

Opening Speech Biennale de l'Éducation Nouvelle 29/10/2022 – Jean Luc Cazailon

Representatives of Ministers Désir (Minister of Education of the Walloon-Brussels Federation) and of Minister Vervoort (Minister in charge of Education for the French Community Commission in the Brussels-Capital Region).

Dear activists of partner associations of the School and pedagogical movements: from Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Haiti, Tunisia, Algeria, Lebanon, Canada, Morocco, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Ukraine, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Togo, Benin, Madagascar, India, Democratic Republic of Congo, Seychelles, Senegal, Spain, Uruguay, France

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,

Here we are again, gathered for this third International Biennial of « Education Nouvelle ». We are still more (more than 500 people should take part in this entire collective work), coming from 30 (?) countries of the world. After two biennials in Poitiers and a year's delay due to covid, we are now in Belgium, in Brussels. A great first time for the Biennial which affirms more and more its international dimension. So before unfolding this introductory statement, I wish to warmly thank :

- The management and more globally the team of the CERIA for its availability and for its welcome here, in these premises
- The European Commission for Education and the International Youth Office, which once again allows us to welcome many comrades from associations in several countries of the world
- The representatives of the 8 founding members who have been working assiduously and consistently for more than 7 years now to build these Biennials, one by one
- The activists of GBEN, Miroir Vagabond, Éducation Populaire and CEMEA of Belgium who have been committed and mobilized for several months to welcome us in the best conditions while working for the cultural enrichment of this event.

So to all of you, thanks you !

My dear friends,

If this Biennial is part of the young common history of our movement (2017 is not so far), it will be part of the history of Education in the 21st century by giving birth to Convergence(s) for « Education Nouvelle ». All the organizations present inscribe their practices in reference to the « Education Nouvelle », to active pedagogies. These terms designate a way of educating, of teaching, of understanding learning, human relations and educational institutions in order to move together towards social justice and emancipated human beings.

These pedagogies are part of a political ambition because they translate actual educational goals into concrete action. We are not militants/activist of "active methods" but of "active pedagogies" or "active education" and from this point of view, there are many confusions, sometimes simple involuntary shortcuts which can, however, go as far as intentional amalgamation. It is up to us to reaffirm that our ambitions are to make pupils, children and citizens the authors of their own lives. Thus, whatever the spaces, the fields (school, leisure, culture, health, ...) we speak about Active Education marking our ambition: to allow each and everyone to emancipate themselves from all forms of guardianship and to engage in the construction of a world of solidarity!

In a context of increased standardization and technocratic control, of a return to fundamental "knowledge" alone, to scientific support set up as absolute references, to coercion and isolation, to the fragmentation of time and space, we are convinced of the modernity and the incredible insolence of our approaches, of our values, of our practices.

Since the end of the 19th century, the « Education Nouvelle » has defined itself, in Europe and in the world, as an education for freedom so that more fair and more egalitarian societies, respectful of human beings and their environment, may come about. Its ambition, at once political, ethical, philosophical and pedagogical, reinforced between the two world wars by a culture of peace to be brought about, is addressed to each and every one of us, based on common values.

It is around these strong ideas that the International Biennials of « Education Nouvelle » were organized.

But we had to do more!

One hundred years after the first founding congress of the Ligue Internationale de l'Education Nouvelle (Calais 1921), what we are going to do together is to launch an international dynamic for the 21st century by creating "Convergence(s) for Education Nouvelle" to open ourselves to organizations from all countries that act daily according to the same principles and values. To recreate this great momentum, this fertile bubbling, this art of debate, to re-enchant the world, (...) these are among the founding ambitions of Convergence(s). Making an alliance is a major political necessity when we must fight against the commodification of education, when too often the pedagogies put forward enslave and instrumentalize more than they promote emancipation, when competition is at the heart of educational processes whereas our conceptions are based on the dimensions of cooperation, mutual aid and active education.

But that is not all!

The 1921 gathering and all the congresses until the one in Nice in 1936 affirmed their will to promote a culture of peace. We thought these times were over Russia is invading the Ukraine, China is threatening Taiwan, women are fighting for their freedom in Iran, and all over the world extreme right-wing parties are making progress, as in Poland, Hungary, Brazil, Turkey, and today in Sweden, Italy and many other countries, unfortunately! So Convergence(s) must be one of the means to confront the rise of ideologies of exclusion and closure to others, fighting to promote culture and education for all, the values of secularism, democracy and the defense of human rights.

The last decade has been marked by an unprecedented growth in the role of private and competitive actors in education, particularly in low-income countries. This trend is profoundly disrupting already fragile education systems. Its impact on the quality of educational content, on segregation and social inequalities, and more generally on the realization of human rights, makes it a major challenge for all actors and defenders of the right to lifelong education. As stated in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, education aims to "prepare the child for an active adult life in a free society" (Art. 29 of the CRC). Education as we think of it thus participates in the transformation of society by acting on the modes of organization, by supporting individual freedoms for more equality and rights.

We must resist the logic of simple adaptations when we militate for transformation! To resist neo-liberal ideology and authoritarian regressions in order to reaffirm the responsibility of States in the

field of Education. The approach we promote is that of a global education working on the relationships between the different social times, between discontinuity and complementarity of formal, non-formal and informal education spaces. Our organizations have been built in an international dimension. We are convinced that thinking about « Education Nouvelle » can only be done in an international perspective that places humanism at the heart of the political projects of our different societies.

The political context of today's world revives these struggles, these necessary resistances. We must inscribe Convergence(s) in our respective projects as one of the means to show solidarity, to create common ground in a world in crisis, and first and foremost in an ecological revolution.

So "let's act"! because the pedagogical project of the « Education Nouvelle » is first of all a political project.

To act, here and everywhere, in France, in Europe and in the world, for social transformation through « Education Nouvelle », such is our ambition. It is thus, beyond their differences and because we share this common base, that our organizations carry together the concern of a thoughtful innovation, the wish to create and to act daily to maintain a real dynamic of author. In the current context of a conservative and reactionary counter-offensive at the level of values as well as at the level of educational conceptions, of a neo-liberal management of educational and cultural systems oriented towards the economic exploitation of "human resources", we are convinced, my dear comrades, that the time for alliances and solidarity is today indispensable.

It is therefore in confidence with each other, in confidence to share, in confidence to debate, in confidence to confront, that we will succeed in the challenge not only of this Biennial but also of Convergence(s). This is what will contribute to creating common ground by rediscovering, among ourselves, the tranquility, simplicity and authenticity of shared debate. Let us rediscover the art of fruitful disputes in solidarity and reciprocity!

We are in Brussels, in the heart of Europe. So I am going to borrow/use a term that must be freed from its technocratic meanings but which is dear to the civil servants who work in the European institutions. I want to claim with all of you our quality of experts in Education!

- We are experts in our ability to create the conditions for solidarity and cooperation when others promote individualism, division and competition
 - We are experts in creating the favorable conditions for intercultural encounters, for openness to others when others advocate withdrawal and communitarianism
 - We are experts in our ability to bring the family, school, leisure, and culture into dialogue when others ruffle the boundaries between formal and informal spaces
 - We are experts in a global education that considers the life paths of each and every person when others create enclosures, base their actions on determinisms.
 - We are experts when we manage to create the conditions for meeting and dialogue between the worlds of research and that of everyday actors. We are all research pedagogues! when others oppose knowledge and action

The educational action that we lead is based on values and convictions, on doubt too! It cannot stop at certainties or dogmas. We live daily these permanent movements of research and action of an education that is constantly reinventing itself, deeply in touch with the realities of the contemporary world, of the societies in which we live. Because it chooses the camp of social transformation and the refusal of relations of domination, because it carries the ambition to fight

against all forms of poverty, social injustice and discrimination by promoting a culture of peace,
The « Education Nouvelle » is political!

These shared ambitions, this common political project constitute one of the first pillars of
Convergences.

The Manifesto we have written clearly illustrates the World we want, the values we defend. It
constitutes the common base for our organizations and for those who wish to join our great
international dynamic: Convergence(s) for « Education Nouvelle »! It is up to us to bring it to life
here in Brussels, but also in our respective countries and continents, so that tomorrow there will
be even more of us within Convergence(s).

My dear friends, during these 4 days, we will have to marvel/wonder at the practices and
reflections of the Other, accept doubt, listen to criticism, say and contradict, meet and welcome,
give and receive, because, in a context that is complex in more ways than one, if it is vital that we
maintain and develop our capacity for indignation and resistance, it is just as fundamental to
maintain and develop our capacity for wonder, dreaming and caring.

This Biennial must be exemplary. Exemplary when it will articulate times to share, times to debate,
times to live together, times that will allow us all to think and progress together. Exemplary when it
will allow us to produce by making a work of collective intelligence.

Exemplary finally:

- When it must allow us to reaffirm that the « Education Nouvelle » movement has a history to
share, to discuss, to celebrate! ... to continue the path
- Exemplary when it must allow us to reaffirm the modernity of our struggles and our values!

We must constantly reiterate that the question of means, although absolutely essential, does not
solve everything and that the ways of acting, the modes of pedagogical intervention are at the
heart of the stakes of educational success and therefore of school success!

To say finally that it is through Education and thanks to our capacity for pedagogical invention that
we will allow the greatest number of people, and in particular young people, to take up the
challenges of today's world. And the stakes are high while our consumer societies have erected as
a dogma the separation "nature"/"culture", removing human beings from their inescapable
belonging to the future of our planet in order to exploit it and, in fine, to destroy it...

We must therefore demonstrate our capacity to "move forward in resonance" in order to lay
together the new foundations of a great momentum, of a great international movement bringing
us together, with others, to revive the ambition of our elders. That of an objective alliance, of a
lucid solidarity and of fruitful interactions for the benefit of our humanity.

For the steering comitee
Jean Luc Cazaillon