PROYECTO D: FROM THE INSIDE

(TEAM FROM THE SPANISH NETWORK OF SACRED HEART SCHOOLS)

There is a lovely parable, explained by a Persian sufi, which says that it is during the month of Nisan when several oysters emerge from the depths of the sea of Oman and appear, open-mouthed, on the surface of the water. Following the commandment of God, the steam rises above the sea and falls again, taking the shape of rain. Then, some raindrops will fall inside the opened oysters, closing them, and these will go back into the depths where they belong. With their hearts full, every raindrop will become a pearl.

A similar process happens within people. Everyone owns a secret and beautiful centre. This centre is the place of the heart, the place where everything we are exists, the place where we can find the best version of ourselves. ‘Proyecto D’ (‘D Proyect’, in Spanish) has been created in order to provide an answer to the desire to discover, meet and take care of that space within all those who make up our educational communities. Thinking about everything that nourishes our identity, about all the things that characterize us the most, we usually say that all who belong to the Society of the Sacred Heart –the educational communities–, we are all wish to live, feel, think and act with and from the heart. ‘Desde dentro’ (‘From the inside’, in Spanish) would be our answer to many of the questions that we raise.

Nowadays we can hear many voices, not without contradiction sometimes, expressing that need to look directly into that centre, into the inner world. Why does taking action drive us crazy, but we are unable to think carefully about what is happening to us? Why do we get distracted with all those stimuli, while we struggle to focus on the things that really matter? Why is there so much boredom and dissatisfaction in a society of abundance as ours? Why do we find so many broken hearts that are unable to find something that gives sense and unity to their lives?

Two hundred years ago, Sophie Barat had already discovered that there is a whole life in everyone There is a delicate inner world whose care is essential to be able to, fully and deeply, be.

Today, more than ever, pupils need to grow their inner self. They must learn to be writers of their own destiny. They have to find a personal pivot (focal point) able to sustain and unify them as worthy, unique, irreplaceable human beings. An pivot that will help them to set the high goals that will motivate them to become who they are meant to be. [Madeleine Sophie Barat, 1830, personal translation]

Developing every one’s inner space, besides from being essential in our educational context, is an actual goal held in the heart of our charisma. That’s why ‘Proyecto D’ has been created: in order to provide an answer to this aim, whilst remaining loyal to our educational and pastoral traditions. Our guiding principles encompass all those thoughts and all this work that has been done in many schools during these past years. Now we are proposing a common framework: an open path, so that every school that is part of the Spanish Network of Sacred Heart Schools can create their own path. ‘Proyecto D’ is not just another lovely project to be added to the list; it is an actual paradigm shift.

It is a pedagogical framework that inspires the whole school life. It represents a pedagogical framework where the most important thing is the core of every person. It will be within this framework that every child and young student will be proposed to receive an education that allows them to know how to care and develop that centre. [Elena Andrés, 2017, personal translation]

To ensure the embedding of ‘Proyecto D’ into school life, the whole educational community must takes part in the process: pupils, teachers, non-academic staff, families, directors or catechists, among others. The project will be developed around three major areas of action:

* Routines, called ‘Espacio D’ (‘D Space’, in Spanish): these may include assemblies; prayers and moments to think in the morning; and silence periods before or/and after meetings, classes or breaks.
* Specific sessions, called ‘Sesiones D’ (‘D Sessions’, in Spanish): these may take place during workshops, group meetings, tutorial hours or even in different subjects, such as Arts, Music, Physical Education or Religion, among others.
* Specific moments, called ‘Momentos D’ (‘D Moments’, in Spanish): these may be spiritual celebrations, campaigns, festivities, pastoral activities or any other special event.

‘Proyecto D’ aims to integrate and balance different dimensions of the person (physical, psychological, social and transcendental), which are physically trained. This allows our pupils to integrate all their centre, which is essential for deep growth.

These four dimensions are developed thanks to the use of an active and experiential methodology which helps the pupils to feel, discover and express themselves. Other techniques and means involved in the process are: control of breathing, mindfulness, physical expression, mental visualization, massage, group dynamics, dance or meditation.

Once we created the project, last summer we introduced it to a group of teachers in some workshops that were taking place in Santa María de Huerta. It was there where more than a hundred teachers from the Network had the chance to experience it through some special sessions.

During the academic year 2017/2018, the pastoral Coordinator from the Network has been working with the rest of coordinators on developing, expanding/detailing, and planning the project, so that it could be ready for September. It has been a year of organising and planning moments, spaces and activities to educate our pupils’ inner lives. It has also been a year of creating a network among us, learning from each other, and walking together in a project that we love.

Among others, some of the goals that can be highlighted are: stimulating personal identity, integration and building processes, providing growth and development of the physical and psychological dimension of our pupils, enabling a valuable interpersonal encounter that will orientate people towards others, society and creativity, as well as creating the conditions to facilitate the personal, transforming and integrating encounter with God.

Furthermore, the training of the future leaders of ‘Proyecto D’ will also begin next year. Teachers from every school in the network will become these leaders and will have to collaborate with coordinators in the organization and implementation of the project, as well as in the training of the rest of the teachers in their schools.

We are fully convinced of the importance of making efforts in developing the ‘care of the inner world’ in our schools, so that we can ‘live from the inside’ in every school space or activity. We are engaged with this project because we know that if we help our pupils to connect with their centre, they will find in it a source of life that will lead them to the communion with everybody and with All. It is as simple as following Sophie or Janet Stuart’s inspiration, who understood education as a path to humanization. That is why:

They created a preparation for the journey of life, where nothing inherent to the human being would be left apart: its intelligence, its soul, its artistic skills, its physicality. They tried to see what moved them the most and explore, in them, their most developed skills. They did always focus on training the heart, awaking and controlling that integrating centre where life is gathered and life is spread. They wanted to be ready to keep healthy relationships with the others through that first Relation that allows all the others to be developed with honesty and beauty. [Mariola López, rscj]