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A Learning Revolution in Mexico Contribution to GTI Forum [The Pedagogy of Transition](#)

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It is refreshing to read this month's contributions on the role that education, formal and informal, should have in the epochal struggle facing humankind. Our various efforts to stir rebellion amongst the doubly captive educational audiences in formal settings receive welcome support from the arguments being elucidated.

One aspect of concern in the discussions is the contrast between the very high order of the changes being proposed as imperatives and the rather conventional means being advanced to implement them. Is it not that the vision is still predominantly top-down, over-reliant on committees of experts and social policies? My contribution puts forward Wendell Berry's dictum that "the necessary political changes will be made only in response to changed people."¹

I want to call attention to the social movement among teachers in poor public schools of Mexico—and elsewhere—that are realizing in simple, yet powerful, ways the goals being advanced as crucial to face the dire challenges we now face.² It all starts from the conviction that teachers and students in present, mostly public, formal education are prevented from engaging personally with one another to freely share what one knows and the other wants to learn.

Consciously changing understandings, feelings, and actions in response to evidence, experience, and reflection are, as the late Richard Elmore used to say, everybody's genetic and social endowment—but it rarely takes place as such in regular schools. Fortunately, on the fringes of the system, in poor unitary schools, it is more likely that needy students see more clearly that the King being offered them has no clothing of which to speak. The predicament teachers face is either to accommodate their students' genuine interests to learn or to risk being deserted.

Teachers have to put things upside down—or, perhaps more appropriately, straighten them up—by making subject matter, time, and mode a function of learning, not the other way around. Each student trusted, being attended to, challenged to choose according to interest, etc., achieves the desired traits of the education we want. The school setting becomes a community of learners, each member acting as tutor or tutee according to interest and knowledge. Aided by digital technologies, courageous teachers in this social movement share knowledge the way indigenous communities in Mexico share goods and services in what it is called “tequio”: informed, free exchanges in a community of equals.

As is the destiny of social movements, teachers engaged in tutorial and communal learning are already becoming interlocutors of official authorities, forced by the pandemic to consider more radical changes. Hopefully, the movement is reaching a tipping point with minimal yet powerful equipment. It achieves the development of critical, whole, and engaged teachers and students, even engaging their family members, accessing the resource best distributed in the world—the power of each person. Other means are but accessories.

In Mexico, 52,452 public elementary and middle schools (34.5%) are formally graded, but have fewer teachers than the number of grades. In what officially were deemed less desired and understandably less attended schools, teachers were freer to discover that engaging in dialogue and constantly dovetailing the interest of the apprentice with the capacity of the tutor accomplished the often-touted goal of basic education: learning to learn by oneself, of course, but also and foremost, learning to care for others. With wide variations, the movement, officially or not, is alive among more than 40,000 teachers and their students, ready to consciously learn in depth what needs to be known and acted upon by as many people as possible.

Endnotes

1. Wendell Berry, *Our Own World* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2015), 71.
2. See, for example, <https://redesdetutoria.com/>.

About the Author



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