CUBAN EDUCATION BETWEEN REVOLUTION AND REFORM

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Abstract

In recent years, Cuba has been immersed in a process of profound change. Among these changes, one that has been less addressed by specialists both inside and outside the island is ‘education reform’, specifically at the university level. The relevance of this study is to understand the current university education policy as the one that has perhaps the most political content, the analysis of which would help to understand the challenges in political and ideological matters faced by the government of Cuba today. Therefore, the present work makes a critical assessment of the Cuban educational model based on values as a central focus of university policy and its relevance in the transcendental process of change happening in Cuba today. For students of public policy, the Cuban case encapsulates an important singularity that allows the possibility of analysing short-term versus long-term assessments of public problems (Ascher 2009). It also allows us to learn about social and policy challenges in a country that has achieved universal mass, free and quality education that has been able to extend itself beyond the capital (Mészarós 2008). What happens next? A reflection on the role of education in a changing society is one of the main purposes of this work.

Keywords: state change, reform, public policy, university education, values, ideology

Introduction

A reflection on the challenges facing public universities leads us to a theme (among many) of the centrality of the social sciences: how far should the state be, desired to be or actually be responsible for education in a country? Can direct government involvement produce favourable results in solving the educational problem? The analysis of the role of education cannot be done without a reflection about the State, the development models that are driven by this structure, the power groups that give it meaning, the kind of society that results and a holistic view of public policies (Del Castillo 2014) that serves as a tool (in a double sense) of governments to solve public problems that they
themselves have defined in a (desired) dialogue with society. Just as it is essential
to understand the State to analyse education, education also ‘talks’ about the
kind of state and society in which it occurs.

Education as a public issue is an idea as old as ancient Greece. Since then the
state has been defined as the entity that is ultimately responsible for the formation
of the citizens in the polis: the meaning of the State is, in its superior essence, the
Paideia\(^1\) (Werner 1971). From this statement we return to the political status of
(public) education.

The debates on education as a public issue have transcended the field of
research. They also exceed domestic politics, standing on the top of the global
agenda. Today we find tensions between the models proposed by governments
(pressured by international organisations) and those desired by society which
have led to a climate of direct confrontation. We see examples of this everywhere:
in the US and its most recent reform of the public school system, the education
reforms passed in Mexico, the protests in the university student movement of
Chile, the strike of teachers in Brazil, controversial university reform in Ecuador
in recent years and the university student movement unleashed in Colombia in
2011 are a few of the flashpoints that demonstrate the social dynamics around
the problems facing the education sector in general and universities in particular.

The consequences of the neoliberal educational model (Gentili 1996;
Puiggrós 1996) have challenged the assumed direct link between education
and development, although the World Bank insists on it (Banco Mundial 2012)
and unresolved social problems in the Latin American region such as poverty,
iequality and inequity (Blanco, 2012; Gajardo 2012) only serve to trigger deep
crises in the current paradigms of the social function of education and what it
implies: the confrontation between reality and utopia.

Immersed in this scenario, the Cuban case is symptomatic of a different situation,
though not without its own tensions. In recent years, the government and Cuban
society have been involved in a major process of change: according to many, the
most important in the last 50 years. The changes are projected in the Guidelines
of the Economic and Social Policy of the Party and the Revolution (adopted at
the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba 2011 and ratified by the
National Assembly of Popular Power in the same year) and include new directions
for the economy, labour policies, taxation, immigration and education, among
others. They are an expression of a macro-policy discourse that presents us with
the aim of streamlining the national economy, in the interests of improving the
Cuban socialist system, by making it prosperous and sustainable. According to
the government, we are facing an updating of the economic model, but without
political changes,\(^2\) so that the two main axes of the current reforms are aimed,
first, to implement measures aimed at improving national economic efficiency
and, second, to support and strengthen the historical ideological precepts of the Cuban Revolution, most emphatically through education.

Within the package of proposed reforms, one of the routes of change designed by the government relates to education, specifically in universities. The new policy in the education sector is called upon to contribute ‘moderately’ for the purpose of general reforms in the race for efficiency, but above all, to strengthen the political and ideological work in the field of university students and young teachers (Díaz-Canel 2011). Even when the changes in the higher education system were among the first of the great period of the ‘upgrade’, they have been quite unnoticed by analysts, more focused on assessing the effects of emerging economic, immigration, tax, labour relations and foreign investment changes, among others. Because of the nature and history of Cuban education in the revolutionary period, its features (state, centralised, universal), its key role in the distribution of political and ideological values of the Revolution and the explicit intention of the government to regain policy effectiveness in the field of universities, it is pertinent to understand the current educational policy as perhaps the most politically charged of the current reforms.

The Reforms: What Are We Talking about?

In 2008, Raúl Castro Ruz, then Minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba, was named President of the Council of State and Ministers and was subsequently elected General Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) in 2011. From both positions, (previously occupied by Fidel Castro) he is leading one of the most significant processes of change that socialist Cuba has lived through, that he announced in 2007 as ‘structural and conceptual reforms’. Two years later, a national debate was opened: ‘a popular, democratic and inclusive consultation’, as it was called by the government. Since then, the economy has been the focus of reforms and although there have been many significant changes in sectoral policies (taxation, foreign investment, employment, etc.), these respond essentially to an economic or pragmatic logic (‘oriented towards the market’, Mesa-Lago 2012: 23) to continue to fund the socialist social policy.

The government has determined that the changes do not allow for the modification of the (dominant) state ownership of the means of production, even when the reforms increasingly stimulate private and mixed ownership and management (individual and collective). In speaking about the changes, it has been made explicit that the intent behind them is to rearrange the economic field so it becomes functional to the current demands of economic and social development through a socialist alternative: ‘Cuban’ socialism.
While analysts have prioritised the emphasis on the new economic policies promoted by the government, we want to highlight another aspect of the reforms: the refusal to make political changes. ‘There will be no political change in Cuba, but we will update everything needed in the economic model,’ said Murillo (2012), vice president of the Council of Ministers. This claim rests on the assumption that profound changes can be implemented to the economic model (and its impact on the social) without altering the basic political model that gives it sense. What happened to the concept of politics as a concentrated expression of economics postulated by Lenin and taught in Cuban schools? The other assumption is that Cuba, which is changing, does not need political change. The split in the design of the reforms between the (necessary and intentional) change to the economic model and the (untouchable) Creole political model allows a profound tension to shine through. Politics, as a framework of meanings that structure the process and the making of policies itself, resists being revised, even ‘updated’, to use the word that the government uses to identify the current process of national (economic) change: the design of reforms does not provide for the modification of the Cuban socio-political model.3

From an analytical perspective of public policy, the distinction between politics and policy is extremely useful for understanding the complexity of the political process of policy making. A complex and comprehensive public policies–linked approach (to which this article subscribes) has at its core the idea that public policy of any country emerges from the political system as an order and from interests that provide meaning to government actions. This is to draw attention to politics as one variable (among others) that structures the process of public policy (Sabatier and Mazmaninan 1993). The need is paramount to look beyond the specific content of policies to concentrate the explanatory analysis on the critical processes that shape, run and perpetuate in time (Stein and Tomassi 2006). From this perspective, the decisional act itself is understood as an inherently political process through which a public issue has become a political and policy decision. Political dimension is understood as a social process of active production of legitimacy and consensus of the state order (Bazúa and Valenti 1993), which serves as a reference (not without conflict) to government decisions. Social demands and the state’s capacity to satisfy them through public policies generate a fragile balance that continually challenges governance and the legitimacy that governments may or may not show.

Thus, seen through these theoretical lenses, the approach of the Cuban government that splits economical and political changes suggests a tension between the different levels of the policy process. Following the above argument, our analytical assumption is that we are facing a change of policy, but under the
same politics, a condition that tends to cause a kind of straitjacket proposed in this reform process. Concretely, we feel that a good example where this situation of changes without change is manifested is in the current university policy, deployed as part of the overall reforms.

**Education, Bulwark of the Revolution**

Since the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, education has been defined as a priority sector for the country’s development. Education, understood as an expression of revolutionary cultural policy and as a path to the development of the productive forces, was one of the founding discourses of the Cuba of those days. This vision grew out of the deep transformations in the structural, pedagogical and ideological (among others) order that unfolded from the very beginning of the Revolution (Schultz 2011). The National Literacy Campaign of 1961 and the University Reform of 1962 are two examples that illustrate the extent of the binding concept between education, society and revolution.

To understand the nature of the Cuban educational system, the role of the school and the university as a special case, it is crucial to accept the idea that while education is a right of citizenship, it is conditioned by and subordinated to the state (Mujal-León 1988). This is the only entity responsible for providing the service and to guarantee it as a right, and therefore it is an education of and for the state: In the Althusserian sense, we understand it as an ‘ideological state apparatus’ (Althusser 1988). This is the principal function, but not the only one. There is a plurality of approaches to the functions of the educational institution (Clark 1992): a role in the generation of culture in a civilising sense, in the formation of national identity, contribution to the scientific and technical development in the formation of youth for economic development, among others.

The guiding ideology and content of Cuban education has been clearly defined since the Constitution of 1976 as ‘a patriotic communist education and training of future generations ...’ (Constitución de la República de Cuba, section C, Chapter V: 52, 2010). The ideological content of the declaration itself condenses the meaning of the training practices that have demonstrated the achievement of the manifesto, at different levels of the Cuban education system, with special emphasis on the superior level. The constitutional pattern has not been dead letter and lives on today more than ever.

The concept of political education was crystallised with the celebration of the First Congress of the CCP in 1975 (PCC 1976) and was then reflected in the law that marked the creation of the Ministry of Higher Education (MES) in 1976. In this law it is proposed that the ministry will have as one of its main functions
to increase the efficiency of the subsystem and the quality in the preparation of specialists, according to the economic and social development of the country and the principles of Marxist-Leninist pedagogy’ (Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba 1976). The Soviet-Stalinist reference in the new Constitution (Azcuy 2004) and with it the pedagogical principles demarcated by the MES are not hidden in these words.

Nevertheless, reality is whimsical and the logic of social reproduction persists. The working class, preponderant and growing until the mid-1970s, began in this decade to show a slowdown in their growth rates, while the intensity of the growth of the class of intellectuals (Paz and Espina 1994) rose. The university, for instance, which was before an effective organ of integration and social mobility (Domínguez 2009), became increasingly an institution that reproduced social inequalities. In the 1980s, the imbalance in the college entrance was already noticeable, especially in the sustained increased access for children of professionals, to the detriment of the working class and peasantry (ONE 1986), implying a regression in relation to the better balance of the 1960s. Along with social origin, traits such as the feminisation of education and majority access of the White population began to demonstrate a practice that indicated a return of the traditional dynamics of access to higher education. Among other affirmative policies, one factor that favoured this cycle is linked to the establishment in the late 1980s of selection mechanisms to higher education with the purpose to reduce the rates of reproduction of the intelligentsia and counter the growing mismatch between training, research and contribution to production (Paz and Espina 1994).

In addition to establishing entrance examinations, the relationship of the structure of course offerings with the demands of work was revised, universities’ specialisms were redesigned to prioritise their link to production, while the training of technical media and skilled workers was realigned. All these changes in the educational policy of intake, training and job placement led to a realignment of the selection mechanisms in the population, thus definitively redistributing the relatively masked mechanisms of ‘natural selection’ in the possession of cultural capital transmitted from the family group as a key element to the new demands patterned by the institutions. In turn, this gave an emphatic value to the meritocratic logic (with emphasis on political and ideological terms) as an essential means of ascent in student, labour and political careers. Thus, the social space defined primarily by cultural heritage (Bourdieu and Passeron 2003) through the family unit began to regain significance. The effectiveness of this resource is based on the gradual growth of the social imbalance in the origins of those who entered higher education. At the beginning of the new
millennium, 80 per cent of university students had at least one professional parent, doubling the proportion in relation to the 1980s. Thus we see how the ‘technical’ requirements to regulate admission to the expanded university became instruments that favoured educational and social inequality – social reproduction through educational mechanisms (Bourdieu and Passeron 1998).6

Then the 1990s brought a strong conceptual rethinking of the Cuban professional model, and thus we are at another turning point. It was catalysed by an unfavourable external environment, without the East European socialist bloc, a critical economic situation, as well as a collective imagination disrupted on multiple fronts. The expectation of the government on university graduates took on different nuances from preceding eras; although they were not new in essence, they were re-hierarchized with a clear emphasis on the integral content profile of college youth. The youth also accommodated their social perceptions of education as a result of its decreasing efficiency as a mechanism for social mobility (Domínguez 2008).

The economic crisis led to an accentuation of all political practices and the education sector was at the centre. Researchers say that the weakening of the state that came from the crisis of the 1990s was offset by an inflammation of nationalist rhetoric (Rojas 2004). For this author, the economic and political crisis in the last decade of the last century, instead of producing a theoretical reformulation of the principles of socialism, degenerated into a campaign of symbolic reaffirmation of revolutionary nationalism. The purpose of making this ‘languaging’ (Maturana 1989) was to be a kind of antidote to ‘Yankee imperialism’.

In this scenario, the education system internally started a review of the values-based educational model as the backbone of the pedagogical approach. Dissatisfaction with the integral and cultural development of college students was openly expressed in the Main Report of the Third Congress of the CCP (PCC 1986), from where the debate critically opened on the meaning of an integral education. Integrality resulted in a conception that placed an indispensable importance on political and ideological work.

The need to strengthen and implement an integral approach to educational and political-ideological work from an educational project... seeks primarily to train and develop in our students the values that determine the quality of a Cuban revolutionary of our times and academic excellence. (MES 1997: 3)

With the open debate on the reformulation of educational processes, three dimensions that group the wide fingerboard of educational activities were restructured as performance spaces and are still valid today:
1. The curriculum, content and the processes of academic life;
2. The extracurricular, originally called university extension, with an emphasis on student interaction with collateral processes alongside their studies. These are linked to cultural activities, sports and essentially investigative development.
3. The socio-political dimension associated with the set of substantive activities related to student participation in political demonstrations, shock tactics (‘tareas de choque’) ... life in the fellowship, and the various actions that emanate from a dynamic university, are inscribed in the socio-political life of our students, as well as being a source of strong convictions and actions that society demands of our future professionals. (MES 1997: 9)

The inclusion of the political as an explicit dimension is a peculiarity (non exclusive) of the Cuban case and a marked difference from other experiences (Quintana 2014). While historically the political dimension is often associated with university life, especially in Latin America since the Córdoba reform (Brunner 1990), there is a recognition of the relevance between academia and politics (De Sousa 2010), and it is unusual to find the political in the institutional structuring of universities.

Education Reform: ‘To educate professionals committed to the Revolution’

Higher education is, for the Cuban government, a key objective (Díaz-Canel 2013), and the current challenge is to achieve excellence. To do this, the current university policy increased quality with greater economic rationality, where the quality of education is understood as

... educational work with emphasis on political ideology [...] based on the value system of the Cuban Revolution, which tends to the training of professionals that combine high professional standing with the most altruistic revolutionary beliefs. (Alarcón 2013)

The singularity of this definition from the leader of MES on educational quality stands out, since this concept is one of the most controversial and polysemous within educational studies and whose analysis abounds in the literature. Some of the problems that led to these objectives were

Unsatisfactory results of university entrance. To give an idea, according to figures from MES, for daytime courses in 2010, only 32 per cent of those submitted to the entrance examinations passed. From that year changes were introduced whose main objective was to ease the entry of young people to universities: Places were guaranteed to all who...
achieved the minimum required (60 points) in the three entrance exams, Mathematics, Spanish and History of Cuba. In addition, the exam in specific aptitudes was eliminated in 30 courses. Another change was to establish a ‘second round’ of entrance exam for those who failed in the first.

Decreased efficiency in completion at the upper level (the official estimates for 2013–14 are 50 per cent). That is, for every two students entering college, only one will finish their course. This is one of the indicators that usually measures internal efficiency of the training of professionals. It also reflects the university academic performance, which is influenced by other external and internal variables. In early 2000, the completion rate was estimated at 75 per cent (Almuiñas et al. 2008). That is to say it has worsened.

The low rate of return on investment in education. According to a Human Development Report (UNDP 2013), Cuba ranks first in the world in expenditure on education relative to GDP with 12.9 per cent, but is ranked 22 in the index of education. This difference between investment and educational outcomes questions the efficiency in the use of resources for the sector. In terms of the economics of education, this means that the rate of return on investment in education is very low and that the management of resources for development of the education sector is highly inefficient. The low correspondence between resources invested in education and expected outcomes is not a new problem, which can also be the subject of political analysis.

The socio-political situation in the universities. Let us examine this last point closely. The socio-political situation in universities is what has become known as the political and ideological work in higher education. The current discourse on educational policy change repeatedly recognises the priority of this work. Universities are identified as areas where there is great need to strengthen education in values related to the Cuban socio-political system, both for internal (e.g., crisis of values in young people) and external (increased activities of ‘political subversion’ where young people are the main target, the government claims) reasons.

In the official view, universities have a unique role in the dissemination of Marxist-Leninist and Martí’s ideas. We should encourage ideological debate and controversy, the capacity for critical, committed and revolutionary analysis, knowledge and respect for history, which is the basis of the political culture of the citizen (Díaz-Canel 2014).

Recently, the ministerial authorities have recognised that, although results in terms of professional performance are satisfactory, education on the values of the Cuban Revolution is insufficient: ‘We instruct better than we educate, that is the reason by which we ensure that the effectiveness of our work in this task of strategic importance for the future of our revolution is insufficient’ (Alarcón 2013). Therefore, university management has proposed in the design
of the current university policy: ‘To train highly qualified professional revolutionaries committed to the nation and socialism and to train patriots with strong anti-imperialist sentiments and deep knowledge of the principles and values of Cuban socialism’ (UH 2009). The above objectives, though ‘new’ in a chronological sense, are a continuation of university policy since the beginning of the Revolution. The question arises: Why after over 50 years of revolution does political and ideological education offer no better results, as recognised by the government itself?

On the political situation in Cuban universities, some studies have reported results that have been interpreted as a certain weakening of the commitment to the Revolution (according to specialists at the Socio-Political Studies Centre (CESPO), unpublished data). The Study Group on Youth Centre for Psychological and Sociological Research (CIPS) has also shown that among the young, ‘The most notable difference is the magnitude of the loss of sociopolitical sphere that has significantly reduced the significance it has in youth satisfaction’ (Domínguez 2005: 42).

As part of the current university reform, the main actions that have been established to address the above situation are better planning alongside control, more rigour and accountability; involving more stakeholders in identifying and solving problems; reinforcing the groundwork ‘that teachers with more experience and conditions occupy positions of basic responsibility’; the creation of a new paid position called Principal Lecturer of the year, whose responsibility is to ‘... lead the university community, composed of faculty, teachers, guides and guardians where they exist, students and their organizations towards achieving the strategy comprehensive educational concert together’ (Alarcón 2013). These leaders have well-defined duties and powers to make decisions on their scope. The positions are filled by educators with political and academic experience and who have enough time for the work which consists of the extension of the contents of the work departments in their integral and everyday function, to be in charge of the preparation of teachers in the values, accomplishments and projections of the economic and social policy of the Cuban Revolution, to stimulate and control the duty to overcome these issues through dialogue and discussion groups that prepare them to work with students. In addition, they must refine and extend the formal courses (related to the History of Cuba, training and politics).

The emphasis in the duties in the above ideological-politician is clear. The new education strategy of the Cuban government does not hide its purpose: to intensify and accentuate institutional and educational practices for political purposes wherever possible throughout the university. It is the maturation of the education system as an ideological state apparatus.
Cuba, the largest Caribbean island, a country today with more than 11 million people, is immersed in one of the most momentous change processes of the last 50 years. Only the changes that came with the triumph of the Revolution in 1959 (55 years ago) were more radical than the changes now (which many analysts agree show a continuity with those of the 1990s). Then it was called a revolution, today reforms. And to make a play on words, we might think today that Cuba is a country that is between revolution and reform.

From the political theory of social order, revolution and reform respond to different solutions to the question of change. The first is the path that is based on conflict (Bovero 1985): the struggle, ‘disorder’ leading to a new order, rebellion as a foundation of the new status quo. The second pathway refers to a change that respects the original contract that founded the political order, just to avoid the ‘state of war’ as the jusnaturalist perspective would say (revolution, say the conservatives). The violence (‘anti-democracy’) from which, for example, (some) socialism arises as a political order (Cuba as a special case) is one of the criticisms (Bobbio 1986) that are made to the revolutionary path as a form of change. On the other hand, the most radical negative remark about ‘reformism’ is to identify it as a ‘change without change’ at the same time. With the methodology of ‘gradually’, transformation comes through reforms. Mészarós (2008: 82) says it represents an insurmountable social premise that by definition banishes the possibility of real change. Under this conception, one can only think of antidotes, but not in significant changes. For this author, the causal structural determinants of the order (of capital) are limitations on any possibility of real transformation, because the reforming potential can never go against their own causal determinants. Can this ‘constriction’ of reformist logic be overcome under socialism? We shall see.

Although today the reforms, and within these educational reforms, give indications of change in their intention and execution, the approach we make is that, although policies can change, politics, in their design, seems to be different. How then can we understand that the education system today is reinforcing a historical ideological line, in a country that is no longer the same as before? The impermeability of the political model and the values on which it rests is a fundamental restriction on the reforms. They are the padlocks that bureaucracy is placing on the modifications, the explicit intention of the discourse is ‘do not touch’ the political and the safeguarding reproductive logic of power are signs of a change without change, at least as a stated intention. There is no denying the obvious social dynamism in the current situation: the inclusion of new actors in the economic field (and thus empowered groups), a rethinking of the ‘rules
of the game’ where you can no longer guarantee or even speak of a policy of full employment, while the workforce is being dispensed with because it is unproductive or ‘unviable’. All these emergencies have impacts on the life of the country and have been studied by researchers from both the island and abroad.

The situation we have identified as changes without change is expressed very clearly in education between a present that is ‘updating’ economic rationality, its practices of reproducing material life and an untouchable political-ideological model that resists be revised. It is pragmatic and ideological logic (Mesa-Lago 2012), in sharp contradiction. Anthropomorphising the analysis, it is a policy of changes with fear of change. From a psychoanalytic perspective, it is a paranoid policy: with a fear of itself.

Specifically, the challenges that Cuban education faces today are many: from the point of view of the state it is required to be ‘productive’ and cost effective and meet its political and ideological function. Meanwhile, among the citizenship disappointment regarding education as a means of upward social mobility is increasing. In a country where before to be university educated gave social prestige and resulted in a skilled occupation that allowed a decent income (according to the standard of living of the model of socialist development and consumption patterns), today, as the government itself acknowledges, the average income of a state worker does not even cover half of their spending, which makes a professional find it less and less attractive to work for the state. So far the changes in education are not a making a sufficient connection between the new reality that is happening (reconfiguration of the labour ‘market’, new tax policy, rising prices, growing social inequality ...) and the education the state is offering.

With the current university policy, the government seeks, in turn, to contribute to the race for efficiency as the supreme goal of the reforms, while perfecting the institutional mechanisms for a more effective role in the (re)production of revolutionary ideology and the distribution of its values. The vision is maintained of the state as an entity that monopolises educational heritage as ‘cultural imperialism’ (Carnoy 1982), for which new mechanisms of control domination and control of the educational capital are designed. But this policy also seeks to recover ‘symbolic efficiency’ (Bourdieu 2009), assuming a strengthening of the historical ideological line that serves as a counterweight to the process of opening the country is experiencing. In this ‘battle of ideas’ and ‘practical purposes’, we will have to see who comes out victorious.

More than Conclusions, Questions

Cuba, unlike some other experiences, has intentionally driven university policy with a social and political purpose. The recognised success of Cuban education
should be understood not as a result of an isolated sector strategy, but within a vision of social policy that is built from the political will and institutionally implemented with comparatively recognised results (Carnoy 2010).

Cuban education has earned it admirers and critics, who, while stressing its high quality according to conventional measurement indicators (assess learning in mathematical reasoning, language skills, etc.), question the monopoly of education by the state. However, under another logic of the organisation of political order, such as that underlying the Cuban model, the historical evidence shows that in this case, it is thanks to the State-Education link, rather than in spite of it, that social transformation has occurred, but not just because of education. In fact, the transformation has occurred (also) in the education system, but, as expressed by Freire (Torres 2004), the transformation is in itself educational. Can education, in the current situation, assist the social change that Cuba needs? For the educational contribution to social development, not only in the traditional manner but also in the formation of a civil society able to participate in all its diversity (Bobes 2013) in political life and where personal fulfilment is not contrary to social welfare, it requires not only an upgrade, but a rethinking of its functions, its codes and its logics of critical pedagogy.

In this sense, the island is facing great challenges to which the current (general and educational) policy has to provide answers: Is it necessary to refresh the view of politics in the education sector at this juncture in history? What changes are required in the education system so that it articulates better with the labour sector, the most changing sector today? How can more productive links be built between Education-Science-Economics within socialist principles? Can democratic processes be enhanced through current university policy? If the Cuban government wants to contribute to the overall change via the current educational policy (among others) then, the main challenge is to achieve consistency in the design of policy in this sector with the aim of policy change in general, and in the Cuban case, it would seem that the concept of education today answers a Cuba that no longer exists. It is necessary not only to formulate more policies (educational, economic ...) but to discuss a new political economy of education. The main function that education could have in the face of the present changes in Cuba is to try to anticipate and prepare generations of young people with a vision of the country that must be defined by the government and society. More than changes, transformations are needed, and as part of them, revolutionising education is crucial.

Notes

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1. Education in Greek.
2. In fact, the government’s idea is to ‘improve the Cuban socio-political model’, not to change it.
3. For more information on the Cuban political model, visit the official website www.cubaportal.org
4. To see more information about education before Cuban revolution, look for Cordobí (2012).
5. In these days are increasing the role of family economic capital in students’ careers.
6. To increase the massive access at the university, by early 2000s start a ‘new educational revolution’. See more in http://www.redalyc.org/pdf/373/37303407.pdf
7. The nature of political-ideological education in Cuba, despite being one of its characteristic features and an institutionalised practice in the sector, has been kidnapped by political issues and its own research institutions. From Cuban social research, the political dimension in education studies was studied as a sideline, but not as explicit object of research, for example, in studies on Education and Society, University-Extension and university research on young people.

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