"Bases for a Curriculum Design in Educational Institutions of Quality"

(Paper presented at the XIV World Congress of Comparative Education,
Istambul, 14-18 June, 2010)

Samuel Gento &
Raúl González

The axiological basis of curriculum design

The critical analysis of current educational institutions is claiming for their urgent transformation, although not for their elimination. By considering this, the important question is how to conveniently clarify the basic tendency on which today´s educational reform should be based. But it is becoming progressively clearer that education is a complex phenomenon and that there are diverse components and a number of elements intervening in its implementation and results (Gento, S., 2002). We have particularly considered the need of clarifying the definition of appropriate results or, which is the same, *what is the true product of an education of quality*.

In relation to that, the report of OECD "Schools and Quality of Teaching" sets up the following consideration: "Those who claim for a bigger attention to results should clarify if priority must be given to the specifically cognitive results, or if among the desired aims should be equally included the education wider purposes to embrace the emotional, social, aesthetic and moral learning" (OCDE, 1991). Although the purposes of education enunciated by this source are not complete, it gives us an opportunity to offer arguments in favour of *our own fundamental proposal for an educational curriculum design, particularly when it is related to basic education*.

We are attending today to a true watershed in education conception and, according to that, the hitherto relevant concern in curriculum design for giving priority to knowledge acquisition should give way to a new situation that concede more importance to the specific condition of human beings (who are not only mechanisms able to accumulate knowledge), as a guarantee of their essential ability to assure their survival and to guarantee their future in harmony with their environment and with their fellow people. In this sense, Professor Alvin Toffler asserts that "nothing must be included in a curriculum unless it will be strongly justified in terms of future" (Toffler, A., 1990: 409).

By contrary, the same author indicates that the today's curriculum is a vestige of past time and it does not have meaning (Toffler, A., 1990: 410). The efforts recently made in favour of the inclusion of values in study plans or curriculum designs have inserted "*values as transversal subjects*" that must be developed through other fundamental curriculum subjects. This situation has appeared in different countries, among them Spain. Nevertheless, the increasing claim for extending training in values, as a saving table to

solve the many growing problems existing in our today´s societies and, frequently, in our schools, is determining a revision of this today´s situation.

Relevant in themselves, in this meaning, are the words of the Mexican researcher Rolando E. Maggi Yáñez, when he expresses himself this way: "From the curricular point of view, the current tendency focuses in the increase of quality and education in values and attitudes that will be introduced according to the idea of universality (…). Although we estimate this idea as pertinent, we must also consider that what has been attained till now has not given the wished results: this has produced the existence of grave shortages in fundamental aspects of education" (Maggi, R.E., 1997: 230). This statement, referred to the Mexican context, should also be extended to other countries.

To overcome this formative shortage in curriculum or study plans, *our proposal puts upside down the essential existing approach*: instead of considering the knowledge contents (epistemological approach) as basic for curriculum design to what it is afterwards added education in values as transversal contents, the approach we propose should be the inversed one. *Our approach is not to submit values to knowledge contents; by contrary, the epistemological development must be implemented by submitting it to an axiological approach*: the idea is to firstly clarify those values that should be developed through education (as fundamental product of this education) and to implement, then, this fundamental purpose throughout the use of cognitive elements proceeding from diverse areas of knowledge.

Values, as the authentic product of education

The educational product, understood as the basic entity of education or (which is the same) as the specific authentic result that education should produce, must be the *basis or ground to a curriculum reshape*. The particular educational product of an educational institution is, obviously, centred on the attainment of 'education'. But this general idea, involves itself a diversity of components that should be specified, explicitly stated and made operative, in order to facilitate its subsequent assessment.

Education implies a typically human process, implemented through an intentional and integrating process, in order to optimize the behaviour most convenient to each individual in his/her own environment and context: this process is basically consisting of knowledge acquisition, automation of ways of behaving and internalisation of attitudes that give him/her valuable quality in general and in his/her own peculiarities.

As a consequence, we consider education as the integral promotion of a human being in all his/her dimensions and peculiar features. This meaning of integrality compels us to consider *education as a product in terms of a human being's global promotion*. Nevertheless, the need to understand the components of this unitary promotion forces us, first of all, to identify such components; and, then, to profoundly study their content. After intensely reflecting upon them and on the essential meaning that education has, our conclusion is that *the most important and specific contribution that education makes to the human being is values promotion* (Gento, S., 2002: 67-83).

Research purpose

Reviewing studies about frame values in educational systems from different countries, we found out, as a most revealing contribution, the synthesis offered by UNESCO in one of its reports (UNESCO, 1972, quoted by Marín, R., 1993: 56): we reproduce here such synthesis (Table 1). It shows a description of frame values put forward by various countries whose basic educational conception could be different; nevertheless, the report demonstrates highly interesting coincidences in values they want to be promoted through education in disparate countries.

Values put forward	*Countries*									
	South Arabia	Austria	Indonesia	Ireland	China	Great Britain	Ruanda	Russia	Zambia	Total
Physical	●			●	●	●	●	●	●	78%
Intellectual	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	89%
Moral	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100%
Social & Practical	●	●	●	●	●	●			●	78%
Aesthetic & artistic	●						●		●	22%
Religious	●	●	●	●			●			56%

Table 1.- <u>Values put forward to be promoted by education</u> (UNESCO, 1972)

It may also be considered that "most of the universal values that will be necessary to promote throughout XXI century have been inscribed, for quite a long of time, in the millenary traditions of great civilizations. These ones simply reflect the moral or ethical conceptions and the ideal of life, of humanity, of beauty, of justice and of freedom defended by our ancestors and magnificently maintained in the treasures of thinking" (Delors, J:, 1996: 287).

We, as educational researchers, decided, after a conceptual analysis and a comparative study of the situation, that *-in a nowadays integral conception of education– this one should essentially promote values derived from human being´s dimensions*. As a consequence, the values to be promoted should be organised around the following types of formation (<u>Table 2</u>): physical-emotional, intellectual, moral or ethical, aesthetic, civic-social, ecological, practical or utilitarian, and religious.

Human dimension	Educational area	Values to be promoted by education
Physical	Physical-emotional	Promotion of integrity, survival, physical function and emotional balance
Spiritual	Intellectual	Development of knowledge and conscience, intellectual attitudes and strategies
	Moral	Promotion of responsible free behaviour
	Aesthetic	Perception, enjoyment and promotion of aesthetic manifestations
Socio-relational	Civic-Social-	Accommodation to configuration and functioning of human groups and on their cultural manifestations
	Ecological	Respect and accommodation of human beings to their context and environment
	Practical	Development of the ability to survive and to successfully being integrated in diverse contexts
Transcendental	Religious	Free and responsible supreme acceptance and justification of personal and cosmic limits

Table 2.- <u>Values to be promoted by education</u> (Gent, S., 1996; 2002)

As a consequence, an educational product of true quality should try to attain the firm development of values that correspond to the above mentioned formative dimensions and educational areas. Nevertheless, and assuming that these are values to be promoted by a general and extended education for every person, *each educational initiative will determine, in the end, its own axiological profile*: according to this, some values could be stressed or considered of less importance for the specific pupils or students to be educated in a particular educational entity.

Theoretical framework

The current profound concern in values proceeds, in a certain high measure, from the current social context. Perhaps the stressed anxiety that it is today felt for the 'axiology' and, particularly, for values, is due to the "lack of traditional values previously consolidated, or to the co-existence of values that are each other contradictory, or because we attend to processes of change or redefinition of old values: this is probably determining an unclear axiological panorama to orientate behaviour of educating human beings. Anyhow, we perceive today the lack of orientation that affects all the human life's spheres" (Hernando, M.A., 1998: 78-79).

However, some recent reports show that education seems to lag behind current reality: *"The educational national systems are nearly invariably based on principles*

proceeding from believes previous to nuclear and planetary era. For this reason, they are unable to offer a new model of thinking that is claimed by humanity´s well-being and survival" (Delors, J., 1996: 263-264).

This impression is also ratified by Alvin Toffler (Toffler, A., 1990: 416), when he writes: "*Whenever the question of values becomes more crucial, less prone seem our current schools to consider it. It does not seem strange that millions of youngster go around erratic ways towards their future, bouncing here and there as projectiles without a target*".

But the need to insert values into education has become progressively more emphasised: "The quality we are looking for as a result of basic education must be clearly understood as its ability to offer our students the mastering of basic cultural codes, the abilities to democratic and citizenship participation, the promotion of the ability to solve problems and to continue learning, and the development of values and attitudes according to a society that is longing for a life of quality for all its inhabitants" (Schmelkes, S., 1995: 13).

In order to specify the general notion and to facilitate the analysis of different categories of values that will determine the above mentioned formative areas, we briefly describe each one of them. The value types corresponding to the different educational areas are included in basic categories. Each one of these categories must be specified in terms of competencies. These competencies will give origin to particular skills.

Values of the human physical-emotional dimension

Physical education or formation must be oriented to guarantee, in as much as possible, each individual's survival and physical development in the best possible conditions of integrity and successful functioning of faculties, mainly the ones from bodily type or derived from body functioning. Values of emotional type are also considered as part of this group, because emotional manifestations have ever an undoubtedly bodily basis.

Physical education must, then, be considered as a necessity of taking care of human physical dimension. Other contents to be considered as necessary to develop this dimension are also: psychomotor development, health education, care of physical condition, security and traffic education. Health maintenance and care will also include preventive medicine and hygiene.

The human being is a non divisible entity and, as a consequence, it is not possible to set up separate parts that will independently function: so, physical dimension is considered as part of the whole human being. However, the need to suitably understand such dimension asks for it to be specified to facilitate its study. García Pelayo, R. (1985) identifies it as "the magnitude related to human being's body". And ENCARTA (1997) considers it as "the importance given to bodily nature and constitution, opposite to the mental, spiritual and moral one".

The importance of physical and emotional values is clear for the African leader Nelson Mandela, when he expresses himself this way: "I have always believed that (physical) exercise is not only a key to physical health but to peace of mind. Many times in the old days I unleashed my anger and frustration on a punching bag rather than taking it out on a comrade or even o policeman. Exercise dissipates tension, and tension is the enemy of serenity. I found out that I worked better and thought more clearly when I was in good physical condition, and so training became one of the inflexible disciplines of my life" (Mandela, N., 1995: 490).

On the other hand, Lidell, L. (1989: 116) writes in relation to the importance of our physical dimension: "We are three-dimensional beings, made of flesh and bones, muscles and ligaments, organs, veins and arteries. All these elements form the furniture of our internal space. Only if we are present in it and learn to perceive it this way, we shall be able to transform it".

We mention, next, some axiological basic categories of physical and emotional values that must be promoted by education in order to attain an educational product of authentic quality:

> ➢ Health
> ➢ Sensory and motive functionality
> ➢ Personal hygiene
> ➢ Nutritional balance
> ➢ Balanced sexuality
> ➢ Physical and emotional stability
> ➢ Self confidence

Values of spiritual dimension

Values of human being's spiritual dimension refer to his/her peculiarity as a rational and intelligent being: this dimension offers features that distinguish a human being from other living beings of this planet. The most popular meaning of spiritual values refers to their opposition to material or physical features. But the classification of values we have set up has been made up by considering such values in their relationship with human beings. Perhaps we can find out one of the best conceptual frame accommodated to values of human dimension in the Spanish philosopher J. Ortega y Gasset (1994) who, when he refers to spiritual values, includes the intellectual, moral and aesthetic ones within them, as we do in our proposal.

Within this basic dimension of a human being, we consider, then, types of values such as: intellectual, moral and aesthetic. Education, as an integral promotion of each human person´s components, must consider all values corresponding to his/her own peculiar dimensions and must, then, include all corresponding diverse types of education, every time according to an integral and global focus, due to the fact that a human being is an integral and unique entity.

Intellectual values

The promotion of intellectual values can be summarised in the '*supreme tendency towards truth'*, through the domain of knowledge. In the area of intellectual training, a good educational product of quality means the attainment of three fundamental formative blocks that are: knowledge acquisition (conceptual contents); the automation of procedures (habits and techniques of intellectual values), and internalisation of attitudes towards knowledge. These attitudes constitute permanent dispositions to estimate, appreciate and, as a consequence, to behave in a peculiar intelligent way (Marín, R., 1993: 64).

The consideration of values as the nuclear pillar of education takes us to put forward that such values should be the essential nucleus, around which conceptual contents, skills and procedures should be developed. But, in order to promote these three blocks according to requirements of quality, their treatment must assume the three following requisites (Mortimore, P., 1993: 29): "to be reached within the less possible time and effort; to be integrated with other knowledge, procedures and attitudes; and to persist the necessary time to produce relevant effects on educated people".

With a wider openness in her focus, perhaps because she is closer to the total quality paradigm in education, Sylvia Schmelkes gives a wider vision (although not complete nor systematic) of aspects to be included in intellectual training: "The relevance (of knowledge contents) cannot be understood as giving the students some 'relevant' data, that will be close to what they experiment in their ordinary life outside the school. The most relevant content is the skill to understand the written language and to express it through writing, to reasoning, to solving problems, to analysing, to assessing options and to getting information. This implies putting stronger emphasis on skills than on knowledge contents. However, skills can be developed by contents that underline what students are, in a special way, interested in (Schmelkes, S., 1995: 121-122).

Alvin Toffler also claims for a focus on intellectual training that will not be restricted to the knowledge acquisition, when he states: "The tomorrow's schools must teach not only data, but the way to manage them. Students must learn how to reject old ideas, how and when to substitute them. They must, in the end, learn to learn" (Toffler, A., 1990).

Moral values

The individual *ability to freely and responsibly act* -according to behaving principles that each one imposes to him/herself- should be considered as the true dynamic nucleus of moral education. The fundamental condition of moral behaviour is freedom, and such behaviour will be as more moral as freer it will be: what reduces freedom also diminishes the conduct responsibility. Nevertheless, not everything that can be made is morally licit: responsibility, as the accommodation to moral principles and rules, is an impending pre-requisite to morality.

The German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1827) has set up some features of morality, which have been accepted by modern philosophy. According to Kant, the moral values should answer to characteristics such as:

- ➢ To be absolute or unconditioned, differently from other conditioned values;
- ➢ To be accommodated to a universal norm;
- ➢ To consider each person as an end, not as a way to other targets.

However, to distinguish a moral norm from other ones is not ever easy: only one norm reaches the condition of a moral one when it commands or prohibits something that directly affects human personality in something as fundamental as life, honour or dignity. As a consequence, the promotion of moral values (accommodated to moral norms) through education will produce a general improvement in behaviour of people who are educated in propitious personal and social environment.

As moral values are the most profound and obligatory for every human being, their treatment is wholly compulsory in education. In relation to *moral training*, it is important to offer an educational product that will be suitably impregnated of such values (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1994: 37-46). But it is necessary to respect the balance between values of social projection (such as coexistence, tolerance, respect, collaborative integration, etc.) and those of personal self-assertion (such as responsibility, self-inhibition, effort, sacrifice, etc.).

Aesthetic values

The diverse forms of expressing aesthetic or artistic values imply the use of different rules and elements that are combined in a peculiar way: this combination of rules and peculiar elements constitutes the 'codes' or normative construct of each artistic manifestation. This normative construct can be used as a point of departure to understand and to enjoy aesthetic works. Such aesthetic works will be the peculiar manifestations of beauty and of artistic creation.

But the combination of aesthetic rules and standards changes from one epoch to another one. It is, even, possible that particular individuals have their own peculiar conception and interpretative frameworks for the same aesthetic work, or that such individuals use the artistic standards in a different way to conceive and to make up an artistic work.

As a summary, artistic interpretation and creation ask for a personal and collective contribution by human beings. So, then: "The creative use of the plastic, dramatic and musical representation means the personal and innovative creation of elements integrating the codes, that are present in the creative particular artistic work: this implies going further than the use other people have made of the code, and overcoming previous solutions and ways other people have followed" (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1989: 150).

As typical manifestations of creative artistic contributions, we can refer to the following ones:

➢ *Music*, as an expression of harmony in sounds;
➢ Plastic expression, *or "visual arts"*, manifested through painting, drawing, photography or sculpture;
➢ Bodily expression, manifested through *mime or pantomime*;
➢ Combined expression of diverse channels of communication, represented by *theatre and movies;*
➢ Written expression that, when it reaches the condition of beauty, transforms itself into *literature* (theatre, poetry, novel, etc.).

<u>Values of socio-relational dimension</u>

The values of socio-relational dimension refer themselves to the human being´s condition that helps him/her survive with their fellow human beings, within a specific atmosphere of relationship and placed in a peculiar environment and context. The importance of values of socio-relational dimension appears clear in Nelson Mandela´s statement (1995: 334): "Nothing is more de-humanising than absence of human company".

Included in the socio-relational dimension of a human being, we can consider, on the one hand, civic and ecological values and, on the other one, the need to reach the necessary training for him/her being able to satisfy his/her goals of success: this will be attained through the development of *practical values*.

As the human being has an inevitable social dimension and as society is his/her ordinary natural environment to live, values of socio-relational dimension should necessarily be promoted by education. On the other hand, although peculiarity of today´s organisations and institutions claim for the necessary development of social and ecological education, the peculiarity of educational institutions asks for a specific treatment of such education.

Civic-social values

Social education does not imply, per se, a moral attitude towards society; but it seems that it cannot be a perfect adjustment to the human group nor advancement of such group without a moral background to face different problems that social relationship among human beings produce. Anyhow, the moral implication can also be a necessary part of any other type of education.

In general, *a human being shows an adequate social education when he/she shows respect to collective patrimony (this implying rules, symbols and uses) of a specific human group and contributes to the general progress of such group.* The respectful manifestation does not imply, per se, a moral or ethical component, although, in fact, it could proceed

from a moral attitude, as it is not easy to respect a rule if you are not persuaded of its morality.

By contrary, when with legitimate interpretative rectitude one considers a social rule as a not moral at all, he/she will be facing a grave dilemma, because the supreme respect to moral values claim for a rejection and not acceptance of such supposedly immoral or not moral rule.

Although in some cases it may be difficult to distinguish social education from the moral one, we consider that social education, "sensu stricto", refers to individual´s operative acceptance of configuration and functioning ways of collective entities where he/she is immersed. In the end, *this type of education involves: the assimilation of uses, habits, and rules; a balanced adaptation to them (which will not be obstacle to possible critical focuses); and a proactive attitude that will determine participation in the promotion of human groups or social entities* (these social entities can be the ones where the individual is immersed, or can be some other ones).

A successful interpersonal relationship depends on the ability to understand the reference frame of the group, in its own environment. As a consequence, to attain a constructive understanding of the collective patrimony "it is necessary to maintain an inclusive social dialogue, by which individuals could be able to understand diverse experiences and viewpoints of other people. This, not only asks for a generalisation of education 'for' democracy (with the meaning that students need to learn typical behaviour of good citizens), but an education 'as' democracy, which means: an education that offers students access to social understanding through de promotion of their participation in pluralistic communities, of their intercommunication and of their intervention in decision making, and of their coming near to understanding multiple options (Darling-Hammond, L., 1997: 30).

A process of classroom interaction, that will produce a good relationship of the teacher with his/her students and of the students with themselves, is necessary. In order to get this interactive relationship, it seems advisable that the teacher self-assesses his/her own attitudes, mainly those related to other people´s esteem, security and confidence, stimulus, recognition and respect. With this self-assessment and a favourable determination to promote interaction, it is possible to promote, within an educational institution, the civic-social values we put forward here.

Ecological values

Within this type of socio-ecological values should, also, be included those that relate to the *physical environment attention and care*, because such physical environment is, also, a space where human beings live and maintain relationship with it: as a consequence, we cannot elude the human individual and social connection with the physical space they are immersed in. Active ecological care, as a conscious and operative attitude towards maintenance of the physical and geographical space where you live, must be part of ecological education.

Useful and practical values

Education must prepare individuals to their *survival and integration within their own specific life environment*: this means that education should, in the end, have -apart from other focuses– a practical projection for life. Within these values, we can consider structures based on "*integrated disciplines and disciplinary contents that relate themselves with life and labour situations*" (Secretary´s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, 1991).

Individuals in the educational system usually look for successful academic results. One education that promotes the balanced development of practical utility values must include the creation of mechanisms and strategies that will also allow students access to levels of success in every type of values. Some academic expectations of practical type that frequently appear are the following ones: to get favourable results (in control tests or in selection exams); academic accreditation or degrees; guarantees of access to higher levels of education; attainment of a professional degree; getting a job (in general and in the profession the student has prepared him/herself for); enjoyment with knowledge acquisition and with contact of cultural contents; development of his/her own psychological and intellectual ability; etc. (Posavac, E.J. & Carey, R.C., 1989: 7).

Apart from legitimate wishes of obtaining outstanding results in the educational system, other personal and social expectancies must be included within education for useful and practical values, such as: appropriate technical training and the suitable use of emerging technology; to be able to live oneself in a satisfactory way; to be able of using his/her own educational level to improve his/her own economic situation; to be trained to live in ecologically suitable environments; etc.

Another component of usefulness that is a sub-product of education is the *behaviour* of educational subjects, as individuals and as members of collective groups, societies or people. Within this behaviour, the practical usefulness, as value promoted by education, must contemplate training of individuals and groups of people to prepare them for being able to live together with their fellows and citizens (which relates to social values) and to be able of contributing –with effort and preparation– to the general development of social groups they are immersed in.

The promotion of useful and practical values must also have incidence on *labour and professional arena*. But what are the values that determine success in these areas? Although it is not ever easy to find out a systematised list of such values, some of them are frequently mentioned, such as the following ones: "The employers change, more and more, the demand of an academic qualification (even too much impregnated, according to their opinion, by the idea of material knowledge) for the demand of a competency that presents itself as a kind of 'cocktail´ accommodated to each individual, combining the strict academic qualification (obtained through vocational and technical training) with social behaviour, ability to team working, initiative and eagerness to assuming risk" (Delors, J., 1996: 96).

In the area of useful and practical values, the proposed change for educational institutions must imply a change from a selective system to a flexible one where the educational context may offer diverse opportunities for attaining success.

Values of transcendental dimension

The transcendental values refer themselves to *human being´s projection farther than his/her own existence and physical and temporal limitations*. In the end, the concern of the human being outside his/her own limitations may produce the appearance of religious concern, although the focus on it can be different from one person to another one: in the end, the human being has freedom to decide the acceptance of reality as it is or to approach his/her own vision to it according to a personal will.

The *religious feeling basically* proceeds from the human being´s feeling of lack of defence, of limitation, and of eagerness of perenniality. Those religious values imply the acceptance of the essential limitation that the human being, as such, has to know his/her origin and to control his/her own life and his/her destiny in the universe. The humanity has for ever wanted to relate itself with the Absolute (in the end, with God, designated in different ways), which gives reason to everything that surrounds us.

Of course, there are some people who deny and renounce God; but these represent a minority phenomenon, as the confessed atheists form a reduced number. On the other hand, the militant atheism of some countries has not been able to completely eliminate religion in them. Other thing is the personal acceptance of a particular religious confession or denomination.

Anyhow, *the acceptance of the religious feeling and, mainly, the assumption of a specific religious confession is a personal option that each individual must freely and responsibly decide*. Under such condition, and under the consideration that the religious dimension is a true human one, education (at least the formal one) must offer those who voluntarily wanted it, the opportunity of receiving the religious training according to their own personal option. Nevertheless, the real practice offers diverse ways of facilitating the exercise of this right of receiving religious education.

Although it does not seem acceptable that educational institutions prevent religious formation to those who wanted to receive it as part of their integral education, some people reject this possibility in public educational institutions; some other ones even affirm that religious education should be out of the curriculum of public education (particularly in countries where, according to their constitution, declare themselves as lay).

Anyhow, the educational system must, furthermore, promote respectful attitudes towards those who profess a particular religious confession, even when this will not be the official one or the one mostly spread throughout the social context where these people live. For the same reason, a public educational system must show itself respectful towards those who do not adhere themselves to a particular religious confession, towards those who

profess other confessions different from the official one, and towards those who do not adhere themselves to any religious confession at all.

In any case, it seems that the religious training should bring people to a cosmovision according to their own belief and should produce an approximation to the big basic questions that upsurge to human beings, mostly related to their origin and their destiny in their life and after their death.

A generally spread feature of religious focus is the aspiration to reach a heroic degree in the exercise of virtues. Although the supreme acceptance of this level of religious aspiration in sanctity degree corresponds to each individual´s personal decision, it seems that the balanced interpretation of the religious sentiment can be, in most of the religious confessions, a factor of internal stability for individuals and an ingredient to empower favourable social relationship.

Inquiry

In the research we have implementing on the importance of quality components in an educational institution, the second mark in relative importance is the one given to values as educational product. This mark is a bit lower to the first important component that is the student´s satisfaction. The arithmetic mean obtained in this identifier of quality (values as educational product) is of 7.91 (over a maximum mark of 9 points), which should be considered as a very high estimation.

But the essence of educational product is not the acquisition of knowledge nor even the practical transference of such knowledge, but the *promotion of values derived from human dimensions, with the aim of educating people in order to be more intelligent, more balanced and satisfied (with themselves, with other ones and with their own context), and more useful (to themselves, to other people, to society and to their own environment)*. But this is certainly a revolutionary approach of education.

A sample of professionals and involved people answered a questionnaire-scale that asked them to assess the importance of components and elements of quality. For such purpose, a scale was suggested (going from 1 -minimal importance- to 9 -maximum importance-). We enclose here some global data obtained in the participant countries: in the corresponding table you can see the importance given to the basic components of quality in an educational institution or centre (Table 3).

Results

Throughout the research we have made on the importance to be given to basic components of quality of educational institutions (one of them is, precisely, the educational product defined as the promotion of values), some countries have intervened: most of them of Spanish and Portuguese language (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Spain, Mexico, Portugal, Dominican Republic and Venezuela), although we have also received some

opinions from the U.S.A. At the moment, we have processes results of 3529 questionnaires from such countries

COMPONENTS OF QUALITY IN AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION	All participant countries	
	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation
Values as educational product	7.91 (2º)	1.48
Students' satisfaction	7.95 (1º)	1.40
Staff´s satisfaction	7.58 (4º)	1.56
Impact of educational product	7.41 (6º)	1.57
Resources availability	7.39 (7º)	1.70
Planning organisation	7.50 (5º)	1.71
Resources management (personal, material)	7.15 (8º)	1.79
Educational methodology	7.70 (3º)	1.65
Pedagogical leadership	6.75 (9º)	1.89

Table 3.- <u>Importance of quality components in an educational institution</u>

The data included in the previous table show that, globally considering all the countries and participating sectors, the *students´ satisfaction* is the component that was considered the most important one to determine an educational institution´s quality. This component is, furthermore, the one that shows a higher uniformity in the assessment made by all respondents, because in this component the standard deviation is the smallest one. The second place in order of importance, very near to the first one, corresponds to the importance of *values as educational product*: the standard deviation is also quite low in this component (the lower one if we do not consider the students´ satisfaction).

The global data offered by the participant sectors show a considerable coincidence, particularly in the components estimated of the most importance, although there are, certainly, some differences among diverse sectors participating in the research. But, apart from the importance given to values, in general, as educational product, what is the importance attributed to the specific proposed values?. We can see global results in the next table (Table 4).

VALUES TO BE PROMOTED BY EDUCATION	Importance: global data (all countries)	
	Mean	Standard Deviation
Physical-emotional	6.44 (5º)	1.95
Intellectual	7.86 (1º)	1.43
Moral	7.58 (2º)	1.79
Aesthetic	6.17 (6º)	1.90
Socio-ecological	7.52 (3º)	1.63
Practical	6.98 (4º)	1.79
Religious	4.76 (7º)	2.61

Table 4.- Importance of diverse values to be promoted by education

At this table we can see that intellectual values have been considered as the most important ones for the quality of education. The second place corresponds to the moral values. The social and environmental values, very near to the previous ones, occupy the third place. The other axiological categories are all of them below the mark of 7: the fourth place corresponds to the practical values; below them are the physical values (as fifth place); the aesthetic ones are in the sixth place. And, finally, the seventh and last place corresponds to the religious values.

Apart from the global data, there are some differences among diverse sectors and other categories of participants contemplated in the used instrument. Many opinions manifested that *values should be considered the true essential starting point to define a curriculum design accommodated to the paradigm of quality in education.*

CONCLUSION

Authors and sources of authority referred here show that, in order to reach an education of quality in effective educational institutions, quality it is necessary to reform our systems of education. Such mentioned references suggest that suitable curricula accommodated to the needs of today's societies must be based on the authentic human dimensions: these dimensions could determine educational areas of values to be promoted.

Empirical data obtained from representatives of school members involved in educational institutions functioning show that a curriculum design based on an axiological approach is one of the most relevant factors for the quality of educational institutions. These empirical data also show the importance of values put forward as the core background to promote competences development and knowledge contents by curricula needed for the integral progress of today's societies.

References

DARLING-HAMMOND, L. (1997). *The Right to Learn.* San Francisco (Ca.): Jossey-Bass.

DELORS, J. (Coord.) (1996). *L´Éducation, un Trésor est Caché Dedans.* Paris: UNESCO / Odile Jacob.

ENCARTA (1997). *Enciclopedia Encarta en C.D.* Microsoft.

GARCÍA PELAYO, R. (1985). *La Práctica de la Educación Personalizada.* Madrid: Rialp.

GENTO, S. (2002). *Instituciones Educativas para la Calidad Total.* Madrid: La Muralla (1st. Edition, 1996)

HERNANDO, M.A. (1998). "Los valores, núcleo esencial de una educación integral del adolescente". *Anuario del Centro de la UNED de Calatayud, 1 (6)*: 77-94.

KANT, I. (1827) *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*. Leipzig: Friedrick Hartinock

LIDELL, L. (1989). *El Cuerpo Sensual.* Barcelona: Integral.

MAGGI, R.E. (1997). "Formación de valores y actitudes en la educación profesional técnica: caso CONALEP". *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios Educativos, XXVII, 1 y 2*: 227 – 240.

MANDELA, N. (1995). *Long Walk to Freedom.* Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

MARÍN, R. (1993). *Los Valores, un Desafío Permanente.* Madrid: Cincel.

MINISTERIO DE EDUCACIÓN Y CIENCIA. (1989). *Diseño Curricular Base. Educación Primaria.* Madrid: Servicio de Publicaciones.

MINISTERIO DE EDUCACIÓN Y CIENCIA (1994). *Centros Educativos y Calidad de Enseñanza.* Madrid: Secretaría de Estado de Educación.

MORTIMORE, P. (1993). "School effectiveness and the management of effective learning and teaching". *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 4 (4):* 290-310.

OCDE (1991). *Escuelas y Calidad de la Enseñanza. Informe Internacional.* Madrid: Paidós - MEC.

ORTEGA Y GASSET, J. (1994). "Introducción a la Estimativa". *Obras Completas, tomo IV.* Madrid: Revista de Occidente.

POSAVAC, E.J. & CAREY, R.G. (1989). *Program Evaluation.* Englewood Cliffs (N.J.): Prentice-Hall.

SCHMELKES, S. (1995). *Hacia una Mejor Calidad de Nuestras Escuelas.* México, D.F.: OEA/SEP.

SECRETARY´S COMMISSION ON ACHIEVING NECESSARY SKILLS (SCANS) (1991). *What Work Requires of Schools.* Washington, D.C.: Department of Labor.

TOFFLER, A. (1990). *Future Shock*. New York: Bantam (1st. edition, 1970).

UNESCO (1972). *L´ Éducation dans le Monde. Politique, Législation et Administration de l´ Éducation.* Paris: Author.

---

(1) sgento@edu.uned.es

(2) raulperedo@yahoo.es