



"School is truly important, but it's not the only source of learning. The coexistence from the community is a major source for a quality education."

Herman Van de Velde, PhD



Elmys Escribano Hervis  
escriba2003@gmail.com  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0050-0649>  
Titular Professor at Universidad de Matanzas, Cuba  
Director of Revista Atenas de la Universidad de Matanzas  
Editor of Revista Iberoamericana en Investigación Educativa

Quality in education is a matter of great relevance and social interest. Elements such as Genuine Cooperation and inclusion are referents on the development of quality education, as they contribute to the transformation of a social environment of people who act and interact on the educational field.

On the sixth edition of *Índice, Education Journal of Nicaragua* with Education of quality: equity, inclusion and social justice as transformational principles as main theme. We present the reader an interview directed by Elmys Escribano Hervis, from Revista Atenas and Colectivo Editorial de la Revista Iberoamericana en Investigación Educativa, to Herman Van de Velde. It is an open and lively exchange between

both sides who merge reflections of new messages to interpret education with an evolutionary gaze.

During the interview, Escribano and Van de Velde engage about quality in education successes; it entails meaningful learning for life through the knowledge building, as well as community's inclusion on educational processes through the sociocultural elements that facilitate wisdom from a holistic perspective.

**Dr. Elmys Escribano Hervis (E.E.):** The Editorial Collective of the Colectivo Editorial from Revista Atenas and Colectivo Editorial de la Revista Iberoamericana en Investigación Educativa have the pleasure of talking with Herman Van de Velde,

general coordinator of ÁBACOenRed. We regard it as such, a digital creative space of Alternative Education: Cooperative Learning without borders. Our editorial collective appreciates this opportunity.

Herman, your original and articulated foundations and positions on various topics of education and science are quite recognized, so we suggest talking about them. The first subject would be recognizing ourselves as a legitimate stance, to defend genuine cooperation, your concept, for promoting learning processes to include research education. **What value do you ascribe to conceive these processes currently moderated by Genuine Cooperation?**

**Dr. Herman Van de Velde (H.V.):** Thank you so much, Elmys, for this space and opportunity of sharing with you from that dear country, Cuba, that I carry, for your government and people, something special on the left side of my heart. I truly like it; I'm very happy.



Speaking of genuine cooperation, firstly, I have to say the concept of Genuine Cooperation was found on a Commander Fidel Castro's speech where he discusses Genuine Cooperation, referring to international cooperation. It was during the II CARICOM-Cuba in Barbados, on December 8<sup>th</sup> of 2005. Thus, finding ourselves with

the concept of Genuine Cooperation, we were truly impressed because it aligned with the context of my Ph.D. thesis. It had a lot to do with the evaluation of international cooperation regarding education in Central America. We really found a large part of what is named cooperation, also internationally, is not always genuine. Further on we applied the concept of Genuine Cooperation on an international, national and local level, specifically in education and integral education, trying to give meaning to this concept. Then we found various aspects.

A core value in genuine cooperation is inclusion, which is an ethical, pedagogical, and methodological referent. In traditional education we love to talk about "teach to". It is claimed we must teach the young, grow conscience about care for the environment, namely. However, when we say, "teach to", we always refer to others. This is where the matter of inclusion is placed or, rather, exclusion. Of course, we allude all people must be active members of the educational process, socio-educational, politic, and ideological life in a country, a society. Yet, when I say it should "teach to" or raise awareness to mothers and fathers of family to..., I make an implicit exclusion of myself, as if saying: "we should teach other people, but I'm already educated". This drew our attention to the point we thought of creating a dictionary of "bad words" in pedagogy, such as "teach to" as it excludes myself. Hence, since then we started to talk about "educate US".

Also, we started to consider this approach of Genuine Cooperation in classroom on all levels, seeking to build this horizontal relationship implying Genuine Cooperation as a learning environment. Similarly, I say I know and the other doesn't, whereas,

currently, with such access to data sources, internet, through books, libraries, other people, it is not true I know and the other does not. Rather, from the Genuine Cooperation approach, it is truly important, instead of always trying to teach with the claimed “wise man”, we must provide learning spaces where we all learn. Including me as a mediator, as a teacher! I also have to learn from my students! This is a key element. Instead of just raising awareness, we talk about becoming aware ourselves, to build our own conscience together with everyone else because I will never get to an already finalized consciousness.



It is a great challenge to keep building conscience all life-long. We learn throughout life, up until—I would say—death do us apart from learning. So, I completely agree with your approach that Genuine Cooperation is an authentic posture to promote learning processes, and, if you allow me, I could share some personal experiences we’ve had. First, personally as an education and teaching professional, when I came to Nicaragua, 39 years ago, I felt happy when I had a textbook available where I could ground myself to work with students. I remember it was a Cuban textbook translated from Russian: “The pedagogy” from Savin, in pedagogy, and I had a psychology one. Subsequently, we grew interested in producing a textbook of our own authorship and we made it in different

fields: scientific research, general pedagogy, educational assessment, etcetera. However, further on, about ten, fifteen years, I asked myself the question and, already thinking from this approach of Genuine Cooperation, what is the function of a textbook, for instance, in higher education? Is it not, implicitly, I’m telling my students: “What you must learn is in this text”? Rather, unconsciously, I could be limiting them to find data, deepening elements part of the study program and go beyond what it is said in the book. As you know, every book is limited. In a book we cannot lay everything. So, I started to work with the approach of Genuine Cooperation, another strategy aiming to learn through all of us researching, learning by sharing, learning meaning from a critical attitude facing the data we can find on internet, for example, where there is so much trash. We could name this as “knowing how to read”, and when I say knowing how to read, I remember José Martí’s words: “Knowing how to read is knowing how to walk, knowing how to read is knowing how to ascend”.

This exact thing is something I wanted to directly apply in the educational experience, understanding José Martí, as knowing how to read and how to walk means we could learn to be superb actors or protagonists in our society, where we are born; but it is not enough, since knowing how to write is knowing how to create, is transforming from an actor to an author; the actor with “c” we change it to “th”. Then, instead of actors we become authors of new sceneries according to the political, ideological, pedagogical project we share nationally, on society level. Everything means we must also learn to write, knowing how to write.

I had an experience in a module in educational planning on a master’s level at Autonomous National University of Nicaragua, Managua

(UNAN-Managua), Estelí. In educational planning, the whole world has experience when they are on a master. We worked at the beginning without a textbook and even promoted research, first based on identifying possible sources about educational planning. With students, we went to review documents and books' index, so in nine meetings we learned new topics of educational planning. Then, we created a new index, which we organized ourselves formed in teams of two to three people, assuming the responsibility of investigating the topic.

Subsequently, a schedule was defined so each presented a draft of what they had investigated. It was a learning by investigating but presenting collectively so the rest could also suggest. We also had available a physical library of around ten books, including a text that, from the Master's coordination, was created. As I had stated I didn't want to work with only one textbook, I requested authorization to take ten books and photocopy them three times each one (because it was 30 students). So, at the same price, instead of having one textbook, everyone with the 30 copies had ten textbooks, three samples each, as a physical library. Also, we built a digital platform library.

All of this was interesting as we went on building together, being authors of our own learning. After nine meetings, the students made a cover page, and we edited a new book (reflecting everything learned) about educative planning. This book is already at the digital library of ÁBACOnRed, titled "The art of planning". I'm not saying this book is the best, the supreme. No. But it is a product of Genuine Cooperation between 31 people, 30 students, and myself, a team of book's co-authors reflecting on what we learned. I

can also talk about another book we created for a PhD. The title of the book is "Being a teacher: notes about teaching training and evaluation"; similarly, it was carried out on "Learning to investigate, investigating" (video and article), and "Systematization of experiences". This means we apply Genuine Cooperation as didactic, as methodology, not for teaching, but learning.

In this sense, returning to the question of a legitimate stance to promote education processes, I would say it is authentic, original and highly enjoyable, as in those cases it is no longer me who (supposedly) knows it all, but I methodologically accompany the processes. From my experience, I share some comments which, of course, provoke and enable others to reflect; as well as their comments also provoke me and make me reflect on what they say and contribute because what we share is interesting.

**E.E.:** Quite an interesting philosophy, I would say it is an update of the basic principles that have powered this movement of continental popular education. **Do you consider this could be a bet for quality in education for everyone in our areas, our regions?**

**H.V.:** I am convinced it is. Even when at the beginning we called it "paradigm", today we talk about Genuine Cooperation with a **Vital Essential Vision**. Genuine Cooperation has been a collaborative construction from the pedagogical experience of each person of this team with practice in education since the National Literacy Crusade in Nicaragua in 1981; assistance in the process of national consultation about goals, objectives, and principles of the New Education in Nicaragua; education for

adults and teacher training, as well as housing cooperatives. Similarly, all our people's inputs are truly major, even in other countries of Ouramerica (Nuestraamérica), especially where they represent us as ÁBACOnRed.

In our case, regarding Genuine Cooperation, we do not pretend to be either a paradigm or model as it is not something to be duplicated, rather it must be built from the territory, from the reality we are a part of. Genuine Cooperation won't necessarily concrete itself as it did here in Estelí, in our activities as ÁBACOnRed, as in the context of Universidad de Matanzas. The embodiment of Genuine Cooperation is different. This is why, instead of talking about a paradigm, we consider it a **Vital Essential Vision**, implying essence for life, for quality life, and not only educationally, but on the level of life in all its areas. For instance, we talk about Genuine Cooperation on communitarian or territorial development, social solidary economy, cooperativism.

Vital essential vision is based specifically on two pedagogies we have named "**Pedagogy of being, being EcoPerSocial**", pedagogy of "**BEING being**" on a people level as well as a community level with an EcoPerSocial identity, and a **Signification Pedagogy**.

We define identity as **EcoPerSocial**, though it is a concept we will not find in any dictionary. It is not someone's invention, it is the collective construction through contributions in workshops we have held with teachers, and it means our identity, both as a community and personally, is a consequence with conjugation, the interaction of three very

important dimensions: a) Very **personal** characteristics; b) **Social** interaction with other people, family and c) Section we call **ecological**, which completes EcoPerSocial, regarding the context, territory, to say: if I didn't decide to come to Nicaragua, instead, for example, went to Brazil or Cuba in 1983, then in this moment, the Herman who would be talking with you would be other, not the same because context influences a lot.

Genuine Cooperation has as a foundation in "**Pedagogy of Being, being EcoPerSonal**". The other foundation is the "**Pedagogy of Meaning**". From a Vital essential vision of Genuine Cooperation, it is very important to be conscious of how everything happening to us in life is what we mean; we mean these events, these experiences. An example: right now, we have this virtual encounter, although it is also in person, right? because here we are. Then, when we leave, when this ends, each of us will build a meaning, perhaps different, of this same event, of the conversation.



All these elements are essential to Genuine Cooperation. We have various referents: an **Ethical EcoSocial\_Humanist Referent**, a philosophical, political, and ideological posture and **Pedagogical Referent**, with two elements: a popular alternative education and Integrator of Learning and its Facilitation Paradigm (Paradigma Integrador de Aprendizaje y Facilitación, PIAF). We also have a **Methodological**

**Referent**, implying an educational practice coherent with the two previous references.

In the Pedagogical referent we refer to a popular alternative education as public education, not as private education and PIAF, where we pick up elements of different learning theories, considering all these theories of learning have crucial elements to consider. Maybe there is not totally “false”, or “real” learning theory, rather, just as behaviorism, cognitivism, humanism, constructivism, connectivism, all have interesting elements. Which is why we talk about the learning integrator and its facilitation paradigm.

The **Popular Alternative Education** is an adequate strategy to guarantee quality in education, in learning, at all levels. Here I have our definition of popular alternative education; I will comment briefly. *An alternative popular education, as public education, is the one with original and creative inputs—originals mean of the origin; where I am from, from there we must begin, so we go training ourselves creatively—points to the integral and integrating learning of the human being, provoking—and here once again— from their own being, —from what we are—as a sociocultural historical product attitude changes.*

Also, José Martí highly stressed history is the root of actuality. So, for us to be able to live consciously we must know our history. This means we should provoke changes in attitude, expressing what we learned. One of the things we propose for a quality in education is we cannot settle with changes in behavior or knowledge accumulation or knowledge building, because we can truly only talk about meaningful learning from the moment there are changes in people's

attitude, only possible when knowledge building begins from our own context's history we live in that moment. And there we propose *everything is based on Genuine Cooperation and guided towards a social entrepreneurship of quality* since, if there is an attitude change, the question is, what do we do with it? To talk about quality in education, we must be aware of what we do with what we learned. If I don't do something with what I learned, possibly I didn't learn it.

All of these imply two things: one, critical appropriation of the sociocultural heritage of a society, to be able to be an actor with “c”, actor in the current sociopolitical and economical coexistence. What José Martí used to say: “knowing how to read is knowing how to swim”. In essence, knowing how to read not only literally, but generally knowing how to read your context, understand, comprehend this society where we are born, because it is important to be a conscious actor in this sociopolitical and economic current coexistence. But it is also important there is a creative and constructive contribution of our students, of us as authors, no longer with “c”, but with “u” of the culture and society because, if there is no authorship, it means we haven't advanced. Then, the positive development, quality in education, implies all those contributions must be made, not only on a university level, but on technical education or education in general: *creative and constructive contributions as authors of culture and society where the persona unravels itself together with other living beings in all their dimensions.* When I say other living beings, I mean it's not only human beings, but the whole ecological part, earth, universe.

Being able to create, build as authors, from very young, would be so interesting. I remember right now José Martí's words when he said: "*Only cultured people can be truly free people*". So, being cultured means to say no just knowing history. It is important to know history, but also contributes to keep making history as a very important input.

Coming back to your question, I like how you say, "*for our continent*", because we cope too much of other continents, while there is so much richness in Ouramerican we should delve into, so we can also achieve to help to this culture, this society Ouramerican is so different. Decolonization keeps being a constant challenge because they have imposed and kept on imposing ideas, models, dimensions, elements I do not know to what extent they have anything to do with our own history here in Ouramerican.



**E.E.:** It is very interesting, and I confess I feel amazed, I feel pleasantly impressed, above all by how you have managed and inserted Martí's thoughts in your reflection. In fact, it also presents us with a line, phases. Thus, I believe we must have other conversations in the future to delve further into what has left us delighted.

Martí used to say men have two mothers: nature and circumstances —to think from there the definition you were saying. Martí said "*The past is the root of the present. It must be known what it was, because what*

*it was is what is*". You have used knowing how to read and how to walk, knowing how to read ourselves connects us to the idea and lecture you have done, it connects us to a topic we have thought of proposing for you to talk to us about. Essentially, it has a lot to do with the sense of the critical pedagogy, therefore we wanted to hear you: what meaning do you grant to support the learning processes today, founded on the pedagogy of the renewed popular alternative education and originally contextualized for Ouramerica?

**H.V.:** To be able to talk to you about **critical pedagogy** it's important to mean the concept, because I am aware there are different meanings of critical pedagogy nowadays. There are meanings saying its origin is further from the north. But more than seeing the meanings from the North, it appears to me so important to mean the concept of critical pedagogy **from our Ouramerican context**. The meaning I give to it has much to do with my answers to the two previous questions. I could also say, picking up a concept from Paulo Freire where he criticizes banking education, critical pedagogy is the one taking us to a **liberating education**, completely opposite education to banking education. Likewise, we could call a community pedagogy, a pedagogy from the community where learning how to read and write is promoted, two things from the territory, from the community, and where school is part of the community. A pedagogy where we are conscious learning to read and learning to write is not only from school. School is truly important, but it's not the only source of learning. The coexistence from the community is a major source for quality education.

Critical pedagogy is something it considers this community character, and for us it is reflected in this **Pedagogy of BE being**. I remember, in some moment, some years ago, UNESCO stated, and imposed internationally, we must: learning to know, learn to do, learning to live together and suddenly it also appeared “learning to be”. If we truly had integrated the reflection from a philosophy, or would be critical pedagogy, we would have proposed from the beginning regarding “learning to be” *Would it be this boy, this girl not born yet, it still has to learn to be?* I feel this is rude because this boy, this girl just born already is. The only thing it is not, is an adult person, of course, and has to grow, has to learn, has to educate themselves, but this boy, this girl already is. Then, it is rude to say we must “learn to be”. At least we should say “**learn to be being**”. Yet, I have never seen, in any place, up until this moment, a writing where the expression “learn to be being” is criticized (perhaps there is, but I have not read it).

Another element I analyze from the approach of critical pedagogy is **competency-based education**. This is something imposed on us by the World Bank in every country. *But have we really analyzed from a critical pedagogy what an education based on competencies means?* Three times it goes towards the product, nothing else. *Would it be the product is the only indicator to talk about quality in education or perhaps the process it takes for the product could be a better indicator to value product quality?* Hence, frequently I give an easy example: in Nicaragua we have an evaluation system of scores—that should not exist—, because scores is a capitalist try which does not help us in anything, rather promotes competing to see who has more; but, let’s say two boys or girls achieve 75 in average score. If we analyze two situations:

(1) a kid has always had 95 and up, now has 75; (2) the other kid always had a 62, 63, 65 no more, but now has a 75. Would it be the results are the same 75 and 75? And there is where a supposedly qualitative scale is applied stating in both cases “very good” or “good”. However, giving very good to both is a great mistake, a barbarity, since the first boy or girl descended from 95 to 75, we must recognize they have a problem and we must investigate the cause since, suddenly, this academic performance has decreased. It is also a barbarity to qualify the kid who has had their grade go up from 62, 63, and 65 up to 75 as a “very good”, because it is excellent. We can’t deny the process, tendency, one to the lower and one upper. The one giving us more possibilities of a good future in education is the kid who is growing; but in the two cases we must analyze the causes.

Through the **pedagogy of meaning**, a critical pedagogy could be materialized, since it implies reflection of the educative act. It is important to be conscious I mean something, and the other does too. This provokes me a critical attitude because when we share the diverse meaning of the same educational event, it makes me think, makes me critically reflect. Here I would say, as a critic of what we have in our universities in general. No, not generally, I can’t generalize, even when I have the context of the UNAN-Managua and other universities’ contexts where I have punctually gone to share. I’ve been lucky to go through various universities in Latin America and have perceived, even now, our universities work a lot under the colonized conception, where many want to copy what is in Europe, United States, instead of building what is ours and not letting us be imposed of.



When we talk about a popular education—now we say **Popular Alternative Education**—, we don't say popular alternative education, as we said at the beginning, because after we saw in popular education there are no different alternatives, rather the alternative education must be popular because there are also non-popular alternative educations, elitist and is not what we pretend. Which is why we say **Popular Alternative Education as Public Education**.

The other day I had a conversation and suddenly they asked me: *your idea of Genuine Cooperation, is it based on the contribution of a pedagogue?* And they mention us names of pedagogues with some history from Europe or United States. But here we have, for example, Simón Rodríguez, Paulo Freire, José Carlos Mariátegui, Orlando Fals Borda, the own José Martí and others. There are many sources here we should delve into to identify their contributions because they come from our own realities. I mean, we must expand, broadening more in these contributions from our contexts as a challenge to build this matrix of an Ouramerica education.

I am self-critical and I recognize the proposal of Genuine Cooperation. We have made a few first steps to face this collectively built vision from the Nicaraguan, Central American and Cuban context, through the experience of my doctoral education, and the support of other Latin America countries.

*How can we further enrich this?* With studies of ancestral knowledge of our indigenous people, where there are many examples of Genuine Cooperation, even if it was not named like this, because it is not a model, it's not something closed,

is something we keep on building. If you read an ÁBACOpenRed's paper from a few years ago, you will see the scheme we had of Genuine Cooperation is different to the one we have now, because it is something dynamic and to keep on building, enriching.

Critical pedagogy is a pedagogy integrating **subjectivity** to educational activities for it to be of quality. When I started to work in Nicaragua, and Belgium too, it was stated to make an investigation, the scientific method had to be applied. I say now: it is fine, but I would rather talk of a **scientific methodology**. Within this range of methodologies or scientific methodologies there are many scientific methods, there are technics, different options. To make science, there is not only a methodological option, but we'd also rather opt for methodological creativity, transparency, holistic approach, systematicity. All of these are very important elements, as well as the conscience of how subjectivity will always be part of the reality we live in, the reality we build, and, if we want to investigate this reality, we must integrate subjectivity.

Subjectivity is not the same as cronyism, cronyism is corruption. Subjectivity means people enter the scenario. From the moment we identify a problem and, even when there are statistical data demonstrating it, we choose it because I as an investigator or our investigative team subjectively give importance to the problem and, as of our subjective experience, we'll define the topic we want to link with said problem.

Another related concern: *Why always start from the problem?* From this approach of critical pedagogy, *why can't we start from dreams?* Let's investigate how to materialize a dream instead of how to solve a problem,

even when deep down it may appear to be the same, because a dream not concretized is because there is something in our reality that is not how we want it to be. It is a problem. The idea of achieving dreams motivates me more because it reflects a positive attitude, constructive with possibilities.

We must be aware of this approach of critical pedagogy; science also is a human social construct of where my experience comes from. We should see in universities it is a false contradiction when it comes to quantitative and qualitative. When I worked the research part in a Masters (there is a paper in the digital library and a video in the YouTube channel **ÁBACOenRed** about **“Learn to investigate, investigating”**), they were three research modules: qualitative, quantitative and there were thesis seminars, but with a condition: not separating those elements, because we must learn to investigate, investigating. Youth must start to make the thesis during master’s and, depending on what they need, we must work topics. With tutors present in meetings, we addressed quantitative, qualitative, and participatory action-research, according to the needs to tackle to make a good thesis.

Another thing where critical pedagogy and our pedagogy correlate a lot, from the approach of Genuine Cooperation, is we must learn not only learn to respect diversity between people who share a dream, but also enjoy it. Enjoying diversity has its limits, which is why we place the surname of **“between people who share a dream”**. When we share a dream of the society we pretend, the horizon of a society based on Genuine Cooperation, we are also clear there would be a lot of diversity between people who share this

dream. But this is a diversity we can share, from honesty, complementarity between thoughts, feelings, and contributions.

That is where critical pedagogy heads to, of course there is much more to say yet. A further element is the concept of **Dialogue in Meeting (Diálogo en Encuentro, DenE)**. It is necessary to find ourselves first to establish the dialogue. If there is no encounter, then dialogue is not possible. It has to do with the very own popular education, the same popular alternative education is a concrete expression of what could be critical pedagogy.

**E.E.:** Very well, Doctor Herman, I find myself between what you have shared and have used a video of yours where you establish false limits between paradigms to assume the conception in the practice of educational research in our educational and scholar contexts.

Finally, we ask you for a comment to finish the interview, incidentally, and your reflections around the topics we proposed. We are certain of the value of educating critical citizens, schools are truly spaces of creativity, reflection, of applying research as a tool for improvement, and teachers must be properly up to date and with the spirit of constant adjustment to the reality we live, contributing to the quality management of education.

Then, on this subject, we would like to hear a last reflection of yours today **about the utility it has for our social, cultural context form critical citizens, use research as a tool for improvement and as contribution to the constant quality in education.**

**H.V.:** Without a doubt, research is highly necessary; where we fail is we have given an excluding character to research, as if it is only of great experts, closed off in their own academical world, and we forget the boy, the girl who is born, investigates.

If we put much more emphasis on this research experience from very young, that boy, that girl starts to explore the world around them, a type of contact they could have with people who accompany them in this growth, later on outside from the Center of Child Development (Centro de Desarrollo Infantil, CDI), pre-school, elementary school, high school, so research is more of a permanent methodology for learning, even more than transfer knowledge, rather discovering knowledge and build skills. Generally, discovering knowledge already exists but be careful with all the creativity nowadays in children and youth! Suddenly we can also find ourselves young students discovering knowledge, perhaps, in our context as new knowledge.

So, from childhood and youth we must delve into our research. I remember José Martí's words: *"who feeds on young ideas always lives young"*. This means we promote listening to young people but listen to youth by facilitating spaces where they can discover and truly research topics of interest.

I have performed on an educative intermediate level and later in university. In university, one of the areas I worked in frequently was research methodology. I remember the experience. One is afraid that young people of 17, 18, 20 years old don't know how to research, have no idea how to. If you tell them or used to say, "Research about that", then the immediate question was: —Teacher, where can we find

it? Yet, I don't have to tell them where to find it, as it is part of the research: identify valid sources to build new knowledge, build those inputs, the source to define them.

The other element I criticize a lot in any context around research is when spaces of research are created, participation must be encouraged, not for the "jury" to attack. So, here I have comments: (1) if they tell me I must defend something, I defend something when they attack me; I believe in a quality education nobody should attack anybody, it must be sharing a research experience; (2) it's defended in front of a jury. Such a horrible name: "jury"! Because what a jury does is listen to judge. This is another critic: we should not listen to our students' research experiences to judge them, rather we have to **listen to comprehend**. It is a completely different attitude where I can make questions to better understand, but not make questions thinking "I will make this question because they won't be able to answer it", in other words, cheating. That is not correct, it is not a learning environment of Genuine Cooperation. This is an educational environment aiming to compete which will always be exclusionary and is the reason our students must go to their defenses, wrongly named defenses, before the mistakenly named jury, with great fear, because they know they will be listened to be judge not comprehended.

In this case, to finish, the importance of research is its character and positive sense, always aiming for constant improvement of quality in all the areas of our lives. It is essential to research in life. Let's not give it such an excluding character to it because we all can contribute from our context with experiences.

Very specifically, us as Genuine Cooperation Pedagogical Foundation (Fundación Pedagógica Cooperación Genuina, FUPECF) and ÁBACOnRed, we are in research processes to value boys and girls from six to ten years old's quality learning, mainly in reading, writing, and mathematics. There we have José Martí with his knowing how to read and knowing how to write, in addition to logical thinking with mathematics. We don't want to do it in a competitive manner and is the reason we don't do it in schools, since they will ask where boys and girls did better. That's how they do it with standardized tests of Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo, ERCE), of PISA (Program for International Student Assessment), and all of that. We do it in homes where boys and girls don't know we will arrive beforehand. We work with our homes' representatives of different communities and neighborhoods.

This gives us a real idea of childhood quality learning. Children are also included as for x or y reason are not in school, which is another advantage. So, the objective is not to say this community is better than the other, not at all. It is, rather, to identify where there could be problems, where boys and girls need reinforcement so they can level off according to indicators or minimum criteria to keep moving forward. We rely on the idea that, if a boy or a girl at ten years old knows how to read, knows how to write, according to the level it corresponds to that age and know logical thinking, also according to their age, their level, then the boy and girl are ready to keep on learning all life-long with quality.

In this research, we base ourselves on two theories. One is **learning on an adequate learning**. Not necessarily learning

corresponding to age, but rather to the level the boy or girl has. Another is named CaMAL related to **combined activities**, diverse activities enabling quality learning. Then, on the first phase, learning quality is assessed; later, we work with those girls and boys in need of reinforcement for the development of learning basic abilities.

These are truly interesting and beautiful experiences because we involve students from Normal Schools. They also learn from this research experience according to their future teacher practices, as students, but later insert themselves into teaching practices as professionals.

If you allow me to, I would like to finish with a thought from Martí in which the term Genuine Cooperation is not used, but it does refer to one of the basic values, fundamental values of Genuine Cooperation, as it is **solidarity**. He says: *"We look for solidarity not as an end, rather as a means for Our America to fulfill its universal mission"*. I love this because it characterizes José Martí's greatness thinking, who does not only talk about Cuba, but also Ouramerica, something we have truly present in our thoughts and feelings. Thus, this type of exchanges possible through this interview are very rich for us, as we broaden it a lot, as well as exchanges with my Doctorate tutor in Cuba, Dr. Norberto Valcárcel. Also, I enjoyed my time there a lot, so many years ago, and we keep communicating daily. So, my great gratitude to Cuba, the Government of Cuba, all of you, in one way or another, we have communicated and have been able to exchange. Thank you so much!

**E.E.:** We reiterate our thanks from the Colectivo Editorial de la Revista Atenas de la Universidad de Matanzas, and Colectivo

Editorial de la Revista Iberoamericana en Investigación Educativa, for dedicating time, sharing with us your experiences, knowledge, impressions, and, above all and most importantly, contributing to science and Latin-American education with sense and we stress originality and authenticity. Thank you!



**Interviewed by:**

Dr. Elmys Escribano Hervis

**Interview transcription:**

Lic. Dayra Blanco Sánchez

**Text edition:**

Ms. Nohemí Rojas Icabalzeta

**Official interview website:**

<https://riied.org/index.php/v1/articleview/91>