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EDUCATION NETWORKS: THE VIRTUAL WORLD AT THE SERVICE OF ANOTHER EDUCATION MODEL

The traditional "deficit of information" problem has become today an "infoxication" problem (for a minority of the world population). The virtual world, with the major paradoxes that characterize today's globalized society in which it emerged, is bringing with it extraordinary possibilities for a double, contradictory movement, both towards further concentration and towards democratization of information. The "banking education model" – which monopolizes power and truth to legitimize a structurally hierarchical and asymmetric relationship, concentrates and recycles information and knowledge, and adopts a selective, transmissive and unilateral instructional strategy- was once associated to the classroom but navigates today at large in the Internet, with enormous capillarity. However, that same virtual world houses and carries the antidote: the possibility, also at local and global scale, of horizontality, encounter of the diverse, debate, reasoned, interactive and genuinely democratic communication, capable of building relationships and processes that are educative in themselves and more coherent with that other education possible: for critical thinking, acknowledging diversity and complexity, emancipation, and social transformation. In every platform, portal, site, list, network or virtual community there are different political, communicational and educational projects at stake. This paper outlines a general reflection against the background of the author's concrete experience of moderating various national, Latin American and international networks and virtual fora.

Rosa Maria Torres del Castillo is Ecuadorian, educationist, linguist and education journalist., researcher and specialist in basic education. She has worked for both national, regional and international organizations. Most of her international experience in the field of education is linked to UNICEF and UNESCO. She was Minister of Education and Cultures in Ecuador (2003); Researcher and Coordinator of the Area of Educational Innovations at IPE-UNESCO Buenos Aires (1998-2000); Program Director for Latin America and the Caribbean at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, based in Buenos Aires (1996-1998); Senior Education Adviser at UNICEF Education Cluster, in New York (1992-1996); Education Officer at UNICEF, in Quito (1991); Pedagogical Director of the National Literacy Campaign "Monsignor Leonidas Proaño" in Ecuador (1988-1990); Researcher and Coordinator of the Education Area at CIUDAD Reserch Center in Quito (1986-1988); Researcher and Coordinator of the Education and Communication Area at CRIES (Regional Coordination Office for Economic and Social Research) in Nicaragua (1983-1986); and Advisor to the Vice- Ministry of Adult Education in Nicaragua (1981-1983). Since the World Education Forum (Dakar , April 2000) she coordinates the initiative that led to the creation of the network of signatories of the Latin American Statement for Education for All. She moderates various virtual networks and is the author of many books and articles on education. In 2000 she started to work independently as a researcher and international education adviser from her own institute, Fronesis www.fronesis.org