop their practice.</p> <p>To know and understand the actors involved.</p> <p>Reflection of our practice:</p> <p>Do our practices as educators respond to the needs of the context? Do our practices help to interpret and transform it? Are our practices alien to reality? Do they reproduce inequalities?.</p>	<p>Dialogue from practice with other theoretical and practical references to reflect, deepen and contrast one's own knowledge with other knowledges.</p> <p>Reflect and confront between what people did, were, knew and new things.</p> <p>Contrast with what other colleagues, authors, theories or experiences think.</p> <p>Reconstruct our own conceptions and implications.</p>	<p>This organizational phase is essential for grounding and translating into action what has been contextualized, analyzed, and deepened through dialogue.</p> <p>Reflection towards action:</p> <p>What should I change or improve? What should I enhance? How can I improve my practice?</p> <p>This is the moment of decision making in the design of improvement plans, both personal and collective, linked to educational practice, individual growth and the exercise of citizenship.</p>

Methodological guides

Working Group 1 - Right to learn

Guide 1. This work guide analyzes the global challenges of Popular Education, linking the right to learn with other fundamental human rights. It highlights the creation of Communities for the Right to Learn (CDA is its acronym in Spanish) to promote mobilization in educational centers, with a focus on emergency and early childhood education to ensure social equity.

Working Group 2 - Transformative pedagogical practices

Guide 2. The guide analyzes the pedagogical challenges of Fe y Alegría's Popular Education in the current context, proposes activities for the identification of transformative pedagogical practices. It discusses how the Congress will advance reflection on educational and pedagogical practices, with special emphasis on educational rights and pedagogical quality in vulnerable contexts.

Working Group 3 - Education

Guide 3. The dynamics of the third guide leads the national teams to analyze educational models and their impact on social transformation. During the development of the guide, educational proposals are evaluated to ensure that they promote sustainable scenarios of equality and social justice. The main objective is to integrate a holistic educational proposal, analyzing the comprehensive training of educators and students, and to strengthen the educational identity of the Movement.

Working Group 4 - Global Education Challenges

Guide 4.- In this working group, the global challenges of education are analyzed based on presentations by experts in the field. Dialogue is generated between national directorates, country delegates and invited representatives of networks of the Society of Jesus.



Chapter I.

Opening of the Congress

Fe y Alegría Ecuador welcomed us to the Congress with an artistic ensemble prepared by the students of the Theater and Mime Group “**Trompos y Garabatos**”, revisiting the beginnings of Fe y Alegría almost 70 years ago:

“A spark that started a fire, was what caused the union of hearts and a tireless initiative. Father José Velaz tells us his trajectory and message about the creation of Fe y Alegría in the world, through time, and the innocence of a humble girl, who travels a path that will be fundamental to achieve a dream that will unite Fe y Alegría across continents”.

The texts we share in this section are more than just a few words to formally open the Congress, they are the recognition of the meeting of Fe y Alegría as an international family and an important part of the Society of Jesus in the universal mission. We thank Carlos Vargas, National Director of Fe y Alegría Ecuador; Daniel Ycaza S.J., Provincial of the Society of Jesus in Ecuador; José Alberto Mesa S.J., Secretary of Secondary and Pre-secondary Education of the Society of Jesus in Rome and Daniel Villanueva S.J., General Coordinator of the International Federation of Fe y Alegría, for their appreciation of the work of Fe y Alegría and especially the reason that brings us together.

They remind us that in these times, when reality is constantly challenging us, it is necessary to remain firm in our option for a Popular Education and Social Promotion next to those who most need a quality educational service. Therefore, they rescue the reflective and participatory nature of this Congress in the search for alternatives and

answers that allow us to adapt to the challenges posed by the defense of education and learning as fundamental rights for the construction of a more just and humane society.

1.1 Welcome Remarks

Carlos Vargas.

National Director, Fe y Alegría Ecuador.

Dear family of **Fe y Alegría**, friends, companions on the road, how good it is to meet in a common space and at a time when humanity is facing profound and radical transformations, a world where “the development of intellectual power, knowledge and technological skills go on the one hand, and wisdom, spirituality and ethics on the other” (F. Capra 2006).

How meaningful it is that our stories of encounter, as a Movement of Popular Education, are rooted in our missionary interdependence—an interdependence that embraces our shared spiritual heritage and calls us to recognize ourselves at the margins of our societies. It is here that we understand ourselves as compassionate women and men, committed to serving those most in need and prophetically insisting on building a Common Home for humanity—beyond races, borders, and creeds. This has been our mission for 70 years, a path we continue to trace with unwavering dedication.

For Fe y Alegría Ecuador, holding the Congress alongside its 60th anniversary is a reaffirmation that Popular Education is the way forward. It equips individuals, communities, and nations not merely to adapt to change, but to actively shape it—guiding transformation toward a vision where another world is possible. A world in which human and environmental rights, inclusion, respect for diversity, care for life, and peace are upheld. This is an education that goes beyond merely training technicians for the labor market—a common focus of many educational models. Instead, it seeks to form professionals who, in line with Adela Cortina’s (2013) conception, contribute to a free, ethical, and deeply democratic society.

With an open and hopeful perspective, we recognize that the essence of Fe y Alegría as a Movement is rooted in Popular Education—shaped by its ethical, political, pedagogical, and epistemological principles. It is through these foundations that its identity and mission are reflected, sustained by ongoing collective discernment. As an educational Movement, we embrace a committed, militant stance in favor of social transformation.

The preparation for this Congress spanned over ten months of work across 22 participating countries, ensuring a comprehensive approach to the challenges and opportunities ahead. To facilitate deep and structured reflection, four discussion tables were organized: Right to Learn; Challenges and Transformative Pedagogical Praxis in Fe y Alegría; Educational Model or Proposal; and Popular Education and Global Challenges.

These spaces fostered the creation of communities dedicated to critically reflecting on learning. Educators and pedagogical companions engaged in dialogue circles to identify challenges, explore transformative pedagogical practices, analyze educational models that promote social justice and equality, and address global challenges while working to reduce educational gaps. The active participation of the entire Fe y Alegría network in the Pre-Congress was vital, bringing together diverse voices and perspectives.

This gathering became a space for collaboration, where concrete actions were designed to strengthen educational projects that guarantee the right to education and learning—driving social transformation forward.

We have worked toward this new reality—one that can only be achieved through shared values, the recognition of human rights, and a steadfast commitment to quality education that shapes and influences the educational policies of our communities. Once again, we reaffirm our dedication to an education that nurtures the heart for freedom and justice.

With this spirit, we warmly welcome you to our 49th Congress. May your time here be enriching, and may our collective work continue to inspire transformation.

Thank you very much.

1.2 Educating by humanizing the heart for freedom and justice

Fr. Daniel Ycaza S.J.

Provincial of the Society of Jesus in Ecuador.

Dear friends, members of the International Federation of Fe y Alegría, esteemed guests, and educators following this broadcast,

With great joy, we extend a warm welcome to this space of encounter, reflection, and commitment. The Society of Jesus in Ecuador, faithful to its mission of accompanying and serving the most vulnerable, stands in deep solidarity with Fe y Alegría. This Movement shares our mission of bringing hope and building a better future through education.

Education has always been, and remains, one of the fundamental pillars of the Society of Jesus. We firmly believe that only through quality, inclusive, and transformative education can we drive profound change in our society. This is precisely where Fe y Alegría shines—promoting a Popular Education that goes beyond mere instruction, shaping individuals who are not only knowledgeable but deeply committed to justice and equity.

In today's Ecuador, the presence of Fe y Alegría is more relevant than ever. We face social, economic, and political challenges that demand bold and collective responses. The Apostolic Plan of the Society of Jesus in Ecuador calls us to renew our commitment to the excluded and vulnerable, accompanying them in the construction of integral life projects. Fe y Alegría answers this call by driving social transformation from the ground up—reaching the most disadvantaged communities and equipping them with the tools to shape their own futures.

Today, we reaffirm our commitment to walk this path together. Fe y Alegría stands as a living testament that education is not a privilege, but a fundamental right. Thank you for being part of this collective effort, for your dedication, and for continuing to believe that another world is possible.

Welcome to Ecuador! May this meeting strengthen our unity and our commitment to justice, reconciliation and hope.

Thank you very much.

1.3 Fe y Alegría is at the apostolic heart of the Society of Jesus

Fr. José Alberto Mesa S.J.

Secretary of Lower and Upper Secondary Education.

Society of Jesus

Dear friends,

It is with great joy that I take part in this Congress. Fe y Alegría lies at the apostolic heart of the Society of Jesus. Through your dedication and hard work, you bring the Gospel to life in countless places where no other presence exists—among vulnerable communities with limited resources, offering them hope and opportunity.

I also share in the joy of Fe y Alegría Ecuador as it celebrates its 60th anniversary—congratulations! Your unwavering commitment and service inspire us all.

One of the defining characteristics of Jesuit education throughout history is that it does not allow us to rest on past achievements, present successes, or even our future plans. Instead, it keeps us alert, unsettled in the best way possible, with eyes wide open to recognize how God continues to act in the world around us. It challenges us to reimagine what quality education means today—an education that, by necessity, must evolve beyond the quality education of the past.

The Congress we begin today, in keeping with this tradition, seeks to reflect on the meaning, challenges, and possibilities of Popular Education in today's world. It is a clear sign that we remain vigilant, fully aware that discernment in education is an ongoing process—one that cannot and must not stop.

My presence here, as Secretary of Education of the Society of Jesus, is not only a way to express the support and commitment of the Universal Society to Fe y Alegría—a mission that stands at the very heart of our apostolic work—but also a testimony to the call we receive in today's contexts. As the last General Congregations and our General Superiors have emphasized, we are called to work as a universal body with a universal mission. This means that, with our diverse educational models and approaches, we must collaborate, united in the conviction that together we can better serve the Church and the societies to which we are sent.

In this field, we have made significant progress. I know that in many provinces, Fe y Alegría works as an apostolic partner alongside other educational initiatives of the Society, strengthening us all. This collaboration not only enhances our mission but also enables us to be true witnesses of justice and reconciliation—a mission that the Society of Jesus embraces today in a world that is increasingly divided and polarized.

The challenges and opportunities of Popular Education, Jesuit education, and education in general are vast—at times, they may even seem impossible given our limited resources. Yet, together, we can go further, advancing toward a quality education that truly opens pathways to a more just, fraternal, and equitable world.

The challenges are immense, but as people of faith, we know that we do not walk this path alone—God accompanies us every step of the way.

Thank you very much and let us continue working together.

1.4 Opening Remarks

Fr. Daniel Villanueva S.J.

General Coordinator

International Federation of Fe y Alegría.

Dear Fe y Alegría family,

It is truly moving to be here with you today. From the very start, I want to extend a special acknowledgment to the Jesuit Province of Ecuador and our dear Fe y Alegría Ecuador, which has welcomed us so warmly and dedicated immense effort to organizing this Congress. Chino, Geo, the Congress Commission, and the entire organizing team—please stand and receive this well-deserved round of applause!

Pope Francis reminds us that authentic faith always carries a deep desire to transform the world. And I have no doubt that this is true—Fe y Alegría's faith is what drives us forward, pushing us toward the horizon of educational justice, where equal learning opportunities become a reality for all.

Our founder, José María Vélaz, S.J., reminded us that this is the first and unavoidable step toward social and structural justice.

And so, for nearly 70 years, we have journeyed forward as a Movement of Popular Education, carrying the same conviction that inspired our beginnings—yet with a renewed dynamism. This is the essence of being a Movement: we believe and experience that the Spirit speaks—as Vélaz once said—in the jungle, in the workshops, in the books... in every context, person, community, and educational process. For this reason, only through dialogue, intercultural exchange, and collective construction can we discern our calling and shape our responses. Being a Movement means embracing a deep attitude of listening, allowing ourselves to be challenged, to be moved by an ever-changing reality, and to remain in constant search of new answers to the challenges before us. This is precisely what brings us here to Quito today.

The Congresses are, by excellence, the space where, every two years, the Movement reflects, formulates, learns, and envisions the future. We begin with practice, engage in deep reflection, and then return to practice—transforming it. This continuous cycle is how Fe y Alegría renews itself. That is why we are here: to collectively build a reflection on our practice, commitments, and transformative action through education.

If you recall, our previous Congress was held in Colombia, in the midst of the pandemic, when we raised our voices to denounce the global educational emergency. At that moment, our focus was on educators, recognizing them as agents of social transformation as they responded to the new frontiers of exclusion.

This time, in Quito, we come together to reflect on the challenges of Popular Education on a global scale, the pedagogical responses emerging in different countries, and the ongoing challenge of implementing Popular Education in diverse contexts. This includes the critical task of expanding transformative educational proposals beyond Latin America. Our goal is to build an educational model that is equitable, inclusive, and high-quality—one that creates opportunities, bridges gaps, and fosters lifelong learning. The question of how to achieve this in each unique context is what drives our Movement forward. It has sparked an unprecedented dialogue—a global conversation rooted in local experiences and processes—which has now brought us together at the start of this Congress.

Notice that we are learning to dialogue better and better as a Movement, and the articulation of this exercise of international discernment is something relevant in our history. The preparation of this congress has taught us to listen, weave and formulate from the class-

room level to international spaces such as the one we are inaugurating today. This methodology, innovative, participatory, narrative and identity building from our local roots of educational work, is already one of the first results of this congress.

It is easy to say, in the last year we have been working and generating the inputs for this Congress:

- 78 learning communities with 763 participants (students, families, teachers).
- 74 pedagogical dialogue circles with the participation of 173 educational institutions.
- 515 educators, and pedagogical assistants.
- 3,685 young people from 11 countries in 57 learning communities in the Generation 21 Global Campaign.

And our teaching teams, national teams and 22 national directorates.

This is how the voice of Fe y Alegría is built; this is how our Movement expresses itself.

Thanks to each one of you.

It has taken many months of work, conversations, exchanges of knowledge, synthesis and systematization to reach this moment. How far will the ingenuity, the illusion and the yearnings of these days be able to fly? Here are some of the clarifications received:

- We reaffirm the importance of putting each person at the center of education, empowered for its transformation and denouncing the gaps in access to quality learning.
- It is urgent to accompany young people and women in non-formal education and community development, promoting their lifelong learning, encouraging their participation in public life, work and advocacy networks.
- We must continue to improve our educational model with a focus on quality, equity, inclusion and sustainability, adapted to the contexts and caring for people and the environment.

- We need to continue forming teams with a pedagogical vocation and a transforming vision based on Popular Education.
- It is crucial to strengthen collaboration, the exchange of experiences and strategic alliances to ensure the sustainability of our mission.
- Our collaboration with the State is fundamental to guarantee the right to quality education and to influence educational policies, sharing our transformative experiences.
- We feel a deep call to collaborate with greater audacity as a Church Movement, together with the various congregations that are the 'spiritual mine' and the source of the wealth of charisms that nourish Fe y Alegría.
- We need to continue to promote and facilitate the active participation of educational communities. Our growing diversity cannot be an obstacle but an enormous opportunity. This is part of our prophecy.

The fact that Fe y Alegría exists (and is articulated in a meaningful way) is a provocation. It is a prophecy. It is possible to understand each other, it is possible to work together for dignity with the peoples and communities in favor of education as a public good and it is possible to organize ourselves to do it from the neighborhoods and communities to the international scale and to do it from a deep sense of educational justice.

We firmly believe that the Spirit is expressed in this Church Movement, missionary, synodal and diverse. It is a living movement that channels the clamor of hundreds of thousands of people who dream and work in this shared mission. That is why dialogue and joint construction are our main tools to project the future.

We are witnesses to the transformative power of Fe y Alegría. We see it every day in our classrooms and educational programs. This is why hope is our language. A hope that, as Paulo Freire would say, is an act of love and courage—a hope that is not passive but an active force that engages with the world to transform it. A Christian hope that, as Jürgen Moltmann (2006) pointed out, has had revolutionary effects throughout history. It is a political hope, one that creates tension, drives change, and demands justice. A hope that—as Han Kang, winner of the 2024 Nobel Prize in Literature, beautifully expresses—flourishes in fragility and sets us on the path to renewal.

Our Movement is a space of hope, an opening to the newness of God that Isaiah speaks of: “Behold, I am about to do a new thing; soon it will come to light; do you not feel it? Again, I will make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.”

Comrades, let us dare—just as Vélaz urged us. Let us dare to stand at the frontiers, to accompany, to listen, and to learn. Let us foster dialogue and hope, and together, let us discover the power that arises when someone recognizes themselves as a subject—capable of transforming their own history and contributing to our shared future.

May the indignation that fuels us in the face of marginalization and exclusion be transformed into prophetic hope for the thousands of people who make up this Movement. May our commitment to educational justice translate into concrete actions that drive radical transformations—ones that awaken active citizenship and empower communities in the most humanizing way possible.

We are heirs to the great hopes of Vélaz—and as he reminded us: “It is a requirement of our own identity, as a Movement, to engage in permanent self-examination, in continuous renewal, so that we may live our commitment to the most vulnerable with ever greater coherence and fidelity.” That is precisely what we are doing here today.

Without further ado, and on behalf of the entire Fe y Alegría Movement, I declare this Congress open. I invite all participants—both present and remote—to fully commit to these two days of reflection, learning, and collaboration, so that together we may clarify, reimagine, and project our shared mission into the future.





Chapter II.

Dialogue of knowledge on educational and social challenges

One of the key objectives of this Congress was to identify the challenges of Popular Education. To achieve this, the Movement fostered a Dialogue of Knowledge among diverse actors, considering perspectives on learning, pedagogy, educational management, and the global landscape of education. We asked ourselves: What learning gaps are we identifying? What challenges are pushing us to improve our pedagogical and educational approaches, both in formal and non-formal settings? The compilation of challenges—analyzed before and during the Congress—is presented here as a result of this collective reflection.

2.1 Challenges in the Right to Learn

Prior to the Congress
(see more)

In this working group, 78 Learning Communities were formed, bringing together 763 participants -students, parents and teachers-. They analyzed the gaps within their own contexts that hinder the guarantee of quality learning for all, across all stages of life. These locally identified gaps contributed valuable insights to the broader dialogue on the challenges facing Popular Education.

Multiple gaps affecting the right to learn were identified, including lack of pedagogical resources, gender inequality, exclusion of vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities, people with disabilities and women in disadvantaged socioeconomic contexts.

- **Inequality:** Significant gaps persist in access to quality education, related to socioeconomic, geographic and cultural factors.
- **Lack of resources:** Many schools lack the necessary resources to provide quality education, such as teaching materials, technology and trained personnel.
- **Teacher training:** Continuous and updated teacher training is required to meet the challenges of contemporary education.
- **Adverse contexts:** Adverse social and economic contexts, such as poverty, violence and migration, negatively affect the learning process.
- **Exclusion:** Not all students feel included in the educational system, especially those with special educational needs or those belonging to minority groups.
- **Relevance of learning:** Learning is not always relevant to students' lives and to the world of work.
- **Assessment:** Assessment systems are often rigid and do not consider the diversity of students and their learning styles.

In the reflection of this same working group, the Youth Initiative developed a process of dialogue of knowledge on the challenges of learning through a Global Campaign. Fifty-seven Learning Communities were formed and 3,685 young people from all over the Movement participated. They identified the following challenges:

- Learning as a human right, recognizing learning not only as a right, but also as a tool for personal development, overcoming poverty and strengthening democracy.
- Connect the teaching and learning process with real life. The content of the subjects must be applied to real, everyday contexts.
- Young people demand an education system that respects their pace and diversity; an education at a human pace, rejecting unnecessary acceleration, prioritizing compre-

hensive learning that fosters critical thinking, creativity and active participation.

- Conscious use of technology. Use it as a complementary tool, without displacing human interaction.
- Include environmental justice as part of the educational curriculum to develop critical awareness and promote impactful actions in their communities.
- A transformative education that prioritizes gender equality, inclusion and coeducation.
- Shift the focus of educational assessment to continuous feedback that values each student's effort and abilities. Beyond grades, assessments should reflect understanding and authenticity, not just numerical results.

During the congress

Three experiences of Learning Communities were presented: Fe y Alegría Peru from the perspective of youth, Fe y Alegría Italy from the perspective of Adult Education in Migration and Fe y Alegría Dominican Republic from the perspective of children at the Primary level. A synthesis of the main learning gaps and the challenges identified is presented.

María Teresa Izquierdo Rojas

General Coordinator of Identity and Mission

Fe y Alegría Peru

In the implementation of the Communities for the Right to Learn, youth at the secondary level identified the following gaps for quality learning:

- Internet access, and digital education.
- Gap in the balance between theory and practice; sometimes young people feel that the emphasis is on theory, which is why it is necessary to generate a dynamic and diversified education.
- Absence of the State to provide solutions to sensitive community problems.

- Youth protagonism that requires adolescents and young people to be the protagonists of their own development.
- Mental health, which, if not adequately treated, is further aggravated, especially in situations of violence.
- Teacher training gap, students feel it is important for their teachers to be prepared.

The challenges they identify are:

- Relevant teacher training implemented in the teaching-learning process.
- Incorporation of learning communities as part of the institutional educational project.
- Generating bonds of understanding with other areas aimed at working with young people.
- Promote the interest and presence of alumni and alumnae.

Dayanara Medina

History and Entrepreneurship and Management Teacher

Fe y Alegría Italy

During the development of the Learning Communities, the participants identified as a challenge: “Coping with the socioemotional stress of the migration process”, within the framework of the right to learn in the context of Fe y Alegría Italy. The students are adult migrants who, thanks to the Andres Bello agreement, are awarded a bachelor’s degree that enables them to enter Italian universities. They work on emotional intelligence issues, mainly on how to perceive, manage, understand and use emotions. The learning gaps identified in the education of adults in a situation of migration are as follows:

- The time elapsed to resume studie.
- Reading and writing gap and language learning.
- Digital divide.
- Gap between the theory taught and the little practice in learning.

- Gap on the lack of concentration in studies due to socioemotional problems as a consequence of worrying about economic, housing, work, etc. problems.

Faced with this last gap, they have identified the challenge of working with students on issues of emotional intelligence, because along with academic skills, it has become important to develop soft and emotional skills. They have also identified the challenge of management and collaborative work to make this possible: a joint work between the psychology and pastoral areas, through administrative, psycho-educational and cultural and social integration strategies.

Sonia Adames

Pedagogy Coordinator

Fe y Alegría Dominican Republic

The learning communities, revitalized by youth networks, encouraged the participation of children and adolescents, allowing their voices to be heard, their presence to be recognized, and their empowerment in their right to learn. Within these communities, the guide was adapted to effectively engage primary school children in the process.

The reflection shifted from the right to education to the right to learning, recognizing it as a fundamental right rooted in inclusion, values-based educa-

tion, and contextual awareness. This approach aims to ensure that children, adolescents, and young people receive an education that fosters a more equitable and humane world. Within this framework, the identified gaps are:

- Gender inequality.
- Lack of attention to vulnerable people.
- Limited access to resources.
- Low quality of education as evidenced by poor results.

Challenges identified to work on:

- Need for equitable and inclusive education, promotion of attention to diversity and access to adequate resources.
- Implement playful strategies and integrate ICTs in the learning process.
- Work on ethical values and the development of soft skills for life, for the culture of peace and the reduction of violence.
- Environmental competencies.

2.2 Pedagogical challenges

Prior to the Congress

(see more)

The main objective of the round table “transformative pedagogical praxis” was to identify and analyze the current pedagogical challenges and the response of the transformative pedagogical praxis of Fe y Alegría, so it was necessary to ensure contributions from different actors in each of the Fe y Alegría: teachers, directors of centers, educational leaders, community leaders, representatives of different educational programs (formal and non-formal), social promotion, community development, others.

The five common pedagogical challenges in the Movement’s pedagogical action are:

- First, equitable, inclusive and quality learning. It continues to be a priority challenge for us to ensure that the learning of rights holders living in vulnerable socioeconomic conditions and at risk is provided with differentiated attention to their needs, inclusive in every process and of quality from a rights-based approach.
- Second, the recovery of basic and fundamental

learning. Investing time, resources, dedication, strategies and networking so that populations that have fallen behind in their education can recover basic and fundamental learning.

- Third, the integration of the “care approach” in learning. This approach leads us to innovate processes that integrate the socio-emotional aspect, care and coexistence from gender equity, citizenship education and learning to care for our Common Home.
- Fourth, digital education. As educators, it is a challenge to prepare ourselves in the use of technology, networks and artificial intelligence. The pedagogical approach based on values is key to digital education.
- Fifth, training and pedagogical accompaniment from the Popular Education approach. We note that we need to have updated pedagogical training, pedagogical accompaniment and learning communities to better respond to the challenges at hand and to ensure the

learning of students living in exclusion, marginalization and vulnerability.

During the congress

The different presentations generated reflection on the pedagogical challenges and during the dialogue of questions, some topics of interest were highlighted.

- Comprehensive education with equity for all of our students. How do these issues permeate our work? We have a huge problem of inequality; how much do we reproduce these inequalities within our schools? Are we serving these populations or are we leaving them behind? What are we doing for equity in each of our schools?
- From the pedagogical point of view, an important element to achieve is to teach how to learn to learn, to discover the pleasure of learning. This will make us lifelong learners. The human being is at the center of three circles: what I know that I know, what I know that I don't know, what I don't know that I don't know... education consists of going through these circles.
- In relation to the curriculum, it should not become a prescriptive tool, but think much more about curricular contextualization. The nature of the curriculum should be contextualized, not limited to the contents to be fulfilled, but following the needs of the students.
- Regarding the approach of intersectionality in pedagogy, it is important first to recognize it, to assume it, to know what happens with boys, girls, adults, nature... In this assumption, to be able to articulate what these understandings together mean in a classroom. To recognize that there is not only one inequality, but that they intersect and intersect in the life of each student who attends the school. Racism and patriarchy sneak in very easily, these prejudices get into the school and without realizing it we are reproducing them in them, that is why it is necessary the continuous

analysis from the perspective of intersectionality and interculturality.

- We ask ourselves, how do we connect, link ourselves to the subjects? In the classroom, we talk about dialogue, empathy, openness, especially when we work with the initial, primary and secondary levels. There are many didactic recipes, but it is important to keep in mind the encounter of the gaze, the encounter with the other.
- Challenges for students to access decent employment and their relationship with technology. Popular Education has to train them in the understanding of work, both individual and collective. Critical training processes are necessary about what these technologies imply and how they transform the labor market. To train students with the necessary tools to invent new ways of working, taking advantage of the oppor-

tunities offered by new technologies and minimizing their risks.

- We must not forget that students are also epistemic subjects, that they have valid knowledge, some of which is common sense, others are contradictory, but we must work with this in each educational space. We have epistemic subjects to whom we must give a place.
- Critical pedagogies and Artificial Intelligence (AI), recognizing that there is a mutual contribution. To discover the possibilities it offers us, not to deny it, not to prohibit it. Technology takes our lives and sometimes we do not realize it. How do we take something that is dehumanizing us to look at it critically? To be able to know what happens to us with this. We cannot deny it but look at it as critically as possible.

2.3 Educational challenges

Pre-Congress (see more)

The third working group on the pre-congress: “Educational models or educational proposals in the key of Popular Education” was focused on generating reflection on the educational models or pedagogical proposals that we have, analyzing their relevance and their impact on social transformation. With a view to defining and consolidating our educational models and based on our findings, the following challenges for the Movement were proposed:

- To have an educational model or proposal -international and national- in which the Movement's identity is concretized, is innovative and makes visible the focus on quality, inclusion, pertinence, equity and the right to learn; in addition to contemplating institutional policies based on the Movement's needs, without losing sight of the care of the person and the Common Home.
- Leadership from the teams from the Popular Education approach. Having these teams prepared guarantees the progress of the educational model or proposal in the countries. An important emphasis in their leadership is the construction of an organizational culture, exercising decision making and consensus in a more collaborative environment, assuming diversity as a richness.
- Personnel development. Contemplate training in the different dimensions at the personal and professional levels, forming leaders with programs that can prepare them to assume roles in different instances of the Movement.
- Strengthening of networks. Weave strategic alliances with state entities and civil society for the sustainability of Fe y Alegría's processes. Maintain the link with the State through the Ministries of Education to raise awareness about investment in education and contribute to the strengthening of public policies.
- Empowerment of educational communities. In the emancipatory and liberating educational model or proposal, their training and empowerment for active participation in society is a challenge.

- Care of the person. The promotion of actions for the care referred to students as subjects of rights; with educators to consider the coherence between discourse and practice that allows strengthening more horizontal relationships, rebuilding trust and a good coexistence.

The countries prioritized educational challenges according to their reality and context.

- Equality and equity in education.
- Right to education.
- To be centers of educational and social transformation.
- Caring for the Common Home. Knowledge and learning in the transformation of the future of humanity and the planet.



During the Congress

On the second day of the Congress, the working groups focused their reflections on educational models and the impact of our educational actions. Their discussions incorporated valuable insights from various sources, including the paper on critical pedagogies, presentations on learning communities, studies on youth and learning, and papers addressing equity, inclusion, and interculturality in education. The dialogue also explored the challenges of education in Africa and the development of an international pedagogical framework. Through these discussions, the groups identified essential elements that define our Popular Education models.

2.4 Global Education Challenges

Prior to the Congress

In working group 4, during the Panama Assembly in March 2024, the global challenges of education were discussed from the perspective of Popular Education and social transformation. To energize this dialogue, experts were invited such as Sylvia Schmelkes, who highlighted educational inequity and the role of Fe y Alegría in promoting an inclusive education, Nelsy Lizarazo, who stressed the importance of advocacy and state funding, and Jairo Cifuentes, who spoke about the Global Education Pact and its focus on social justice. Work was carried out with national directorates, delegates and guests. This dialogue sought to find assertive proposals to close educational gaps and improve the quality of education through comprehensive and articulated responses.

Based on the dialogue between directors, delegates and guests from different works, three main themes were identified:

- Educational problems: Educational gaps, inequalities, population outside the educational system, school dropouts, illiteracy.

- Social issues: socio-emotional, violence, ecological issues, digital divides; labor demands versus relevance of job training curricula.
- Universal right to education for the most vulnerable population: a challenge that focuses on the right “to” education, the right “in” education to strengthen the educational continuum, educational quality. And the right to learning who learns, what they learn, why they learn.
- On educational management: transformation of educational curricula; guaranteeing quality in educational centers.
- On topics to be considered in our socio-educational proposals: socio-emotional health; ecology and peace education, adult education, digital education, updating and demand for future work.
- On our public action: Rethinking our public action strategies; education is a public good; dialogue with governments; public policy advocacy; guaranteeing the right to education, permanence and continuity; the right to quality.

The following challenges are highlighted:

- Transformation is our intentionality. Inclusion, equity and quality are our principles. To take up and think about strategies in these three approaches.
- On educational management: transformation of educational curricula; guaranteeing quality in educational centers.



2.5 Summary of the chapter Challenges

(see more)

The reflections developed during the Pre-Congress working sessions, along with the discussions held during the Congress, have clearly outlined the challenges that Fe y Alegría, as a Movement of Popular Education and Social Promotion, must address to respond effectively to the realities of the contexts in which it operates. While each country has its own unique characteristics, the shared mission and commitment to the most vulnerable enable us to approach local challenges with a global perspective.

On the basis of the right to learn, the need to continue working to guarantee the right to learn has been identified:

- **Equity and inclusion:** especially of the most vulnerable groups, girls and women, people with functional diversity, migrants, displaced people, those who suffer any type of violence; in order to reduce the gaps that impede access, permanence and results in quality education, also characterized by socioeconomic, political and cultural factors.
- **Educational quality:** offering relevance and pertinence of lifelong learning and with equal and equitable attention to the diversity of students and their socio-emotional needs.
- **The formation of students as epistemic, social and critical** subjects who learn, grow and develop with foundation and criteria, empowerment and leadership in the face of the challenges posed by technology, social and political issues.
- **Innovative educational models:** that respond to the principles of equity, inclusion and quality within the framework of Popular Education, where technology is present to guarantee learning.
- **Teacher training:** in a permanent, continuous and integral manner that allows educators to respond to current contexts, from the perspective of popular education.

- **Through different instances and levels,** continue to work in collaboration with others through networks, alliances, dialogues with the Society of Jesus, organizations and actors to generate advocacy for the right to learn at the national and international levels
- **In relation to our commitment to public education,** maintain dialogue with governments to guarantee the right to education.





Chapter III.

Mobilizing actions of the Movement

Fe y Alegría's response is systemic, relevant, and dynamic, always evolving to meet the needs of changing contexts. As seen in the previous chapters, the challenges it faces are multidimensional, both local and global, diverse yet interconnected, specific yet universal. In response, Fe y Alegría tailors its mobilizing actions to the nature of each challenge, ensuring that they are strategic, institutional, temporary or permanent, and always driven by the active participation of its members. For the purposes of the Congress,

mobilizing actions were organized to address the different needs and voices within four key groups:

- Students and the educational community.
- Teaching staff, educators, school directors, and pedagogical companions.
- Coordinators and teams.
- National Directors.

These groups engaged through various work modalities, including learning communities, pedagogical dialogue circles, Fe y Alegría team dialogues, and national directorate and delegate roundtables.

The organization	Content and methodology	Stakeholders	Mobilizing Action
Learning Communities		Students Mothers and Fathers Participants educators Youth; Generation 21+ Network (FIFYA's international network)	Local mobilization actions for the Right to Learn Global Campaign for the Right to Learn
Pedagogical Dialogue Circles		Teachers center addresses pedagogical companions community facilitators International Initiatives	Transformative pedagogical practices that respond to diverse needs International practices
National teams in dialogue		Educational/ pedagogical coordination thematic and territorial coordination teams	National educational-pedagogical proposals and/or models
Dialogue Working Group		National Directors and delegates	
International campaign		The entire Movement	International Manifesto Advocacy Action



Scan this QR code and explore all the work guides

The following are the different mobilizing actions by each group of organized actors/actresses.

3.1 Learning Communities

Prior to the Congress, the organization of Learning Communities as part of the reflection on the Right to Learn enabled the proposal of various mobilizing actions aimed at ensuring this right.

Participants from the educational community—children, young people, and adults—suggested multiple initiatives to improve access to and quality of education. Among these, key actions included awareness campaigns, the integration of technologies, continuous teacher training, and the creation of safe and equitable educational environments. Additionally, the discussions emphasized the importance of involving the broader community surrounding educational centers as an essential strategy to help bridge the identified gaps.

Prior to the Congress, collectively and within the countries, mobilization and advocacy actions were designed to defend the right to learning in local contexts, implemented within the framework of the Campaign for the Right to Learn. The different actions favored a high level of student participation and commitment, and at the same time, the methodology of the

Learning Communities served to value the diversity of generational perspectives.

The students who participated in these communities expressed their appreciation of the right to learn as an opportunity to:

- Recognize the right to learning as fundamental for personal and social development. It is emphasized that this right not only implies access to education, but also the quality of learning, integral development and equity in educational opportunities.
- To develop personally and professionally. Learning allows them to acquire knowledge and skills to build a better future.
- To be active citizens. Education provides them with the necessary tools to participate actively in society.
- Overcoming adversity. Learning enables them to overcome inequalities in access to development opportunities and to achieve their personal and social goals.
- Connecting with others. The educational center is an essential space for socioemotional development, for socializing and building meaningful relationships.

3.2 Pedagogical Dialogue Circles

Prior to the Congress, each national pedagogical dialogue circle reflected on the challenges and identified three that it considered most relevant for Fe y Alegría. These dialogue circles were supported by a guide to facilitate the space for reflection and also shared experiences and knowledge first at the national level and then at the regional level (Southern Cone, Central America, Andean, mixed Africa and Latin America). Among the most important elements of this dialogue of knowledge, the following stand out:

- The different difficulties, needs and problems in the pedagogical field that affect the group of educators in their teaching and learning practice.
- Reflection on the different pedagogical praxis that are resulting in good practices and respond to the different pedagogical challenges to achieve better quality in student learning.

In the international pedagogical dialogue circles, we identified common aspects that charac-

terize our pedagogical practice and we consider them to be strengths of the Movement:

- The identity of the Movement, its liberating and transforming intentionality is present in our educational action, it is an identity that is nurtured and grows in the Movement. From the identity we understand that Popular Education is integral from the personal, social and community dimensions.
- The exchange, through the pedagogical circles, is a necessary means for the dialogue of knowledge from specific contexts to the common and global contexts that involve us in working together in the Movement.
- The analysis of the educational reality is key to our pedagogical action because recognizing the differentiated needs and interests of the populations we work with leads us to adapt curricular proposals, select pedagogical strategies and tools, plan and evaluate

in order to respond with equity and relevance.

- It has been very encouraging to recognize that our role in each educational process is driven by commitment, passion and vocation, but above all, we are excited to see how in each pedagogical action we promote in students and participants their active participation in learning, their protagonism, empowerment and social commitment.
- We agree on processes and accompaniment based on values, from our pedagogical relationships based on respect, trust and dignity.
- An important finding is that networking goes hand in hand with families and communities; the pedagogical process does not begin and end in the training space, it is a continuous and collaborative work for the transformation of the person, the center and the community.
- Continuous training is a strength that allows us to update, innovate and

professionalize ourselves. Training based on the reflection of our pedagogical practice is fundamental because this leads us to develop the ability to adapt, make knowledge more flexible and contextualize it.

3.2.1 Pedagogical Practice

Each Fe y Alegría, as well as each federative initiative, selected a pedagogical practice that is responding to a challenge. In the table below, you will find each of these practices with a brief description and its respective link so that you can read its descriptive card. You can also visit the International Congress 2024 website through the following link:



[Website of the 2024 International Congress](#)

Country	Pedagogical experience
Argentina	Strengthening reading and writing practices. Reading and writing are skills that are acquired through explicit teaching. We work in a systematized, reflective, collaborative and articulated way from the Initial Level to the Secondary Lev.
Bolivia	Educational continuum in inclusive education in regular and higher education “Students with hearing disabilities conclude their BTH and ITS training.
Brazil	Fe y Alegría Forum: Leadership, Management and Innovation”. Responds to the Challenge of Training and Pedagogical Accompaniment, addressing the challenges of training and accompaniment in the educational context of Fe y Alegría.
Colombia	Life project, vocational orientation and transition from school to work. Development of socioemotional competencies: To help students develop essential skills for their personal and social life, contributing to the reduction of violence and the generation of new citizenship alternatives.
Chad	Parents learn technical and operational skills for the management and operation of community schools. In this way, communities are involved in the learning process of students in rural areas.
Chile	The re-entry schools focus on learning through active methodologies that promote the development of competencies and socioemotional skills, collaborating in the construction of life projects and in the learning of trades.
Ecuador	This internship is aimed at training teachers in inclusive education so that they can become professionals in interdisciplinary projects and work with students with intellectual disabilities.

Country	Pedagogical experience
El Salvador	Transformation of education through continuous and innovative learning in the use of new technologies. Through this practice we seek to reduce the generational gap between the teacher - student on the use of technology.
Spain	Comprehensive support for personal and social care for young people and families in the educational community. In contexts of socioeconomic vulnerability, quality education is not only a matter of academic content, but also of providing comprehensive support that responds to the diverse needs of students and their families.
Guatemala	The project arises from the children's need and interest in harvesting nutritious food that benefits their health. In addition, one of the cross-cutting themes being worked on at the school is "Care for the Common Home".
Honduras	Garifuna Cultural Identity. Through this practice we develop the integration of the community with its cultural and ancestral knowledge, we adapt the curriculum and develop a bilingual intercultural education.
Italy	Creating restorative circles with a collective of teachers. This practice focuses on generating creative activities where teachers share their innovative teaching and learning experiences.
Madagascar	Training of parents in the agricultural seed distribution project. Awareness campaign on the importance of education for parents and children.
Nicaragua	Implementation of information and communication technologies (ICT) for meaningful student learning.
Panamá	The Tejiendo Amaneceres program seeks to promote the integration, cultural training and integral development of the migrant population in Panama.

Country	Pedagogical experience
Paraguay	Recovery of learning from the school magazine, a means of school communication that invites student participation and creativity.
Peru	We strengthen our autonomy to achieve full citizenship. High school students develop leadership skills through participation and critical thinking.
Democratic Republic of the Congo	“Kielo ya Mazaya” (Gateway to Knowledge), is a bilingual literacy program through radio. Fe y Alegría offers educational opportunities to the poorest people in the towns of Kikwit and Kisantu and Kisantu, separated by 680 km in the southwest of the DRC.
Dominican Republic	Teacher training to improve the quality of teaching in the early grades The importance of effective training and continuous accompaniment to improve teaching practice and learning outcomes was emphasized. The need to connect teacher training with the contextual reality of students was emphasized.
Uruguay	Identity and Autonomy in Early Childhood. From the formative spaces, activities are developed that allow the growth of identity and autonomy; times, rhythms and individual characteristics are respected.
Venezuela	Bilingual intercultural education is a transformative experience that promotes respect and understanding of cultural and linguistic differences. For 24 years they have been serving indigenous communities of the Orinoco Delta.

3.2.2 Federative Initiatives Pedagogical Practices

Initiative	Educational experiences
Innovation	Course on Quality and Educational Innovation for social transformation in virtual, classroom and blended learning modalities.
Early childhood	We are building a pedagogical framework for early childhood. It is a reference to guide the work of the different Fe y Alegría organizations in early childhood. It also explains which competencies we should integrate as educational referents in order to promote them.
Ecology and interculturality	<p>ALearning to live in communion with the Common Home: A study of the significant educational practices of Fe y Alegría in Integral Ecology.</p> <p>The study provides key information for the construction of a referential framework in integral ecology that strengthens educational and popular work in the face of the new realities and urgencies facing the care of our Common Home.</p>
On-the-job training	<p>Specific Occupational Competency:</p> <p>Economic alternatives to undertake and innovate with purpose.</p> <p>The initiative has a profile of job training courses. This experience is innovative in the sense of promoting economic training from a social and solidarity approach.</p>
Inclusive Education	Elaboration of the referential framework of the Inclusive Education Initiative and the development of the regional experience "Educate is Include" Eliminating barriers creating opportunities.

Initiative	Educational experiences
Youth	The compass is a pedagogical tool that helps young people to trace a route for a training itinerary or advocacy and mobilization actions, allowing them to clearly define the north or the intentionality of what they wish to achieve.
Citizenship	Education for Citizenship: Pillars of citizen participation for a culture of peace. The course is designed from the pedagogy of Popular Education, promoted by Fe y Alegría, which is committed to participation, the inclusion of diverse voices, the encounter and exchange, the orientation to the transformation of injustices, and the constant linkage of learning with and from the communities that surround us.
Gender	The Transformation Methodology for gender equality is used in various processes promoted by the teachers' network Red-Acción para la igualdad y cultura de paz (Action Network for Equality and Culture of Peace). From the Socio-affective Relationships node, "Strategies to develop emotional skills for care and self-care" were developed.



3.3 What educational proposals or models?

The current global context invites our Movement to make reflective stops that lead us to rethink the aims of our pedagogical proposals, asking ourselves: Why educate? What kind of education and for what kind of society? and What should we teach? It is necessary to keep in mind that we do education in scenarios characterized by a constant transformation, which demands us to go beyond the mere transmission of knowledge.

In relation to our proposals or educational models, we reflect on their relevance for the current context of the country with the lens of change. We deepen at the level of each national Fe y Alegría in the educational and/or community transformations that have generated the implementation of our models or proposals beyond the walls. We think about the strategic actions we need to develop to respond to the challenges of the context, positively impacting people's lives and favoring the development of transforming community actions. Our educational models or proposals are a call to the Movement to be a proposal and a response, with Popular Education as a means, to the global challenges of today.

Eight countries in the Movement have national documents that

reflect their educational models or proposals: Bolivia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru and Venezuela.

During the Pre-Congress, we identified some of the emphases that we should not lose sight of in our educational-pedagogical proposal, both for countries that do not yet have it and for those that already have it:

- (A) The promotion and achievement of learning
 - It is fundamental for us to achieve student learning from any formal or non-formal program and to learn together with the populations we serve. We focus our educational processes on the development of capabilities, skills and competencies for life, forming responsible, critical citizens capable of contributing to the construction of a just, equitable and sustainable society. It is about offering, from doing-being and knowing-living, the construction of learning-knowledge, translated into competencies for the professional, personal and spiritual enrichment of each person.

(B) Identity and commitment

- At Fe y Alegría we recognize the importance of identity building and the commitment we have as educators and popular educators to transform people, so that they in turn become promoters of social transformation.

(C) The development of critical thinking

- In order to develop critical thinking, we need our Movement to be assertive in promoting spaces for permanent formation-participation and critical-reflective dialogue in the definition of actions that favor the valuing of the human being. It is in reflective practice where the knowledge required for educational and social transformation is found.
- Training through critical thinking not only strengthens the capacities of the actors, but also provides them with the necessary tools to understand and transform their social reality, thus promoting integral and sustainable development. In short, it

is about empowering the capacities of all people so that they are capable of transforming themselves and the context.

(D) The transformation

- Fe y Alegría is a Movement capable of influencing personal and social transformation, which implies not only strengthening the individual capacities of educators, but also working collectively to promote significant and sustainable change in the communities where it lives. To this end, it retakes the Popular Education approach, integrating curricular sensitive topics of the context to contribute to the promotion of other forms of relationship and coexistence from the perspective of gender, ecology and citizenship.

During the Congress, the working groups confirmed the characteristics described above and underlined elements that the collective considers essential from the perspective of Popular Education, both for the contents of the educational models and for the public action and advocacy carried out by Fe y Alegría.

3.3.1 Essential elements for Fe y Alegría's educational models

- Do not lose sight of the context as a starting point; the educational proposal must be based on a reading of the context and act with a perspective of equity.
- Deepen the option for the most disadvantaged. This implies supporting those who suffer violence, people with disabilities, people who live through internal and external migration processes. Addressing the realities that arise from new frontiers and the lack of equity in learning.
- Guarantee fundamental knowledge in the areas of: reading, writing, logical thinking, citizenship skills, intra and interpersonal skills.
- To make the pillars of Popular Education explicit in our pedagogical models.
- Promote critical pedagogies that guarantee learning for life.
- Guarantee inclusion and strengthen the culture of inclusion in all its dimensions.

- Strengthening of training in identity and commitment, servant leadership, integral ecology, gender, citizenship skills, forgiveness and reconciliation, the socio-political dimension and accompaniment from the point of view of personal care.
- To strengthen networking, the meeting to share knowledge. To reflect on what we need to change, to transform.

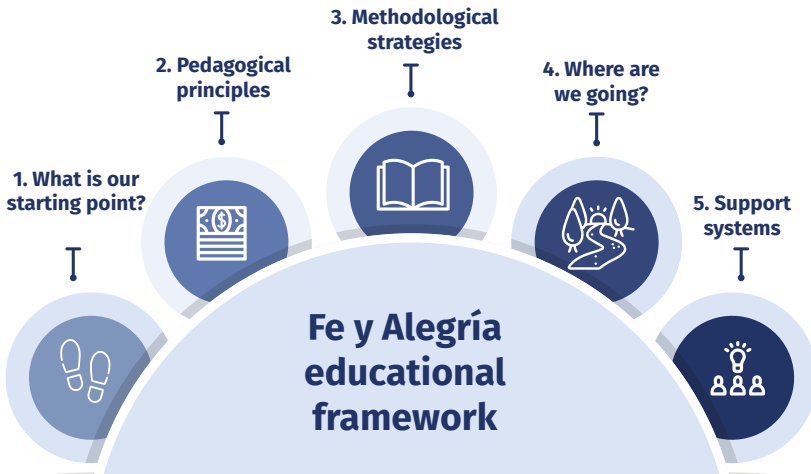
Actions needed for advocacy

- Strengthen participatory action research, which enables reflection on practice in order to generate changes and transformations.
- Promote opportunities for dialogue with decision-makers and government agencies.
- Articulate in the different spaces of dialogue all the actors: educators, students, families, integrating them as part of the Movement.
- To guarantee the comprehensive training of all those involved.
- Seeking educational justice.

3.4 Fe y Alegría's Popular Education Framework

During the Congress, and in light of the experiences shared, it was suggested that our international Movement needs an inspirational document—one that connects local dynamics with the broader international vision of Fe y Alegría. A document that roots us in our origins, serves as a driving force, and provides a clear horizon for new educational responses.

In response to this need, a proposal was presented for a second version of the Index of Fe y Alegría's Educational Pedagogical Framework. This document is structured into four chapters, outlining non-negotiable principles related to identity, pedagogical principles, strategies and methodologies, a forward-looking vision, and a system of support to sustain these elements. The proposal was introduced as an outline to be further developed.



Experts and working groups emphasized the importance of not overlooking key issues such as non-formal education and dialogue with other spiritual traditions. Additionally, discussions on inclusion highlighted the need to make gender issues more visible. Participants also stressed the importance of leveraging technology while maintaining a critical perspective on its use.

3.5 International impact of our mobilizing action

(see more)

Our context analysis reveals that the pandemic has deepened inequalities, directly affecting the populations we serve. Key challenges include the exclusion of large groups, difficulties in youth education, insufficient educational quality, worsening socioeconomic conditions, widening learning gaps, and the long-term impact on lifelong learning. In response, Fe y Alegría reaffirms its commitment to the Right to Learn as a means to reduce these gaps and promote educational equity.

As part of the International Congress, on October 22, 2024, the advocacy campaign “For the Right to Learn” was officially launched by the International Federation of Fe y Alegría. The event, held in collaboration with the Ministry of Education of Ecuador at the Ministry’s Auditorium, brought together authorities

from both Fe y Alegría and the Ministry of Education, including Minister Alegría Crespo. Most importantly, children and young people from Ecuador participated, representing the voices of students across our Movement.

The campaign launch featured the presentation of a Manifesto for Learning, developed by Fe y Alegría’s youth. Two students from Fe y Alegría Ecuador shared the journey behind this initiative and presented the manifesto as the culmination of their collective effort in advocating for the Right to Learn.

3.5.1 Manifesto for the Right to Learn

Fe y Alegría’s children and young people express to educational leaders

October 22, 2024.

Quito, Ecuador

We, the students of Fe y Alegría, raised our hands and raised our voices with a clear and firm message. In these months of dialogue and reflection, we have shared our experiences, concerns and dreams about the fundamental right that belongs to us: the right to learn.

We have formed Right to Learn Communities in our schools and have realized that education is not only about access to the school system, but also about what and how we learn in our classrooms.

We have understood that the reality we face, full of changes, challenges and opportunities, demands an education that prepares us not only for the future, but also for the present.

A meaningful and inclusive education that allows us to understand and transform our environment, that inspires us to act critically, creatively and in solidarity.

Children and youth of Fe y Alegría have identified several points that we consider important to achieve this objective:

- We ask for an education that teaches us to think, to act responsibly and to be agents of change in our communities. Inspired by the Popular Education of Fe y Alegría, we want to learn things that we can apply in our daily lives, that teach us to care for the environment, to respect others, and to build a more just society.
- We request that more contextualized and participatory approaches be adopted, including project-based learning, problem solving and the use of technology in a crea-

tive and meaningful way. We believe that current methodologies often do not allow us to be true protagonists of our learning. We need an education that motivates us and that adapts to what we live

- We demand educational environments where all of us, regardless of our differences, feel valued and respected. We want educational centers where diversity is respected, where there is no discrimination and where we can feel physically and emotionally safe.
- We ask for an education that not only focuses on academic knowledge, but also helps us to develop as people in all our dimensions: emotional, social, spiritual and ethical. We want to be people who can live together in community and build a better future for all.
- We ask that spaces for dialogue be maintained between students, teachers, families and educational authorities. We want to be heard and actively par-

ticipate in the decisions that affect our education. We have learned that our voices matter.

- With this manifesto we not only ask, but also offer our willingness to work together in the construction of an education that really forms us as conscious citizens committed to our reality.
- We do not want to be just passive receivers of knowledge; we seek a transformative education that allows us to be true protagonists of our lives and our society.



3.5.2 Fe y Alegría before the Ministry of Education in Ecuador

On behalf of **Fe y Alegría**, the General Coordinator, **Fr. Daniel Villanueva S.J.** addressed the following remarks to the Minister of Education, Mrs. Alegría Crespo:

“Dear Minister, Allow me to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude for your presence and for the commitment of the Ecuadorian State to guaranteeing the right to quality education for all. Fe y Alegría is honored to be a strategic ally in this crucial mission. We take particular pride in doing so here in Ecuador, where we are celebrating 60 years of a fruitful educational trajectory. I have personally witnessed the Ministry’s recognition of the education we provide and the valuable contribution of Fe y Alegría in shaping public policy. You can count on us to continue working together to transform education.

Today, we come together to launch a historic campaign. For the first time, Fe y Alegría is organizing a joint initiative that transcends the borders of Latin America, with the clear purpose of influencing both the local contexts where we work and the broader international educational landscape.

Our vision of education as a public good compels us not only to serve within the Movement but also to stand alongside popular struggles, advocating for and transforming public education for the benefit of all. That is why, when we talk about education, we always speak of rights and transformation.

This chapter presents Fe y Alegría as a dynamic and committed Movement that, through constant reflection, pedagogical innovation, and social engagement, seeks to achieve social transformation through education.

The implementation of Learning Communities, Pedagogical Dialogue Circles, the compilation of successful pedagogical practices across different countries, and the proposal of a common Educational Framework demonstrate the importance of systematizing experiences and learning from them to shape a unified and powerful educational vision.

The reflection on educational models and their relevance, along with the advocacy campaign “For the Right to Learn,” highlight the dual necessity of working inside the classroom while also influencing public policies and social awareness—ensuring that the right to learn becomes a reality for all.”



Chapter IV.

Thinking about opportunities

Throughout this journey, we have explored the challenges that define our present and the collective responses we have been building as a Movement. This chapter stands at the intersection of reflection and action, a space where opportunities arise—not merely as a list of possibilities, but as the outcome of a shared process of critical and strategic thinking. Here, the papers pre-

sented are more than just ideas; they are dynamic spaces where visions are woven together, paths are debated, and new ways of influencing reality take shape. They serve to renew the meaning and purpose of the education promoted by the Movement and act as a call to recognize its political, ethical, and ideological dimensions, always oriented toward transformative praxis.



Anahí Guelman

She is a leading academic and activist in the field of Popular Education and critical pedagogies. Her work focuses on the relationship between the university and society. She is professor of Pedagogy in Educational Sciences at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Buenos Aires (FFyL-UBA), where she also directs the Department of Educational Sciences. She teaches Educational Research Methodology at the Universidad Nacional de la Patagonia Austral (UNPA-UA-CA) and participates in several graduate programs. She is a member of the Working Group “Popular Education and Critical Pedagogies” of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO).



Sylvia Schmelkes

Sociologist, researcher and writer, known for her influential work in intercultural education. She is also recognized for her acclaimed book **“Hacia una mejor calidad de nuestras escuelas”** (“Towards a better quality of our schools.”) Throughout her career, she has explored best practices in support programs for indigenous people in higher education, contributing significantly to the advancement of inclusive education in Latin America. With more than one hundred published academic texts and essays, Schmelkes has left an indelible mark on the field of education. She is currently a member of the Education Commission of the Conference of Jesuit Provincials of Latin America and the Caribbean (CPAL), where she continues her work to promote quality and equitable education.



Tsayem Dongmo Saturnin, S.J.

Director of Fe y Alegría Chad since 2017. Passionate about Popular Education and engagement with communities. He has been Director of Collège Libermann in Douala, Cameroon, from 2010 to 2016.

He has a background in education, philosophy and theology in different schools, as well as teacher in Chad and Cameroon. Studies: M.A. in Theology from the Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University in Berkeley, USA; DEA in Philosophy from the Faculté St. Pierre Canisius in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo.



Tatiana Cardona Álvarez (Col.)

Fe y Alegría International Youth Initiative Coordinator.

Leader in educational and cultural processes at local and international level, working with youth, women and vulnerable communities.

Graduated in Art Education and Social Sciences, she is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Education at the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Cali.

4.1 Critical pedagogy with transforming subjects

Dr. Anahi Guelman

I would like to begin by reflecting on popular educations and their connection to critical pedagogies. I believe this is where we must start—and where we must ultimately return, if I may offer a small spoiler. Speaking from Latin America, as we are doing now—though with a perspective that extends to the world—it is impossible to separate this link when considering the challenges of Popular Education. Popular educations represent the most authentic expression of critical pedagogies.

Popular educations—spoken of in the plural because they are multiple, as Alfonso Torres points out—have an emancipatory intent. They aim to strengthen popular sectors through a critical reading of the existing social order. Rooted in the conviction that education has the power to transform individuals, they employ dialogical, participatory, and active methodologies that challenge the traditional power structures of education.

These approaches recognize the value of popular knowledge as a foundation for the educational process, yet they also emphasize the importance of problematizing it. This means

understanding common sense not in a romanticized way but as something that must be questioned, debated, and critically examined through educational intent. Alongside respect for popular knowledge, this shared foundation acknowledges the importance of subjective experiences—including people's conditions, emotions, thoughts, and actions—as essential components of the learning process.

Critical pedagogies encompass all pedagogical perspectives that denaturalize reality, question the root causes of injustice, provoke inquiry, challenge the very foundations of the pedagogical field, and seek to disrupt it. They are diverse, with a plurality of meanings and influences. Sometimes they are mistakenly reduced to a North American school of thought, but they are not a single current. In some cases, they do not even carry the adjective “critical,” yet they embody its essence. These pedagogies have a rich and varied tradition, yet they share a fundamental recognition of the political, ethical, and ideological dimensions of education and its role in transformative praxis. They contribute to the development of emancipatory thought. More than a theoretical framework—or even multiple frameworks—critical pedagogies represent a stance, a perspective, an attitude, a way of thinking inherently linked to action.

Popular Education, as I have already mentioned, is the most

genuine expression of the critical pedagogical field, at least in Latin America. However, if I aim to approach this from a truly critical perspective, I must also examine some of the terms and concepts we often use uncritically when discussing “Popular Education” and “critical pedagogies.”

What do we actually mean by “popular” when we talk about Popular Education? We often take certain meanings for granted without fully considering what the term implies. The same happens with “critical” in critical pedagogies. To deepen our understanding, let us take a step back and analyze these concepts more closely.

Let us begin with “popular.” When we seek to define and understand this term precisely, two key elements emerge that are essential to its meaning:

- The concept of “popular” can be understood through the lens of the subject—one who both shapes and is shaped by the people. This subject belongs to subaltern sectors, which are inherently plural and characterized by their heterogeneity. In our context, this subject is often positioned at the margins, at the frontier. Vilas (1994) argues that, in Latin America, “the peo-

ple” is the intersection of a life marked by ruin and political oppression, unjustly imposed, which consequently carries a cultural and ideological dimension. This interplay of socioeconomic, political-ideological, and cultural factors gives rise to a multisectoral subject, whose identity is shaped by diverse political, labor, ethnic, and gender trajectories that intersect within the broader collective. From this perspective, the popular subject is not monolithic but rather a dynamic and plural entity, forming open, heterogeneous, and multifaceted movements that embrace a diversity of worldviews and local realities. A focus on the concrete and empirical expressions of the popular—rather than an abstract conceptualization—helps to move away from idealized or romanticized notions. A key question in understanding the popular subject relates to its articulation among actors who experience the effects of capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, racism, and adultcentrism. Braidotti (2000:183) refers

to this as a “network of simultaneous power formations,” a framework that helps explain how these intersecting structures shape the experiences and struggles of popular movements.

- The concept of “popular” can also be understood through the lens of political radicalism, where it is tied to a concrete objective: the struggle to improve living conditions, often in direct contestation with dominant sectors over control and direction of the social sphere. It is rooted in a subject whose rights and agency have been denied, yet who prefigures a project of social transformation—though this is not always the case. As Hall (1984) argues, the structuring principle of the popular lies in the power relations—both of influence and antagonism—between the popular and the nonpopular. However, this political radicalism is not necessarily explicit, clearly defined, or inherently present within popular subjects themselves.

Therefore, we speak at the same time of two different things: of

a heterogeneous and complex subject - around which exploitation, oppression and subordination are superimposed - and of the objective of transforming its conditions or politicization. Both senses operate as two keys that glimpse the power of the polysemic adjective popular to think about transformative practices.

In popular education, both meanings of the popular coexist. On one hand, there is the heterogeneous subject who navigates and articulates various systems of power and their intersections, shaped by diverse experiences that challenge and expand our understanding of the present. On the other hand, there is the radical political dimension, which seeks to transform these systems of power and establish conditions of justice and equality. The popular is not a pre-existing essence or a spontaneous reflection of social structures; rather, it is a continuous construction. It exists as a heterogeneous and contradictory field—one that involves both appropriation and consent to the prevailing order, as well as resistance and antagonism (Guelman and Palumbo, 2024).

Let us continue with the “critical” aspect of critical pedagogies:

To reflect on critique, I draw on the work of authors such as Estela Quintar and Hugo Zemelman, who allow us to move beyond theoretical or purely adjectival positions and understand criti-

que in its practical power. Speaking of critique first requires thinking beyond what is given—beyond what the dominant order establishes as truth, as obvious, as common sense, as hegemonic (Gramsci). However, making this leap demands that we first recognize our social experience, our lived realities, and the historical imprints that shape us. Only then can we step back from the established order and formulate a critical judgment—a kind of rupture, driven by indignation. In this sense, critique is not about adherence to a discourse but rather a movement of thought—one that questions, denaturalizes, and unmasks unjust social relations. It follows a logic of reasoning that is not purely scientific or strictly confined to scientific methods, but rather one that transcends them, while still drawing on them to deepen understanding.

This critical thinking, this possibility of critical thinking, accounts for a historical critique, an epistemic critique rather than a theoretical critique, because it is supported by and depends on social reality, on historical reality and because it involves a way of conceiving and thinking that reality. History, the concrete socio-cultural experience that flows understood as a social construction (not historiography but the history we build every day) is the condition of critical thinking.

Critical thinking is, at the same time, a prerequisite for any pra-

xis of emancipation or transformation. However, merely adhering to “critical” thinkers and their theoretical frameworks does not necessarily lead to indignation about the realities we analyze. We may understand them, but understanding alone does not always translate into the urgency to transform. This is why we must be cautious of theoretical critique that remains detached from action.

Let us now return to Critical Pedagogies with this enriched understanding of critique. What, then, are Critical Pedagogies? Or rather, how do they succeed in fostering and constructing critical thinking?

A critical pedagogy in action—within the transformative space of teaching—centers on historical thinking rather than merely transmitting information, though it also informs. It rethinks the present, connects different dimensions of reality (the totality, the micro, and the macro), and requires imagination to break conventional paradigms. It thrives on dialogue, fosters autonomy, and encourages learners to think critically and actively construct alternative presents and futures by expanding their awareness.

I have taken this detour through popular educations and critical pedagogies to return to them with renewed clarity and purpose. It is essential to reclaim what is truly critical and popular, with full awareness and a solid foun-

dation. This means revisiting the popular subject today, critically examining the objectives we set for ourselves, and ensuring that they are not reduced to mere slogans or outdated ideas but remain relevant and transformative.

How do we look at this stage, this world, these subjects in this particular context that we are living as a planet? How do we look critically at what touches and challenges us?

Although this is a lecture, I propose an exercise of problematization, in which we will try, through three questions, to question our assumptions, despite the diversity of contexts to be contemplated, those of all of you. We will try through three questions, for which I do not have the answers, to approach globally, decontextualized, a description of some characteristics of this world in transition that we find it difficult to understand. Surely each of you will have examples and counterexamples, agreements and disagreements with what I am going to raise through this problematization. But we will try some approaches that will allow us to discuss or take us to think about our challenges.

The three questions I would like to propose are the following:

- At what point in our world are we?

- What is popular today in general and in each particular context?
- What would it be like today to transform the world and try to build a more just world?

4.1.1 The time of our world

We find ourselves in a very complicated civilizational moment in which we know that our own planet, our home, is at risk due to environmental pollution, global warming, destruction of green lungs, shifting agricultural frontiers, indiscriminate use of pesticides, etc., and yet the attacks on the planet, on our home, do not cease.

We return, if we have not already done so, to generate warlike situations between countries and peoples, with the consequent impact in death, hunger, orphanhood, material destruction of peoples and with the serious risk of putting an end to the species itself through novel armaments of which I personally cannot give an account.

Globally, we are in a transition that we do not really know where it is leading. There is a contradiction in that this transition seems to be going forward at the same time, hand in hand with scientific development and especially technology, and bac-

kward at the same time, hand in hand with living conditions.

Several authors have been critically studying these processes, which they call in various ways: “technofeudalism” (in relation to the regression in living conditions and the lack of individual freedom for personal decisions), anarcho-liberalism, siliconization of the world, “techno-financialization”, etc. We will take to help us particularly Antonio Bifo Berardi (2019), Erik Sadin (2023) and Suely Rolnik (2019).

These authors help us understand that today, life is increasingly structured by the digital rather than by traditional forms of labor, as algorithms shape and regulate daily existence. Computation replaces nature, dissolving the foundations of politics and economics while automatically organizing the world. This phenomenon can be described as “technocontrol”—a system in which regulation is increasingly exercised through technology rather than through states, with governments facilitating governance that primarily serves the world of finance. As a result, the flow of information has accelerated dramatically.

In this context, technology is infiltrating ever more layers of our reality, shaping not only global structures but also individual lives. It is gradually conquering both the world and the personal sphere. Sadin describes this moment in history as patholo-

gical, arguing that we are being shaped by abstract codes rather than human-centered experiences. Amid these changes, the nature of work is also undergoing a fundamental transformation, with jobs becoming increasingly technologized. However, despite these shifts, the workplace remains highly heterogeneous:

- At the top of the pyramid, entrepreneurs linked to technology, robotics, artificial intelligence, the work of gurus, visionaries of this type of development, linked to financialization, generators of immeasurable profits, subsuming the industrial economy to the financial economy. Accumulation, although real, is simulation. It is not in goods.
- Work of programmers and mathematicians who create applications and systems based on the work with algorithms.
- Other trades in the data economy range from research and development to human resources. General programmers who are in front of screens day and night.
- Hardware assemblers who work like robots.

- Workers of the platform economies, borrowers, drivers, delivery drivers, etc., who are supposed to be independent, offering services on their own initiative and autonomously. But in fact, they depend on companies that guarantee the inter-face with the customer, whom they do not see and for whom they generate profits, using their own instruments.

All these workers are referred to as “cognitarians”, even with their enormous differences. These ways of working coexist, at least for the time being, with other more traditional and familiar ways of working:

- Intellectual workers, health and education professionals, teachers, who have less and less prestige based on a return-benefit calculation between investment of time in training and economic benefits.
- Traditional salaried workers.
- Rural workers, rural and urban producers. Traders.
- Unemployed and popular economy workers, that is, workers who, without an employer, generate their own forms of subsistence. Among them, care work and community care work and the role of women in them reappear strongly.

As I anticipated, technology crosses work, but also the ways of living and runs the axis of the organization of life. These ways of working, living and being tied to screens break collective logics and individualize. They also generate greater unemployment, poverty and exclusion.

The changes in the ways of living socially become evident, seem inevitable and generate frustration and humiliation, not only for the unemployed, but also for those who work without the power of thought. The corollary, which we will now delve into, is violence and cruelty.



4.1.2. The popular subject of this world in transition

The changes we have just described have a profound impact on individuals, even within the heterogeneity of labor. As previously mentioned, technology is increasingly shaping both the world and everyday life. This leads us to ask: who are the popular subjects today?

We have already established that popular subjects are not inherently transformative. This is not a new idea—Freire (1969) already pointed out that the oppressed subject carries within them the imprint of the oppres-

sor. However, today, in many local and territorial spaces across different countries, the alignment between oppressed individuals and their oppressors seems stronger than ever. Many now identify with those in power rather than opposing them. Under the digital order, where technology dictates behavior, individuals comply with instructions almost mechanically. They become robotic, acting not from personal judgment but through conditioned responses to signals and feedback loops. Spontaneity is neutralized. Rolnik describes this as a capture of subjectivity, desire, and creativity, leading to a weakening of vital forces. Sadin adds the humiliation that results from the redefinition of human identity, as technology imposes a new order of truth. Meanwhile, Berardi speaks of the frustration and disillusionment stemming from the unfulfilled promises of modernity. Humiliation, in turn, fuels rage and a tendency to identify with the success of the oppressor. Sensitivity and empathy for others erode. Of course, this does not apply to all popular subjects—if it did, we would not be here today. However, it represents a significant trend of our time, one that we must acknowledge if we hope to understand these subjects and effectively engage in Popular Education. Berardi introduces another key point: the overwhelming acceleration of information flow, which has become nearly impossible for individuals to keep up with. He

identifies a contradiction between what he calls the “infosphere” and the “psychosphere.” The sheer volume of information saturates individuals, leaving them unable to process or analyze it through conscious thought. As a result, the very possibility of critical thinking—defined earlier as the ability to question and disrupt dominant narratives—is undermined. We may have access to more information than ever before, yet we are less equipped to form critical opinions or choose cultural and political alternatives. This explains the boom of ignorance we are witnessing. It also highlights that the solution to this crisis is not merely discursive, legal, or ideological. Instead, it requires a fundamental reexamination of the relationship between the subject and information.

4.1.3 What would transforming the world be today?

Evidently, the world we seek to transform is not that of the 1970s, nor even that of the 2000s. Yet we also understand that education does not transform the world directly—it transforms the subjects who will go on to do so. As we have seen, these subjects are increasingly diverse, navigating new and complex realities. Who are we thinking of? The individuals forced to migrate, those collecting cardboard and food on the streets, the delivery

workers on bicycles burdened with oversized boxes and backpacks, the laborers working from sunrise to sunset in the fields, the ones working in solitude in front of their screens, or those who, despite experiencing these realities, still believe that inequality is acceptable.

As I anticipated, the answers are not given—they must be constructed. What does seem clear is that what is at stake is the common—not just what we share, but the very value of the common, the common as a collective construction. The idea of the collective is losing ground to individualism, to the prioritization of property, to subjectivities trapped in narcissism and the inability to recognize the other.

Another certainty is that the work of transformation is not merely discursive. It is micro-political, it is rooted in the sensitive, in the lived experience.

We need to see inequalities. But more than that, we need to be moved by them. Transformation is impossible without both seeing and feeling inequalities—and I emphasize them in the plural. It is no longer just about the gap between rich and poor, though that remains fundamental. We must also recognize how this disparity is interwoven with and reinforced by other forms of inequality—ethnic, racial, gender-based—allowing us to adopt and apply an intersectional perspective.

So, when I speak of transforming the world into a more just and equitable one, I am speaking of emancipation.

So, what do we do from the schools, from our centers, from our places with this panorama?

These are the spheres in which we can do something, precisely because they are micro-political spheres in which the collective, the common can be built. They are the spheres in which we guarantee the right to education and the right to learn. They are the spheres in which critical thinking can be developed against all hegemony.

Okay, that sounds nice. But how do we do it? Of course, I don't have any recipes. But I do have some ideas so we can talk and think together.

In this sense, the first thing I would like to say, although it may seem a bit macro-political, is that we need to continue to demand that our States fulfill their role in guaranteeing the right to education and accompanying them, exercising their responsibility. This is the first way to try to transform the conditions proposed by this complex transition.

Now, in public schools and in all those schools and centers where we meet with the diverse popular subjects, our task will have to aim to generate the collective and the common, on

the one hand, and to form critical subjects, on the other hand, appealing to the contributions of Popular Education.

Teaching is a privileged space for the action of socio-cultural transformation, because it not only allows working on contents in directions opposed to the hegemonic ones, but basically because it can promote the generation of critical thinking, stimulate the possibility of questioning, denaturalize unjust realities and establish bonds of affection and empathy.

As I said at the beginning, historical criticism (not Theoretical), that which is nourished by vital and social experience, requires in the first place to gather the concrete historical-social and cultural experience. To do so, it has to allow affectation, to allow oneself to be affected by what happens to me, by what happens, secondly, to distance oneself in order to understand it, and thirdly, to build unpublished and viable possibilities (Freire).

Vital reality and lived experience can emerge from both the painful physical world and the virtual world—the infosphere. It is essential that we make space for both, for two interconnected reasons: first, because acknowledging the experiences and knowledge of individuals is fundamental to fostering critical thinking and Popular Education. This is where we begin to question, to problematize, to engage

in dialogue. At the same time, if we want what Berardi refers to as the psychosphere—the realm of human perception and critical thought—to intervene in the infosphere, where an overwhelming excess of information defies analysis, judgment, and critique, we must also integrate it into educational spaces. Rather than prohibiting or ignoring technology, we must make space for its manifestations—not just to use it, but, more importantly, to observe and analyze how it operates, how it structures our lives, how it isolates and controls us. Educational spaces can serve as environments where we actively engage with cell phones, social networks, and other digital tools that shape our autonomy—often by limiting it. The same applies to the living conditions of our students, learners, or however we choose to refer to them. Their social realities shape their lives, and education must create a space where these realities are not left outside but instead brought in, questioned, and understood.

Now, in order to allow the affection, it is necessary that in the process there be hospitality, accompaniment of the other, a place from which to build memory and identity.

There must also be room for questioning, for inquiring, for problematizing. We are not talking about the question that judges, nor the one that tries to get private information, but the

question that, without disturbing the intimacy of each one, can problematize.

There must also be what Quintar calls “Donation”, and this is both what students bring, and the role of content contributed by teachers.

Giving input to what affects, to the vital experience, to problematize and donate already constitutes an important resource for the construction of the collective and the common. Precisely, we are not talking about therapeutic processes, but about social causes, often shared. We are talking about listening to others from whom the networks isolate. Of thinking together.

From here there can be reflections, new ways of thinking together, and even the construction of felt projects (Fals Borda) above erudition and competition.



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4.2 Equity, inclusion and interculturality²

Dr. Sylvia Schmelkes

Introduction

It is important to recognize that Fe y Alegría, in its mission, has adopted a rights-based approach, understanding that the subject holds the right, the government bears the obligation, and we serve as an extension of public education to reach communities that might otherwise be left behind.

Rights are inalienable, indivisible, and progressive—they cannot be taken away, divided, or regressed. Within education, there is both a right “to” education, ensuring access, and a right “in” education, ensuring quality and equity once inside the system. In this sense, the “Four As” provide a clear framework: students have the right to an education that is acceptable, accessible, affordable, and adaptable. This right does not refer to just any education, but to quality education. Fe y Alegría has recognized this by placing its focus on the right to learn. But learn what? Learning must be oriented toward what is essential for a dignified life, as defined by each culture, embracing the richness of cultural diversity.

Common educational minimums and different educational maximums

The common educational minimums that every boy, girl, and young person must acquire, regardless of where they are in the world, include foundational skills such as writing, reading, and calculus, now integrated with digital skills. Beyond these, education must also foster higher-order thinking, an understanding of rights, a sense of place in the world, knowledge of geography, ecology, history, the cosmos, and the elements that provide meaning to life, including education for spirituality. These form the essential common minimums.

At the same time, the educational maxims must be adapted to each specific context. The law acknowledges both: the common foundations shared by all and the necessary differences that ensure education remains relevant and meaningful in diverse realities.

Equity

When we talk about equity, first we recognize that the right belongs to everyone, but secondly, we have to recognize that the starting points of the different students, of the different regions

2. The present text is a transcription of the discussion: “Challenges and opportunities of education in the current context from the human rights approach (quality, continuity, coverage, access, inclusion, relevance, equity and the right to learn) for the transformative action of the Movement”. Presented on the second day of the Congress.

and contexts are different; to recognize that each person is unique, that every group is diverse and therefore a differentiated treatment is required, giving more to those who need it most, more resources, more attention, more effort, precisely to achieve that equity advances towards substantive equality. And that is precisely what Fe y Alegría does, giving more to those who have less. It implies giving each one what he or she needs to achieve the learning that we propose. Therefore, what matters is equity in learning, and that is what I want to add to the reflection. How can we achieve equity in learning for our students, recognizing that equity means giving everyone what they need?

Access and permanence are necessary, because if you are not in school, you do not learn what is taught in school, but the purpose is learning, that is where we must focus on equity in learning. Understanding that attention from equity is not from the perspective of deficit but from the perspective of equity of diversity as richness and that is a pedagogical advantage. It is not because our students lack something because they are in vulnerable sectors; what happens to them is that they are different and therefore need differentiated attention. That is what is understood by equity.

This means respecting and valuing the different cultures, their knowledge, their different ways of knowing, that is, their diffe-

rent epistemologies; this must be present in the curriculum, this is up to each one of us, because it is very local, and we have to adapt it to the local context. The curricular contextualization from epistemic justice has to be from positions of equality with the universal knowledge that is also in the curriculum, and that is what is called promoting Epistemological Dialogue, which has a lot to do with intercultural education. Equity includes Epistemic Justice where the realities are culturally diverse, which is practically everywhere.

Causes of inequality

Our educational systems are by definition inequitable and epistemically unfair, the latter, which I mentioned earlier, is not the case of our educational systems, they are unfair in terms of access and permanence, there are more and more children and adolescents in schools, but the gaps do not diminish, they are maintained, we are making progress but they are not closed, because policies are not conceived in terms of equity. On the contrary, the supply is poorer where the population is more disadvantaged. The poverty of the population and the poverty of the educational offer come together, and the result is a perverse synergy that generates inequity in the results, inequality in the results of quality education. This is what happens in general in our countries. The gaps in access and permanence are closed only when an educational level is universalized, which reaches 100

percent, and populations that are at a greater disadvantage, when they come closer in that condition, the gaps are closed.

Fe y Alegría is a testimony that things do not have to be this way, that the situation can be otherwise. In our educational systems there is a great injustice, the possibility of education fulfilling its potential function of breaking the tendency to reproduce social inequalities is being lost, and that is what Fe y Alegría does, it goes against this injustice and works for the transformation of social inequalities, and I say this here with great humility.

We are losing in education the possibility of its potential function of forming people in integrity, of building democratic communities, of building peace, peaceful communities and of transforming unjust realities. Education has this potential and Fe y Alegría demonstrates it and this has to permeate all our realities.

Why is it so difficult to achieve equity?

Matthew effect, which comes from the parable of the talents... he who has more will be given more and he who has not will be deprived of even the little he has. This term Matthew effect was coined by sociologists to show that as a sociological law: the rich accumulate more wealth and the poor sink deeper into poverty. This happens in education. Why, because the causes are complex, mentioning some of them:

- How do we budget for education, do we budget according to what is already distributed? We add inflation but the situation does not change; we usually do it according to what is established. In that budget we are giving less to those who need it most, we are not even giving the same; the most benefited sectors, the urban ones, those who belong to the dominant culture receive more and better resources of all kinds and the other way around the most disadvantaged sectors.
- Teachers are the most important thing; what happens in the classroom, which is teaching and learning, depends on them. Not taking care of them, not providing them with good working conditions, not training them, not ensuring their social value is one of the most important causes of educational inequity.
- The unequal distribution of the capacity to demand knowledge of what the right to education means for the different sectors of the population, then, what we have is that the sectors where this right is not in force are not demanding it either.
- Decision-makers privilege access policies, generally

scholarships, but not the process that takes place inside schools, especially in the classrooms, that is not what is privileged in educational policies; the motivation of decision makers is to raise the averages, but averages can be raised by working with those who are in the average and above it, or by raising the floor, which is the way we achieve equity, that is also what Fe y Alegría is doing, it is working by raising the floor, and when the floor is raised, everyone improves, necessarily.

- The conditions of educability of the families with whom Fe y Alegría works are often too fragile for the learning process to take place: environmental violence, food and nutrition issues, insecurity.
- Equity-oriented policies generally take longer to have an effect among the poorest sectors, but when evaluations are made this is not taken into account and when the sectors that are not so disadvantaged achieve it, the program is cancelled because the others have not achieved it and the program is cancelled before it has had any effect on them.
- Tendency to design single models, homogeneous curricula. In the face of diversity, the single model

does not work; Fe y Alegría attends to diversity. Intersectionality, disadvantages tend to accumulate, but public policies take into account only one part in the design, they never take into account their accumulation.

- The last mile...that is also what Fe y Alegría does. The difficulty of reaching the frontiers is so difficult because there are no roads, because it is so difficult to reach them, because they speak another language, it is not economically possible to reach them. Fe y Alegría goes the last mile, educational policies do not go that far.

Interculturality and networking.

Our countries are rich in diversity, but racism has prevented us from seeing this richness and has also destroyed part of it. Interculturality, not only refers to specific populations or communities, but it is also the intentionality of an anti-racist education that we all need because our countries are deeply racist, so working for interculturality should be for everyone. We have to integrate intercultural education in all our programs.

As a network, it is necessary to dialogue, to broaden Fe y Alegría's dialogues with private schools, but also with public schools in the same territories, to dialogue with other works.

Share courses, documents, innovations. Demand the involvement of universities in their territories, so that they study and disseminate what Fe y Alegría does.

Fe y Alegría is a gold mine, it is a treasure, but little is known about it. We must study it a lot, therein lies the solution to many problems of our countries towards a more comprehensive inclusive education, denouncing educational inequalities and requesting the strengthening of basic and higher skills, critical thinking and values of coexistence.

Thank you very much for your attention.

4.3 Education in Africa and Madagascar³

Fr. Tsayem Saturnin S.J.

Director of Fe y Alegría Tchad

Introduction: Africa at a glance

Africa is a vast, young and rich continent with an area of 30,415,873 km. It is home to 54 countries. With an estimated population of 1,308 million, Africa is the second largest continent in the world after Asia and accounted for 17.2% of the world's population in 2020. There are between 2,000 and 3,000 ethnic groups speaking more than 2,138 languages.

Africa is a continent with multiple riches, including its diversity (cultural, linguistic, customs, traditions, etc.) and its natural resources (especially the subsoil). Unfortunately, most of these resources are exported unprocessed, under poorly negotiated contracts that hardly benefit the African people. Con

sequently, they have little beneficial impact on the economic situation of African countries and in this respect, Africa remains

3. Fr. Tsayem Saturnin S.J. presented the challenges in education from Africa in the Conversation: "Challenges and opportunities of education in the current context from the approach of human rights (Quality, continuity, coverage, access, inclusion, relevance, equity and right to learn) for the transformative action of the Movement". Presented on the second day of the Congress

the least developed continent on the planet. But even if the economic situation has improved somewhat in recent years, in a context of strong demographic growth, the question arises as to its ability to cope with rising mass unemployment and underemployment. In addition, some countries are suffering from war, political instability and terrorism.

As a result, poverty, scarcity, mismanagement, poor governance, external shocks and other crises mean that education is not a priority. In fact, most countries devote less than 20% of their national budget to education.

If for Wole Soyinka, the famous Nigerian Nobel laureate, the African education system produced high-level results and that Africa's rich cultural heritage and traditional teachings had forged well-balanced individuals over many years, it is nevertheless important to note that education in Africa today faces several challenges, a situation aggravated by Covid-19. These challenges are perceptible from the point of view of educational quality, coverage and access to education, the inclusiveness of the education system, the very relevance of the education provided, equity and the right to learn.

Access to education

To begin with, it should be emphasized that a look at the African continent reveals great dis-

parities between countries in terms of education. Indeed, one of the biggest challenges has been to ensure equitable access to education in all regions and demographic groups, with significant progress having been made in recent years. According to UNESCO's latest Global Education Monitoring Report 2023, the out-of-school population in primary and secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa has fallen from 44% in 2000 to 29% in 2020.

However, according to UNESCO, "more than 20% of children aged 6 to 11 and more than 33% of those aged 12 to 14 are out of school in sub-Saharan Africa. In the 15-17 age group, this rate rises to 60%." According to UNICEF data, there were some 105 million children of primary and secondary school age out of school in Africa in 2019, or 41% of the global total.

The difficulty of access to education is related to the correlation between demand and supply. Disparities/inequalities in access to education are notable on African soil, and these disparities are particularly striking in urban and rural areas, in peripheral regions and in rather modernized environments. Rural areas, marginalized communities and girls have often faced obstacles in accessing quality education.

In addition, many children drop out of school without completing their studies. Furthermore, their place of residence, disabili-

lity, insecurity, climate change, natural disasters and epidemics have a significant impact on their access to education and create indescribable psychological frustrations.

Quality of education

Although access to education has improved in Africa, maintaining consistent quality remains a challenge. Teacher shortages, outdated curricula and a lack of qualified educators impact the overall quality of learning.

According to the Institute for Security Studies, in June 2024 the quality of education in Africa is poor. Moreover, the state of global learning poverty in 2022 indicates that almost 90% of African 10-year-olds do not understand what they read. In other words, Africa is also facing a global learning crisis.

In addition, about 80% of children in sub-Saharan Africa are still not being taught in their mother tongue, severely hampering learning outcomes. Worse still, the learning crisis threatens the future of entire generations in Africa. More than eight out of ten children fail to achieve minimum proficiency thresholds in reading and mathematics.

Compared to the 1970s and 1980s, the quality of education in Africa seems to have deteriorated. And this deterioration is even more worrisome due to the

educational policies of some African countries, which do not allow students to repeat grades because they do not have the necessary level to move on to the next one.

The quality of education in Africa is also compromised by curricula that are not adapted to local realities. Schools lack essential resources such as teaching materials, libraries and laboratories. Teachers, often poorly trained and poorly paid, are unable to provide quality education. School infrastructures are inadequate and lack classrooms, furniture and basic facilities such as drinking water and electricity.

Inclusion in education

Poverty, disability and gender are some of the main issues of school inclusion in Africa. Although Africa has one of the highest population growth rates in the world, according to data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, more than 97 million children are out of school in sub-Saharan Africa. But, depending on the region and/or country, there are wide variations in the extent, pace and policy orientation of the changes undertaken in favor of inclusive education: for example, in Niger, six out of ten children now complete primary education, compared to only four ten years ago. In Madagascar, over the same period, we have gone from one

child to four out of ten today.

Although poverty remains the main factor affecting access to quality education in Africa, it is worth noting that children from affluent families are three times more likely to complete primary education than those from poor families. They are also twenty times more likely to complete secondary education. The policy of several African countries speaks of free education, which in most cases remains a slogan rather than a reality.

The gender issue, and in particular that of girls' schooling, remains a major concern. In some traditions and religions, it is considered that women are the ones in charge of the household and therefore girls have to be prepared for the services required in the home, they do not need to go to school.

Despite the progress made in school inclusion, a large number of children are still out of school in Africa. Moreover, given the diversity of ethnicities, backgrounds, cultural groups, languages and religions, exclusion in Africa can be much greater.

Relevance of education

Educational programs, often disconnected from local realities, do not respond effectively to the needs of communities.

Training programs are not designed to meet the real needs of our societies.

Equity in education

Equity means giving all children equal access to an appropriate, quality and relevant education. It is about ensuring that students' personal and social circumstances are not an obstacle to achieving their educational potential. The conditions for equitable access to quality education are influenced by a wide range of factors, some of which are beyond the control of governments.

In Africa, there is disparity in education. Social inequalities, crises, conflicts and natural disasters have a huge impact on the education of the most vulnerable children.

Right to learn

The right means that all children, adolescents, young people and adults should have access to quality education. Everyone should have the same opportunities, regardless of their origin, gender, social or economic status. But this is not the case in many African countries. When we talk about the right to learn in Africa, we have to realize that the public system does not invest enough in education. When we talk about the right in budgetary or political terms, we see

that several African states do not invest enough in education.

Conclusion

Although there have been significant advances and reforms in various aspects of education in Africa, much remains to be done.

To reduce youth unemployment and meet market needs, several African countries are adopting technical and vocational education. But infrastructures and training programs are often outdated or inadequate.

As we know, the task of educating citizens is a sovereign one. However, here and there we observe an incomplete commitment to education by governments. Because of this failure, we believe that in Africa it is up to parents to take up the baton to ensure that their children receive a better education.

4.4 Youth voice⁴

Tatiana Cardona

Youth Initiative Coordinator

International Federation Fe y Alegría

They call me Tata in my city and my country, and today I have the

honor of representing the young people of Fe y Alegría. I am here to tell you about my journey and that of many young people who, like me, are committed to our right to learn. And when I say learn, I don't just mean sit in a classroom and memorize facts, transcribe texts or simply be recipients of information. I am referring to the meaning and commitment that learning has for us and for others: that of transforming life.

I remember my days in public school. I was in my classroom, on one of those long days where time seemed to stand still. The teacher was talking about dates and historical figures, but my mind was somewhere else. I wondered: Where is this? When could I meet him? What does this have to do with my history, with my neighborhood? Is this information for the next exam? Something inside me told me it should be more. Maybe learning meant connecting with life? With our dreams and with our realities? My passions have always been clear: history, community work and art? But sadly, school was not always able to accompany those dreams. It did not have the pedagogical and community tools to lead me to explore my interests. And so, like many young people, I grew up with gaps in my learning. To be honest, I have difficulty writing,

4. This paper was presented in the panel "The Right to Learn in Vulnerable Communities", during the first day of the Congress.

sometimes I eat words, and I don't notice them, even if I read them several times, formulas in excel cost me too. These are barriers that should not be there but are part of our reality. The school was important, but I feel it could have given more. This has been the impetus to strengthen my personal and citizenship skills hand in hand with the educational and community processes of Fe y Alegría de Colombia.

Today, from this corner (that is, from my place of enunciation), I share with you a call from young people to continue guaranteeing an education for life, capable of helping us to discover ourselves and the world from a critical and proactive perspective. An education that leads us to make decisions about the future and the present. In other words, we not only want to receive information, we also want to build knowledge that allows us to understand reality and act upon it.

In the last few months, from the FIFYA Youth Initiative, we met to talk with 1,307 young people linked to Fe y Alegría's formal educational centers in 11 countries. The conversation revolved around the place of school and learning in our lives. There we confirmed what we all know that the educational system does not always respond to the needs

and expectations we have. Being in the classroom, having information through books or the internet is important, but it is not enough in the act of learning. It is necessary to combine other skills such as knowing, doing, living together, undertaking, enjoying and transforming ourselves, from an ethical perspective that leads us, among others, not to accept what is unacceptable.

Along these lines, I would like to share with you five conclusions of the reflection process of young people regarding our right to learn:

First conclusion

Recognition of the school as a space for life, as our safe place. School is the privileged place for learning and friendship. Therefore, in the learning process it is important to consider two elements that sometimes generate tension:

- The pressure to learn quickly, to accumulate knowledge, leaves us exhausted and without space for deep reflection. We do not want a race to the finish line. We want to learn at a human pace, where we really understand what we are doing,

where life experiences are intertwined with knowledge. In a reflection meeting a young man said, "I feel tired because the world is accelerating, and teachers are accelerating" Why are we being taught by running? Are we in a performance-only society?"

- This question resonates because it reflects what many of us feel: a constant race to reach the end, to comply with a program, to achieve academic goals without space for deep reflection or time to truly understand what we are doing. But learning cannot be a race, we need time to process, to question, to fail, to contrast, to re-signify. We want an education that respects our time, that does not make us feel that we must run after knowledge that escapes us, but that gives us space to live it, to appropriate it, and to connect it with our daily realities.
- On the other hand, young people tell us that grades cannot be the only focus of learning, evaluations must reflect a real and authentic understanding, we

want to value what we can do, how we can think, and how we face the challenges we face, education must be a space where we can value our learning, that helps us to grow and believe in our abilities and skills, not just compete for the best grade or the best performance. Where the focus is on valuing learning and not on evaluating learning or memory. We want feedback on our academic process so that we can recognize areas for improvement. In this way, we can be an active part of the learning process, not just mere recipients of information and grades. As Justin from Nicaragua says "I want to go to school away from a podium". Why should we all be measured equally when we start from different conditions?

Second conclusion

Do not lose sight of the integrity of the person in the learning process. We are not unaware that academic knowledge is very important because it gives us the possibility to understand how the world works, however, we also need to learn to know and understand ourselves. We experience many ups and downs in

our emotional life, for example, we feel fear of the future, will we have the opportunity and the ability to work and guarantee our living conditions; we also experience great frustrations because we doubt whether we have the ability to achieve the goals we set for ourselves. That is why we ask you to continue accompanying us to guide us in this process of socioemotional management. We are grateful for the spaces of listening, training, close accompaniment, meeting with peers... that allow us to choose to take care of ourselves and others.

In these years that we have been participating in the federative youth network called Generation 21+ Network, we have learned that in the dynamics of care it is necessary to define practices to take care of me, to take care of you and to take care of us, this has been definitive in my commitment as a citizen, as a Citizen.

Third conclusion

Recognition that we are a society, a profoundly diverse world, and we believe that we all have to learn to live together from an equitable, egalitarian and inclusive perspective. This means eliminating barriers to the guarantee of basic rights and - in

particular the right to education - that some people have because of their race, gender, sexual orientation, religion or disability. We want inclusive schools, but we also want to learn from exclusions so as not to repeat them. We want a social structure that respects diversity and allows every historically excluded group to have participation and representation in school life.

Fe y Alegría must be committed to continue having a presence and educational proposals that allow girls and women to learn, especially those from dispersed rural areas. Women experience greater difficulties to be and remain in the educational system and many of them are associated with cultural learning that relegate us from public life and place us in family work or informal economy. We also have the power to choose, and the school must train us to do so.

Fourth conclusion

Environmental justice. We know that recycling is important, but we also recognize that it is not enough. The planet is suffering, and we young people feel the urgency to do more. As an educational community, we are called to prepare ourselves to face environmental challenges with a critical, proactive and com-

mitted vision of life. Environmental justice is not just about separating waste, it is about understanding how our actions, decisions and economic models directly impact the most vulnerable communities and our natural environment. We must prepare ourselves to demand public policies that really make a difference and generate impact.

Fifth conclusion

Young graduates or those who are part of social promotion and community development processes participated in this space. They raised a fundamental question: how do we guarantee lifelong learning and how do we diversify the learning spaces that allow the deployment of other capacities and talents that give meaning and content to the life experience? This challenge makes sense insofar as it is urgent to recover the sense of aesthetics, of the body, of the sensitive world, but also that which is capable of inviting social participation in the territory to generate the changes that are possible. Therefore, learning is not exclusive to the classroom and the formal school, the community centers, the community action boards, the park, the corners of the neighborhoods, the rivers, the

dirt roads of the mountains, are privileged spaces for learning.

An apprenticeship that does not stop believing in us, that does not forget that young people have the right to look, think, speak, write, dream and work with others to make dreams come true.

Let us defend together the school that is the seed of humanity, of a new humanity that understands that the human being is body, hands, heart, feet and brain.





Closing remarks

*Carlos Vargas.
National Director of Fe y Alegría
Ecuador.*

Dear Fe y Alegría Family,

We have lived these days of the Congress with joy and enthusiasm, in which the main focus has been on conversation, contribution and debate, in relation to the Challenges of Popular Education in Fe y Alegría. To paraphrase Echeverría: "Language is the key to knowing what we are and how we are. We are our conversations" and on this occasion, we have placed education, pedagogy and learning at the center of our conversations, identifying their challenges that confirm to us that education is an essential element that makes the exercise of other rights possible.

We are a Movement, therefore, after the Congress, all the federated and emerging Fe y Alegría Centers cannot stay in our comfort zone, we have to get involved and mobilize. Daring to go further, that is our DNA that drives us to dare to influence from our potential and to continue to reflect critically on our practice in the face of what we still need to work on, to promote comprehensive and quality learning, to guarantee a full and dignified life for all.

The National Directorates are called upon to lead educational change, together with the teams, and to contribute to global educational justice, without renouncing the contribution that the Fe y Alegría educational proposal offers to public education. Reflection on educational practices and learning gaps moves us to recreate the guiding pedagogical framework and reaffirm our commitment to Popular Education and make it a reality in the different contexts of our educational work.

Fe y Alegría, throughout its educational journey at both the federative and national levels, has developed educational proposals and models that respond to the diverse national contexts in which it operates. However, it is essential to pause and reflect on whether our response truly embraces a holistic approach—one that ensures the integral formation of educators, students, and the broader community. This

requires strengthening the Movement's identity and educational actions through an inspiration deeply rooted in its history and lived experiences in each country. An educational proposal or model should embody our commitment to the integral development of students and the construction of a more just and equitable society. It must emerge from reflective engagement with the realities in which we carry out Popular Education, fostering relationships, dialogues, and debates that mobilize individuals in the pursuit of the common good through education, ultimately driving societal transformation.

While it is still too early to draw definitive conclusions, I would like to suggest, in the spirit of equity, some key areas that we need to incorporate into our daily work:

The humanizing school
Socio-emotional aspect
The subject and critical thinking

Global citizenship
Learning communities
Comprehensive education

Lifelong learning.
The sense of community for learning development







Challenges and Opportunities for Fe y Alegría Popular Education