



# The Zapatist school: educating for autonomy and emancipation

## *La escuela zapatista: educar para autonomía y la emancipación*

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### Abstract

The present article exposes the development of the school of the Zapatista movement, which builds its educational proposal from the community, based on ancestral wisdom to link it with contemporary thought. The aim of the Zapatista education is to train generations in the practice of autonomy and self-government in order to preserve its indigenous dignity. This experience is not a model, nor does it fit into other pedagogical movements. Although it is original, Paulo Freire's ideas can be distinguished such as his alphabetization to understand the world and transform it. In this sense, the Zapatista school is anti-capitalist and is not governed by the rules of the market that grants titles to students to earn for money; it is not merchandise because nobody pays to learn and nobody charges for teaching; it is not part of the State either; because each town determines the curricular contents to use the knowledge and develop the collectivization of the field, promote cooperatives and the communal stores. Unlike the globalization trend of schools that promote the entrepreneurial mentality, merit and self-employment; Zapatista education aspires that young people serve their people, be supportive and that knowledge does not imply social

hierarchy. The experience in a Zapatista community and the interviews with promoters of education, allow us to understand that the Zapatista school is still under construction and must avoid the bureaucratization and homogenization proper to capitalism.

**Keywords:** School, zapatismo, education, community, autonomy, emancipation.

### Resumen

En el presente artículo se expone el desarrollo de la escuela del movimiento zapatista que construye su propuesta educativa desde la comunidad, basados en la sabiduría ancestral para ligarla con el pensamiento contemporáneo. El fin de la educación zapatista es formar generaciones en la práctica de la autonomía y autogobierno para conservar su dignidad indígena. La experiencia no es un modelo ni cabe en otras corrientes pedagógicas. Aunque original, en su base pueden distinguirse las ideas de Paulo Freire de alfabetizar para leer el mundo y transformarlo. En este sentido, la escuela zapatista es anticapitalista y no se rige por las normas del mercado que expide títulos para cambiarse por dinero; no es mercancía pues nadie paga por aprender y a nadie cobra por enseñar; tampoco es un aparato de

Estado, porque cada pueblo determina los contenidos curriculares para usar el conocimiento y desarrollar la colectivización del campo, impulsar cooperativas y las tiendas comunales. A diferencia de la tendencia global de escuelas que promueven la mentalidad emprendedora, del mérito y de autoempleo, en la educación zapatista se aspira a que los jóvenes sirvan a su pueblo, sean solidarios y que los conocimientos no impliquen

la jerarquización social. La vivencia en una comunidad zapatista y las entrevistas con promotores de educación, permiten entender que la escuela zapatista sigue en construcción y debe evitar la burocratización y la homogeneización propias del capitalismo.

**Descriptor:** Escuela, zapatismo, educación, comunidad, autonomía, emancipación.

## 1. Introduction

This article presents an approach to the Zapatist educational experience. In principle, it is established that the path until 2018 does not correspond to the logic of linking education with the objectives of the Government. It is an attempt to overcome the postulates of Louis Althusser (2003) who sees the school as an ideological apparatus to reproduce the values of the groups in power. One evidence is the lack of uniqueness in the curriculum and teaching methods of each community. Teaching seeks a more autonomous, active, creative and liberating learning; in which dignity matters more than the commercialization of professional titles. The quality and evaluation criteria related to the efficiency and control of industrial productivity do not exist in its school. It is not an education to promote the entrepreneurial and individualist ideology of human capital as a solution to all problems. On the contrary, it is a proposal built from the communities to emancipate themselves from capitalism and, according to Zapatism, from its four wheels: exploitation, dispossession, repression and contempt.

The analysis arose from the coexistence in a community of Acteal with assistance to the Zapatist school, from the *Rebeldía* magazine, from some communications from Sub/com-mander Marcos and from texts of research and analysis about the Zapatist educational practice. The foundations of the Zapatist formation and a discussion about the current capitalist school are presented in the structure of the text. The aim is to characterize the meaning of the Zapatist

teaching, which includes a brief historical overview of popular education in Latin America. The experience of the Zapatist school that designs its curriculum and contents from each community is detailed below. The final section of the article presents the reflections of its proposal and some of its difficulties. The features of public education as right and not a commodity and oriented towards the goals of autonomy of the Zapatist movement are also highlighted.

## 2. The Zapatist school in the context of globalization

Zapatist education emerged after its armed movement and the establishment of 38 autonomous municipalities in 1994, as a political fact to form the population in the consciousness for self-government, difference, gender equality, care of their territories, economic independence and food self-sufficiency. In the Third Declaration of Selva Lacandona, the Zapatist National Liberation Army (EZLN, 1995) called for a National Liberation Movement to design a new Constitution and a transitional government, and to prevent the sale of the ejido to private individuals. It demanded an economic program in favor of the workers and peasant collectives, the main producers of wealth, and for the autonomy of the indigenous peoples that recognizes their social, cultural and political organization. Since its appearance, in the First Declaration of Selva Lacandona (EZLN, 1994) Zapatism expressed its renunciation of the seizure of power, of being vanguard, of charging to govern, and expressed



that they would disappear when the causes of their insurrection are eliminated.

To understand the practice of the Zapatist school, it is convenient to distance oneself from the rhetoric that considers schooling as an instrument for material and social development of the countries, especially since the 1960s. In 2018 the school that certifies for the world of work is shown as a fetish for the solution of all problems. In the absence of empirical evidence that education is equal to economic and human progress, the idea of Ivan Illich (1989) of de-schooling the world is reborn. In Mexico, each new government implements educational reforms and little changes. There is no jocular comment that the recurrence of such reforms shows their uselessness (Tyack and Cuban, 2001). For example, the modification in the law on working conditions for teachers in 2012 is justified because it means that it will improve the teaching work and the operation of the school to achieve educational quality, and thus resolve the conflicts generated in society, still called capitalism.

In the 21st century, amid the happy songs of the success of globalization, the dispossession and exploitation of nature persists; profits are the axis of the economy and not for the service of the families, the transnationals control the countries and the presidents become managers; the inequality of the distribution of income is accentuated; biotechnology and information technology increase unemployment (Silva, 2018). How to solve it? It will say the official rhetoric: "forming high quality human capital in schools". It is believed that the school with subjects such as vocational guidance, sex or road safety education, will be able to solve the disconnection profile of egress-work, road accidents or venereal diseases. Without missing the promotion of universal values related to capital, synthesized in the profile of entrepreneurial subjects capable of self-employment. Appropriate strategy in the context of job cuts in the private and government sectors, plus the increase in labor subcontracting policies that decrease benefits, there is only the alternative of working on their own.

This is what the Mexican Government proposes in the Sectorial Education Program 2013-2018, Strategy 1. Democratize Productivity:

5. Promote and encourage the entrepreneurial vocation (...) as a professional option (...) looking for synergies (...) of human capital formation (...) 15. Strengthen the national system of labor competencies (...) (certifying) productive, educational and labor initiatives and training (pp. 52-53).

The hegemonic discourse in Mexican schools renews the notion of ideological apparatus of Althusser (2003), because the school reproduces the interests of the State. Does the curriculum in competitions do not correspond to the demands of the globalized business community? Is quality in education measured with the parameters of production or with the qualitative, non-measurable criteria of classroom daily life? Or does the evaluation of teachers escape from the indicators of efficiency and productivity typical of the industry that manufactures by piecework? Or the predominance of the student-centered teaching model, which is not very novel when compared to the new school?

But not all is lost. There is a critical pedagogy that locates the problem of education in the political, not in the technical. After analyzing the ideology that underlies teaching processes, they understand schools as spaces of resistance and generation of alternative community projects to state power (Giroux, 1992, Apple, 1997). They postulate that the renewal of teaching cannot be separated from social rethinking, based on Freire's ideas, a critical and emancipatory education is attempted, because domination is not total. And the teacher must be a transforming intellectual (Giroux, 1997). The institutional analysis provides the notion of pedagogical self-management which means the teachers' refusal to transmit messages in the classroom and aspires that the student decides the methods of learning (Lapassade, 1977). Finally, the concept of resistance in the school, a space of contradiction and conflict,



imagines that alternative cultural practices and/or opposition to hegemony can be generated.

The antipodes allow us to ask ourselves if education ever served society. In the history of Mexico appears the ideal of the 1910 revolution to promote a sovereign and inclusive national development. In rural Mexico, teachers at that time disseminated practical agricultural knowledge according to the region and tried to solve the problems of the community (Vaughan, 1997). Tannery, popular songs, physical education and dance were also taught. The image of those teachers was professional, honest and committed to a national education heir to the principle: the land belongs to those who work it. However, the cultural missions promoted by José Vasconcelos that under the notion of civilization to integrate the indigenous sector, tried to deprive native peoples of their identity.

Jumping to the sixties, in the world there were experiences like the Experimental Institute of Oslo that questioned the logic of the bureaucratic school and posed: non-compulsory attendance to the classes; program and teaching methods discussed between students and teachers; teaching freedom. The proposal arose from failed high school students who decided to establish a non-traditional school. Teaching would be free and without the oppression of regulations, seeking to form autonomous and democratic people (Jørgensen, 1997). It would be as simple as the aspiration of an education opposed to the logic of reproducing the single thought and of obedience to the rules, because school alone cannot modify social ills. In other words, without social reform there is no educational reform; or vice versa.

To close the section, since 1875 Marx wrote that education is not the same for all social classes. He ironized the feasibility of forcing the bourgeoisie to study in the modest public school, the only one accessible to the proletariat and the peasantry. For Marx (1986) the State should not be responsible for popular education, beyond the delivery of resources and regulate the conditions of the teaching staff, but the people must educate

the State. It seems that such deliberations were understood by the Zapatists.

### 3. The attempts to define Zapatists education

One of the proposals to characterize the Zapatist teaching is to link it with popular education and the thinking of Paulo Freire, when he proposes literacy essential to know the world, name it, so that people learn to say their word and try to transform it. It is an education for the people in search of the emancipation of any tutelage, subordination, dependence or servitude. It is not the people in the abstract, it refers to people who live in social, political and economic marginalization. For Freire (1997) "rebellion is an indispensable starting point" (p.77) against injustice. In the indigenous case, to get out of oppression, discrimination, even racism, that they have suffered in Mexico. Therefore, without ambiguities, Zapatist education aspires to a school with a political pedagogy for peace, civic education for the sake of building community power, self-government and non-commercial education. Achieving it implies that the contents and didactics arise from the people to be trained with, by and in the community.

In Latin America, popular education has a long tradition. According to Gómez and Puiggrós (1986) nationalist and popular pedagogical practices in the continent exist, at least, since 1935. In their recount they point out that Lázaro Cárdenas in Mexico promoted this education. In 1946 in Guatemala the Ambulatory Cultural Missions were instituted to reach the entire nation. The cult of patriotic symbols and values, knowledge of the Constitution and the meaning of the revolution spread. In addition, hygiene, prevention and cure of diseases, notions about pregnancy and childbirth, agricultural techniques and crop rotation were promoted. They took care of promoting sports, music, cinema, theater. Although they did not have the expected effect, the Missions were formed with



a multidisciplinary team (currently in vogue, as if it were a novelty): a teacher, a medical student last year, an agricultural expert, an army officer and an indigenous interpreter.

Along the way, Gómez and Puiggrós (1986) highlight the experiences of Bolivia (1938 and 1954), Colombia (1947), El Salvador (1974), Cuba (1960) and Nicaragua (1980). They claim that in 1961 the discourse of the pedagogy of liberation was elaborated; and from 1976 to 1983 the school was a space to fight against dictatorships. Criticisms to the education that forms obedient, individualistic people, the capitalist ideology and the scientific, technological, cultural and economic dependence of Latin America stand out. The alternative is generated from the marginalized community and society, by free education, by the defense of culture and the equality of women. The emphasis of popular education was the ethnic and indigenous as it was in the Andean countries. The sources that make up this current, among others, are the theology of liberation, action research and popular communication, according to Gómez and Puiggrós.

In this context, for Torres (2012), the Zapatist school, which calls itself true education, takes up Freire's postulates about humanization, the liberation of oppressors, the political nature of teaching and its perspective of transforming power structures. It is an education for praxis, with linguistic and cultural heterogeneity, with a critical and radical pedagogy. Consequently, Zapatist education is of collective participation, claims to be indigenous, establishes bonds of solidarity and shared responsibility in their peoples. The school curriculum is designed from the community and in congruence with the Zapatist demands of the 1994 rebellion, they gather the oral knowledge of the elderly. The promoters of education prepare the didactic material of the stories, guides and books, in collaboration with external advisers.

Another characterization of the Zapatist school is Baronet's (2010, 2011a, 2015), who conceives it with indigenous autonomy, horizontal relations in education, the democratization of school management, a contextualized

teaching related to the social, ethnic and political identities of the peoples. They are schools of resistance and emancipation according to a political-regional project in each autonomous municipality, based on pedagogical principles of praxis and common sense. There is no teaching model of study programs, but constant construction. Baronnet agrees with Muñoz (2004) in that those in charge of education in workshops integrate the demands of knowledge in reflection and analysis groups in the communities that are ratified by the assemblies and the municipal authorities. Hence the name of true education, because it is developed against colonialist values and behavior. It is about rescuing the traditional historical memory of the people and culture with the participation of families. This allows the Zapatist school not to be the main instance of political socialization, because in everyday life, children participate in public events, assemblies and social mobilization. Finally, for Baronnet (2011a) the educational ideology is integrated with the thinking of the left of Che Guevara and Friere; and in teaching they follow some active pedagogical practices of Celestin Freinet.

It is not intended to express a model of Zapatist education with this brief account. However, political and philosophical principles are detected, such as popular education, Freire's emancipatory idea, the curriculum drawn from each community, education as a matter of families, the school, the authorities and the EZLN. The relationship in the classroom is horizontal, not authoritarian and active. It is a theoretical-practical training because it combines the school with the work in the community; it is a non-commercial education, because people are not paid to teach or to learn; neither are titles sold to be exchanged in the labor market.

#### 4. The Zapatist educational experience

From the voices of Doroteo, Abraham, Artemio and Gerónimo members of the JBG and the



administration of the peoples, it is established that the Zapatist Autonomous Education System of National Liberation (SERAZLN) began in 1997 in La Realidad, in the Autonomous Zapatist Rebel Municipality Libertad de los Pueblos Mayas (EZLN, s.f.a). From before 1994 they understood that official education and its methods were not compatible with their efforts of autonomy, since it was a matter of instituting an education for and by the people. For starters, there was no recipe or resources. Nor were they satisfied with the work of the teachers sent by the government. In San Juan de la Libertad they chose to organize a secondary school with people who studied high school, and even a teacher. The aim was to take advantage of the fact that with the girls and boys graduated from primary school, the new educators would be trained. Then the group *Escuelas para Chipas* supported the construction of classrooms and ended up in the Zapatist Autonomous Rebel High Schools (ESRAZ).

After reflecting, they decided that mathematics, reading and writing could not be changed because of their universal scope. But in history if they modified the themes. They included the trajectory of the EZLN and other social movements. Then the parents of the people were asked what the Zapatist children needed to learn in each community. Other content and name changes were made in Spanish and natural sciences. They were renamed languages and life and environment, respectively. "Integration" was added to various topics that did not cover the subjects, such as the 13 demands of their uprising. Also, the notion of subject was replaced by area. In the municipality of Ricardo Flores Magón they developed the "true education document", understood as rescuing the knowledge of the people, to know its history. With the support of the civil society of compatriots and internationalists, the plans and study programs and the teaching materials were elaborated. Then they considered how to evaluate the learning of the boy or girl. They agreed that in the autonomous school the report cards and certificates of study

were dispensable. Also, they discarded the exams because the learning would be verified in the development of their work in a position.

Another challenge for the autonomous education was the formation of promoters of education, which was possible with the collaboration of the group *Semillitas del Sol*, from Mexico City. The training lasts six months, an evaluation is applied and if someone does not show full knowledge of the area, they study two more months. Then the Compañero Manuel Formation Center was created. They were called promoters because they did not attend normal school to train to teach. With the creation of the Juntas de Buen Gobierno (JBG)<sup>1</sup> in August 2003, the SERAZLN structure was consolidated and the construction of schools increased. In primary school, three levels are taught, and they learn to read and write. In the municipality of Che Guevara students left their communities and lived a period of more intense study.

For Zapatism, the autonomy of the school begins with the economic, ideological and educational independence of the Mexican government. The construction of its educational system in the pedagogical and material derives from the solidarity of the peoples of the world. The purpose and meaning of the Zapatist school is not training for work, but understanding its history, its culture and its worldview. The desire is to train indigenous and non-indigenous professionals to help their communities, aimed at strengthening the construction of their political, economic, social and cultural autonomy. In summary: "We can educate with the students, who educate us, in order to educate ourselves about who we are for life and thus build those many worlds that we all dream of" (SERAZLN, s.f., par.2). Schools receive financial support and are administered and monitored by authorities from the people.

The contents of Zapatist education are designed based on the purposes that generated their rebellion: health, roof, land, work, food, education, independence, democracy, freedom, justice, culture, information and peace



(EZLN, 1994). The equivalent of the curriculum of Zapatist education is completed with the daily knowledge of their communities and the proposal of each one of the necessary subjects for their sons and daughters to learn. In the classes the reality of the country, the ways of coexistence and the language of the people are studied. As in the SERAZLN the differences are respected, the areas of knowledge vary according to the community and are divided into: languages, mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, humanism and production, which covers the care of the environment, with the same number of hours of study a week. In secondary school, the development of their peoples and of global events are examined.

In La Garrucha, in the Tzeltal jungle, in 2008 the educational dynamic was renewed when the Semillita del Sol school was established, organized on three levels. They start by teaching children to write and draw, going through understanding the demands of the Zapatist movement, until analyzing communications, denunciations, organization of their government, the reasons for their struggle and the achievement of their autonomy. It includes knowledge of the sustainability of the territory. A transversal issue, as is common in current curricula, is agroecology because it is a concern in the communities.

The motto of the Zapatist schools: "That there be a real education and that it be for all", under the principle of educating the student with the collective conscience, group learning didactics and non-directive. It is an ideal to learn in freedom, oriented towards each child reaching knowledge in collaboration with promoters, in an environment without abuse. If the Zapatist education is part of their resistance and the dissemination of their Zapatist philosophy, therefore, it is intended that the students reflect "(...) on the struggle, since the main objective that we propose is that (...) have a different vision of the life. That they do not make an individualistic life" (Muñoz, 2004, p.10). Upon graduation, young women and young people are asked to support the tasks of agroecology, in distribution centers, in pharma-

cies or in alphabetizing. The formative interest of the school focuses on serving the people, not to work in favor of capitalism; neither to differentiate between those who know more and avoid the hierarchy of capitalist education.

An advance of the Zapatist school is the assistance of girls to educate themselves and combat marginalization. In the certificates of the ESRAZ comes the legend: "For what our Educational System recognizes its effort, its contributions to the resistance struggle and invites you to share with our people, what the people have given (...) a liberating education, (...) scientific and popular! I put myself at the service of my people" (Marcos, 2003, par. 21). There are two evaluations: A (approved area) and ANA (area not approved). The school is free, and the education committees ensure that each student has a notebook and pen.

For a non-differentiating education grades, exams or certifications aren't needed. The important thing is that the Zapatist youth applies their learning and their reading and writing skills in their daily and community life. Of course, different to the competences arising from the industry that in the schools models the graduate profile for Toyotista production (Silva, 2016). By the way, competences decided from Europe through the Tunning project, distant from the knowledge and contents decided from the community congruent with their understanding of reality. Reading and writing skills are useful for women to develop their tasks in the JBG. To govern, titles and academic degrees are not required. Unnecessary to keep the accounting of the expenses of the JBG or in the training of the midwives, *yerberas* and *hueseras*. It also serves women when they work as zone coordinators or education trainers.

## 5. Men and women who make non-mercantilist education possible

To support that Zapatist education is not subject to trade, the comments of my interview with three



promoters and of Oventik, in addition to conversations with an Acteal family during my attendance at the Zapatist school in January 2014 are exposed. The EZLN called to live with their support bases in their communities to learn through their teachings, their thoughts, and their freedom, the successes, errors, problems and solutions, the advances and obstacles of their autonomy (Moisés, 2013). The EZLN also produced “text-books” for attendees to study how they have built their self-government, the participation of women in politics, their advances in health and education. The families provided us with room and food. We share their productive activities, political meetings and talk about their resistance.

Thus, the community assembly elects those who educate in the Zapatist school and will be dismissed according to the criteria of the vigilance committee. They call them promoters of education, because they were not trained in some official normal, but with the people with teaching capacities in their towns. Acceptance to teach is voluntary and is part of a commitment to educate for liberation and struggle. He/she does not receive a posting and must work in the field, because he/she is committed to work for the support of the school (Baronnet, 2011b). Being a promoter of education is not a way to achieve economic solvency, nor privileges in the community. As Johnny, promoter of education, says: “(...) We work for consciousness nothing else and the conscience is what we earn ... we do not charge anything, because it is free” (Hijar, 2008, p.147).

The livelihood of the promoters consists of the community helping them with food, clothes or they work in the plots of their relatives during the holidays, in the elaboration of handicrafts or poultry farming. Therefore, educating implies the dedication to disseminate the Zapatist political, social and economic project that seeks autonomy and self-government. In summary, we do not work for capitalist economic remuneration. As Marx and Engels (1985) pointed out, the bourgeoisie with money buried

personal dignity by converting the doctor, the jurist, the poet, the priest, the man of science into wage-earners.

In the ESRAZ the promoters coordinate the school collectively and in a rotating way, they decide the school activities based on consensus, among many things, how to work. Thanks to their autonomy they determine the pedagogical and administrative issues. A form of teaching is through generating questions, taken from Freire, and the questioning of real-life issues, this produces the themes to be developed in the classroom. As a group, the student deliberates how to answer the questions to learn, supported by the review of documents, the observation of their environment or the development of experiments.

In its global perspective, the Rebel Autonomous Zapatist Center for Spanish and Mayan Languages CELMRAZ) welcomes people who wish to learn Tzotzil and Spanish. Without high tuition or limit the offer of languages to English as a lingua franca. As a solidary attitude, only three days of minimum wage are paid from the country where they reside and work, plus 150 pesos for food. In addition, they grant meals and housing, because the principle of CELMRAZ is: “We do not make the language one more commodity” (s.f., parr.2).

## 6. The organization of lessons and training for political autonomy

Regarding the lessons, the Zapatist pedagogy establishes the activities according to students and promoters, the schedules are flexible, and it is not restricted to a physical space. The sessions seek the collective construction and the animation of activities. As a result, videos of the Zapatist struggle are displayed; the spaces where economic projects are developed are visited; coexistence and joy are promoted with songs, dances and debates; volunteer work is invited in the library or in the sowing. The conversation and the collective reflection are encouraged.



The goal is to achieve the autonomy it implies for Zapatism, as synthesized by Adamovsky *et al.* (2011), the way of doing politics independently of the political class and its parties, rejecting authoritarianism and the relations of domination of daily life; the diversity that questions the hegemony of any kind; in favor of self-management and self-determination; and the emancipation of capital. They refuse to no longer be indigenous peoples and to be colonies of the landowners. In their form of government, the Zapatist indigenous communities are guided by the command-obeying. The people command and the authorities obey, there is no payment for governing and the posts are rotating and elected by the assemblies. López (2011) condenses the demand for autonomy of the indigenous movement: they demand collective rights for their peoples; the transformation of the State; they claim their territories and the ownership of their natural resources; the recognition of their forms of government and the administration of their own justice; respect for their culture.

In summary, Zapatism intends to educate for liberation based on the experiences of the communities. The structure of the tiered schools does not imply the rigorous division by age. This allows a coexistence in the classrooms of students of different ages and reinforces Freire's principle that no one educates anyone, and nobody educates alone. Zapatist education aims to achieve that young people in the communities identify with their past and present indigenous history, accept the difference between people and preserve their language. It is about educating to form in autonomy a new way of doing politics, direct democracy and rejecting that the land is an article to be sold to the highest bidder.

## 7. Reflections on the Zapatist school

Zapatist education fulfills three concepts absent in market globalization: 1) it is public, because it is designed from the people and is a right;

2) it is free, because it does not depend on the State or the transnationals of money or culture to design its curriculum, nor does it certify the student body to be one more file in the archives of the school bureaucracy; 3) doesn't have a cost, nobody pays to attend school, and nobody charges for teaching, so education is not a commodity. It does not correspond to the academic capitalism that in summary means: to carry out activities in the universities and the academic plant to respond to the economy based on knowledge, and those who investigate must obtain financing for their studies, in general, according to the sciences and disciplines related to the market. Thus, the humanities become unnecessary sciences for competitiveness, productivity and economic growth. Knowledge is a good to be marketed and generate profits of, as with patents (Maldonado, 2016).

A contribution of the Zapatist school is that it does not follow the linearity of the degrees to exercise a profession. In the logic of the social hierarchy and the merits, to be a doctor or a teacher, you need to study in specialized schools. In the Zapatist territory, *yerberas*, *hueseras* and midwives are formed to take care of the health of the inhabitants. To educate, promoters are trained, regardless of the academic degrees. The only requirement is that they know how to read and write, plus the language of the community and Spanish. The hierarchy is annulled with the denial of differentiation, and the meritocracy is replaced by the will.

The Zapatist education is not lived by the communities as a fetish to cure all social ills. Unlike the fashionable discourse of any neoliberal government that focuses on quality education (whatever this means) the solution to its problems, in the Zapatist experience it is a part of the political, economic, cultural and ideological resistance. Autonomous education is linked to self-government, the self-management of collective production projects, the strengthening of identity and the creation of its means of dissemination. In the midst of material deficiencies, they



advance in the processes of ideological emancipation and consolidation of their democracy from below. For this, computers, cannons and Power Point presentations are not indispensable. Neither are the round tables in the classrooms, fashionable for Piaget's constructivism, nor the well-painted walls, because their problem is political, not infrastructure.

The development of the Zapatist school continues because it is a demand for its uprising included in the San Andrés agreements. These signed in 1996, with a commission of negotiation with the federal government to solve the armed conflict, but that was not endorsed by the former president Ernesto Zedillo. As a result, the right of indigenous communities to implement an education in accordance with their culture and worldview was not legislated. On the other hand, the Law of Concord and Pacification was created in November 1996 to guarantee the transit through the country of members of the EZLN, while they did it unarmed and without calling for violence.

In this context, the EZLN organized its education in a direction contrary to the plans of the Mexican State. As mentioned in the Education Sector Plan 2013-2018, official education aims to train entrepreneurs with a business mentality. In addition, in 2017 it disseminated an educational model for basic education that includes high school. The use of information and communication technologies in the classroom is privileged; also learning throughout life to recycle the labor force according to the demands of the production sphere. In the aforementioned model, the relevant contents refer to: financial education, programming, robotics and entrepreneurship skills (Secretary of Public Education 2017, p.76). As if there were no context of financial speculation, the substitution of human work for robotics and automation, plus the increase in precarious employment, the government reproduces the contents suggested by international financial organizations. Education continues to be seen from an instrumental focus at the service of produc-

tion and employment (Silva, 2016). However, the elected president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, expressed his opposition to neoliberal education. He promised to improve the working conditions of the teaching profession, increase enrollment in higher education and scholarships for high school. But in the context of the rulers there is no autonomous or emancipatory education, only the supposed national development.

Therefore, the Zapatist school does not follow the path of becoming a state apparatus, because it is created, recreated and conducted by the members of the community. It does not propagate a discourse of domination or obedience of political or economic power. It is their process they do not want to impose it, but to convince. The education-production nexus is not aimed at forging salaried labor, but at the development of the collectivization of the countryside, the constitution of cooperatives and communal stores. In their needs, students and promoters work in the milpa to harvest self-consumption food. So, they collaborate for the maintenance in the secondary schools that are shelters.

It is convenient to return to the meaning of the article: Zapatist education as a movement of resistance to the educational policies that exclude neoliberal globalization. It is the attempt to build an anti-systemic school, because it does not respond to the logic of rankings, terminal efficiency and the link with employment. Without certifications or qualifications, it is formed to serve the community, not the employers. In this sense, the difficulties of the Zapatist school are concentrated in the infrastructure and resources to maintain them, not so much in their educational philosophy and their autonomic goals. However, the promoters of education have faced the mockery of the official teachers who infiltrate the Zapatist zones and accuse them of not knowing how to teach. The effect is the resignation of promoters (EZLN, s.f.b). They also face the loss of the mother tongue because the official schools promote the English language. To counteract this situation the teaching of Tojolabal, Tzeltal or



Tzotzil is reinforced. Or the inequality of women as responsible for the promotion of education. Baronnet (2011b) records that promoters recognize their lack of pedagogical training and, on occasion, use ineffective and tedious literacy methods, but they are also critical of their practice. In the Emiliano Zapata rancheria a promoter wants to resign because he needs more support and collective participation to carry out his work. Another problem is the failure of people in the community to provide food and firewood; and although there is collaboration from the people to work the milpa, it is not always enough, as a result, some promoters cannot combine teaching and agricultural cultivation.

In sum, the educational desire of the Zapatist movement is an experience that is renewed so as not to be institutionalized. From the capitalist and western schools, they radically changed the contents, the idea of being human and society. Although they apply multiple choice exams to know the learning level, they do not qualify and do not reproduce the logic of differentiation and rewards, such as scholarships. So far, there is no official certification and demonstrates that education is not the exclusive task of specialized institutions. It is envisioned that the autonomy of the student is respected. I hope that your school does not become rigid, bureaucratic or normalized as the experience inherited from modernity.

For the time being, the Zapatist school is taught against the current of global hegemonic thought. It seems that education for the non-existent. For example, that to transform society it is not essential to take the formal power of the State. Or build a government without professional politicians, with rotating charges and without charging to exercise them, seeking to eradicate the division between those who rule and those who obey to achieve self-management processes (Castellanos, 2008). Or the renunciation of all vanguard so that in everyday life the community defines its identity, lives the mandate and democracy from below, forging self-government under the principle of “obeying to

command” and collective being. How to teach? For all, everything, nothing for us! (EZLN, 1995, par 18) in a selfish and utilitarian world? This is what Zapatist education aspires to.

## Notes

1. It is a form of government in the communities under the principle of command by obeying. The people decide, and the representatives carry out the actions of the people; there is no payment for governing, nor are privileges received, the charges are rotating and collective. There is always a woman as representative in the JBG.

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