

Slogans and Common Sense

Enterprise, Risk-taking and Reception

SERGIO RIQUELME

The University of Melbourne

Abstract

Education as an enterprise, students as risk takers and flexible individuals; and educators as entrepreneurs and leaders have become fashionable slogan systems underpinning the late modern society's common sense. However, in assuming that any educational encounter is essentially a moral event impacting on those being educated, a theoretical examination of the entrepreneurial approach to education is indispensable.

This paper discusses such a theoretical examination in light of the Levinasian ethics of reception (understood as a precondition for any pedagogical relation) and of the conception of the human being as a conversational, collaborative, and compassionate phenomenon. On these grounds, the entrepreneurial approach and its educational version will be explored as cultural artefacts of the long-term capitalist ethos.

As part of the proposed analysis, narratives of Victorian teachers acting as school leaders and implementing the new Victorian learning standards will be considered. They help to identify to what extent and how the entrepreneurial approach is influencing situated curriculum practices.

Introduction

Over the last decades, contemporary leadership and entrepreneurship discourses have become highly influential in education. These imageries have redefined education as a flexible enterprise, students as risk takers and flexible individuals; and educators as entrepreneurs and innovative leaders. Education should be the initiation of a journey into a challenging and attractive future world¹.

However, in assuming that education is essentially a moral event impacting those being educated (students and teachers) some leadership discourses can be criticised as slogan systems that, hiding their historicity, universalise a capitalist worldview as neutral commonsense. In this context, entrepreneurship and risk-taking can be explored as powerful slogans that, in the long-term, have been underpinning the capitalist colonisation of the human phenomenon including education.

This paper reviews the opinion of some commentators who argue that the core skills and attributes of entrepreneurial leaders only superficially apply to other education leaders. At the same time they acknowledge that education and schools are becoming much more market-oriented. In this context, the examination of a number of narratives from teachers acting as educational leaders in Victoria, Australia show concrete influences and traces of central entrepreneurial attributes in their teaching. Thus, in order to ponder the actual penetration of entrepreneurial discourses in contemporary teaching and the implications of such influence, a retrospective analysis is proposed. Based on a long-term historiographic perspective and an evidential paradigm of inquiry² the entrepreneurial impetus and its attribute of risk-taking are explored as clues of a deeper historical structure impacting on contemporary education and life. Entrepreneurship and risk-taking are, thus, re-interpreted as cultural artefacts and slogans. Such slogans have reflected and served the development and struggle of the long-term capitalist ethos for colonising the modern existence and educational experiences. In examining sociological research and pointing out challenges for educators in this respect it will be argued that the consequences of such phenomenon are dramatic and unnecessary for human beings. In order to complement the historical analysis of the entrepreneurship impetus and its search for a

telos, Liberation Theology's conception of history and elements of the biblical prophetic tradition are considered³.

Finally, ethical and theoretical requirements for teachers to challenge the hegemonic commonsense and its slogans colonising education are considered. In this sense, the Levinasian *ethics of reception* understood as a precondition for any responsible pedagogical relation and the Maturanian conception of the human being as a conversational, collaborative, and compassionate manifestation are considered.

Entrepreneurial attributes and education leadership

Brent Davies (2005:2) defines leadership as a future-oriented journey⁴ that has to do with:

One who shows others the way on a journey... Leadership is often distinguished from management. Leadership is about direction-setting and inspire others to make the journey to a new and improved state for the school. Management is concerned with efficiently operating in the current set of circumstances and planning in the shorter term for the school. Leadership is not the provenance of one individual but of a group of people who provided leadership in the school, and by doing so, provide support and inspiration to others to achieve the best for the children in their care. Leadership is not set in isolation but is set in the context of organizations and the wider society... it is clear in almost all definitions of leadership that the concept of future direction and moving forward predominates.

Contemporary educational leadership "can take many forms" (Davies, 2005:2). These forms should allow individuals to build "a useful overall framework to rethink school leadership" (Davies, 2005:2). For instance, leadership can be strategic, transformational, invitational, ethical, learning-centred, constructivist, poetical and political, emotional, distributed and sustainable. *Entrepreneurship* appears just as one more type of leadership.

In this context, according to Hentschke and Caldwell, an entrepreneur is "a person who organises and manages an enterprise, especially a business, usually with considerable initiative and risk" (2005:145). They add that: "a less disciplined description [of entrepreneurship] could ultimately include anyone in any organization that had any idea for doing anything differently"⁵ (Hentschke and Caldwell, 2005:148).

According to Hentschke and Caldwell (2005:145) until recently "there has been no compelling argument why most or even some educational leaders should evidence these kinds of entrepreneurial attributes". Two reasons are pointed out for this. First of all, the public school systems in affluent countries have had other priorities. So, they have stimulated other attributes (e.g. "faithful stewardship of public resources, procedural compliance, inclusiveness") in their leaders over entrepreneurial skills. Secondly, the academic scepticism of entrepreneur and their enterprises: "some education academics distrust for-profit enterprises, and that distrust has extended to those who create, run and grow them, that is, entrepreneurs [so these academics] call into question the legitimacy of all education businesses".

However, these authors argue that the renewed interest in entrepreneurial leadership discourses and its relations with compulsory education (whose main domain is the public sector) have to do with the fact that:

More and more schooling enterprises are increasingly requiring entrepreneurial-like talents and skills. Schools are more like businesses and their leaders are more like business leaders... the "fit" of educational entrepreneur in compulsory education systems is far from perfect and... applies at best to only a subset of all possible educational leaders and roles. Our argument, in fact, holds water only to the extent that the field has changed to favour entrepreneurial skills...[if this is the case] conditions of compulsory schooling have changed in ways that are encouraging more entrepreneurs to enter the field and to behave entrepreneurially (2005:146)

Over the last decades, with the triumph of economic rationalism, education settings have changed because of “social forces” impacting on schooling and promoting entrepreneurial behaviour. In this context new forms of schooling and new education firms have emerged over the last decades⁶. In fact, Brown and Cornwall (2000:4, cited in Hentschke and Caldwell, 2005:147) point out that, as “compulsory education has become so much more market oriented... ‘most distinctions between the roles of public school, private school, and proprietary school leaders will disappear’”. Nevertheless, despite an increasingly market-oriented context, Hentschke and Caldwell (2005:148) declare:

We do not take the positions that all education leaders should (nor do) have identical attributes, that all attributes are equally valuable in a given setting or that leadership attributes, like personality traits, can be acquired at will. Rather, we argue that some educators are inherently more entrepreneurial than others, but that there are proportionately few in the field of compulsory education, where there have been relatively few entrepreneurial opportunities and a preponderance of relatively stable, secure positions (Hentschke and Caldwell, 2005:148)

What are the attributes and skills that identify an entrepreneurial leader? First of all, entrepreneurial leaders, such as those creating and leading small businesses, whether or not they are involved in education, have been asked about their essential aptitudes and skills. Secondly, social researchers have provided their interpretation of entrepreneurs.

First, entrepreneurs have said that:

At least three characteristics together describe and to a large extent *define* entrepreneurial leaders. First, they have a unique idea that borders on a fixation. It may be a solution to a widespread problem, a way to meet a previously large, unmet need or a significant improvement to a widely used product or process. Second, in order to transform their idea into reality, they often have to “go their own way –to do whatever it takes, raise the necessary social and financial capital and so on, to create a separate enterprise. Third, then they operate and seek to grow the business as the concrete manifestation of their unique idea... While this captures core behaviour, entrepreneurs themselves embody some leadership skills more than others”(Hentschke and Caldwell, 2005: 148).

Furthermore, aptitudes, that is inherent abilities or talents, listed by educators who mutated into educational entrepreneurs by creating and running their own educational businesses, were: tenacious, optimistic, creative, courageous, persistent, willing to take risks, resourceful, independent, opportunistic, and thoughtful (Leisey and Lavaroni, quoted in Hentschke and Caldwell, 2005:149). Note that, this set of attributes tells us not only about what a leader must be. The “silences” of this list tell us something about what they are not *necessarily* or *explicitly* supposed to be. Is there any room in this taxonomy for compassion, love, reception, moral indignation or social justice?⁷

In addition to what entrepreneurs have declared about themselves, Hentschke and Caldwell distinguish five skills areas and attributes that “**superficially apply to all educational leaders** [my stress], but upon closer examination are uniquely, strongly associated with entrepreneurs” (2005:149). Such skills, being important for many leaders and educational leaders, are identified as important and even vital for entrepreneurs’ success:

“Financial management..., finding and maintaining adequate financial capital (debt and/or equity) for the business..., spending wisely..., communication skills... to rely more on personal persuasion rather than tradition, existing policies, formal organization and historically shared understanding to move the people in their organization” (Hentschke and Caldwell, 2005:149-150).

The mentioned communication skills include the power to invite, seduce and convince people to follow a specific project. This power that could be “important for all educational leaders” refers to:

The skills of being able to *motivate others* (develop their employees into teams that both understand and support the organization’s mission), to have a *vision* (create and communicate a clear direction for their companies) and being able to *motivate themselves* (a passionate commitment to action combined with a competitive attitude of “can do”). These last three may be seen as important for all educational leaders, but in the context of undertaking new, untried ventures, assuming new risks and creating wholly new enterprises, even these characteristics take on added meaning... While for many leaders the abilities to communicate and motivate are “important”, for the entrepreneur they are “vital” (Hentschke and Caldwell, 2005:150).

Secondly, social scientists suggest descriptions of the attributes of the entrepreneurial profile. They also point out possible influences of such characteristics in other education leaders:

Whereas entrepreneurs see their primary aptitude as financial management, social scientists see entrepreneurs’ most distinctive aptitudes as *tolerance for risk*. Although it is fashionable to treat tolerance for risk as a generalized leadership virtue, entrepreneurs take this to a level not common to most educational leaders. Entrepreneurs are willing to place their personal, economic, as well as professional well-being at risk to achieve their aims... [Thus] ... Entrepreneurs are distinguished from other leaders by their willingness (some would say compulsion) to take risks from which many of their peers would recoil. But in those instances, entrepreneurs tended to discount or rationalize their risky behaviour in a variety of ways, including confidence in themselves and in the inherent value of the venture, the availability of fallback positions in case of failure and, perhaps even a sense of general invulnerability coupled with support of close friends... Closely allied with these levels of risk tolerance is *desire for control*. Entrepreneurs are willing to risk a lot if they believe that they have sufficient control over the factors that are critical to the success of their venture... In large doses, strong desire for control... is not entirely compatible with some notions of shared decision-making and empowerment so popular in general management and educational leadership literatures. In their intense desire for control, perhaps more than in any other way, entrepreneurs are distinct from other leaders in education... Other characteristics which entrepreneurial leaders appear to have in greater than average proportions are *ambition* (relentless pursuit of success), *perseverance* (managing through setbacks) and *decisiveness* (making decisions quickly alone or with modest amounts of advice). These aptitudes sound **moderately attractive for all leaders** [my stress], but for entrepreneurs, they constitute critical survival skills (Hentschke and Caldwell, 2005:150-151).

Entrepreneurial traces in teachers’ narratives

Entrepreneurs’ vital or core attributes are, therefore, seen as “moderately” attractive and “superficially” linked to other forms of education leadership. At the same time, commentators assert that education is becoming much more market-oriented. This means that schools are becoming more like businesses and that school leaders are increasingly requiring entrepreneurial-like attributes. In this context, it is relevant to explore situated perceptions of educators acting as school leaders to assess if their practices have become, at any degree, influenced by entrepreneurial attributes and concepts.

In the context of a PhD study, through surveys and interviews, I have been collecting 30 Australian teachers’ narratives. I am interested in these educators’ perceptions of a new curriculum framework, the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS), being implemented in Victoria over the last couple of years.

These teachers are acting as school leaders in administration or curriculum related positions⁸. Ideally half of them should be in-depth interviewed. Up to now 7 interviews have been conducted.

As a result of the surveys and interviews, here are some *entrepreneurial traces* in these educators' narratives:

1. There is some reluctance to accept at once the jargon of the so-called entrepreneurial approach to education. These teachers do not like to see education as an economically driven process.
2. However, they are aware of the current *business trends* affecting at some extent not only education, but also any other social instance.
3. This awareness is manifested by different reactions: some teachers express the need to be realistic in accepting what is happening in the world and that education is increasingly economically driven. These teachers feel the responsibility they have to prepare students for the "real world". Other educators express that through their teaching they provide a more idealistic stance against global trends shaping local education and society. They identify this criticism as a responsible decision regarding their students' well-being. Despite these differences all these teachers share the belief they have to help their students not only to make a living, but also to find a sense of direction for their lives as individuals and citizens in an increasingly complex world.
4. Most of these teachers accept that current education "must prepare people for survive and thrive" (cf. *Consultation Paper*, 2004:8). One interviewee even suggested this is the main aim of education. Another colleague was surprised with the statement, even more when realised it is part of official documentation referring to the VELs. Other teachers, even though they did not feel particular affection for what is implied in the statement, assumed it shows simply the reality of current society.
5. All the teachers interviewed see themselves as performing some type of leadership which they assess as personally rewarding and beneficial for their school and colleagues despite the new challenges, risks and demanding roles they are supposed to play as leaders. One of them said that his current leadership role is also beneficial for a future promotion.
6. The 30 teachers surveyed agreed that "promotion prospects" and "hardworking colleagues" are important or very important criteria for them if choosing a new school.
7. Most of the teachers surveyed were asked to what extent "risk taking", "competition", "flexibility", "encouraging students to meet challenges", "starting to see oneself as a young adult", "strong individual sense of identity", "adaptability to a changing and demanding world", "sense of duty", "honesty", "capacity to combine social values with success", "innovative attitude", and "individual autonomy" are important attitudes for students to achieve in order to become educated persons. The 30 educators agreed that these attributes are important or very important.
8. Some of those surveyed included "risk taking", "resilience" and "ability to meet challenges" as some of the values they would personally like to communicate to their students through their teaching.
9. At the same time, the teachers interviewed to date, expressed: "risk taking" is a "positive" and desirable attribute to be fostered under the new curriculum as it allows students to get better quality learning and meet personal and group challenges.
10. At the same time, all the surveyed teachers agreed that "critical attitude", "active citizenship", "deep understanding", "love for knowledge", "inclusion", "respect", "trust", "cultivating friendship" and "compassion" were important or very important attributes of the educated person promoted by the VELs in an increasingly complex and globalised world. Of course, these attributes do not necessarily imply that there is no room for entrepreneurial-like features in individuals' character. In fact, current curricula try to get an allegedly balanced mix of attributes to achieve an active and modern citizen⁹. However,

those teachers fostering “critical individuals” hope students will be able to develop a more critically reflective attitude towards entrepreneurial-like features being proposed to them as desirable “civic virtues”. Thus, teachers know they have a relevant role to play in fostering students’ freedom and critical attitude to make decision.

11. Almost all the surveyed informants found it difficult to correlate the main aim of education and of the new learning standards with students’ happiness. The new framework would be more related to deep learning and engagement.
12. Most of the surveyed informants disagreed that learning tends to be a chaotic process (cf. Barcena & Melich, 2000; Gough, 1991) stating rather learning should be planned and follow some predefined order to be effective.
13. Almost all of the interviewees found some level of difficulty in describing the society or world to which they are preparing their students and into which their pupils will emerge as adults. All of them, after being asked a second time, agreed that this world is characterised by being increasingly complex and globalised (especially in economic terms), increasingly flexible and changeable, knowledge-based and technology-based.

In summary, most of these teachers feel some level of resistance to the entrepreneurial approach to education because of the associations with a “business model of education” (Marginson, 1997; Pinar, 2004). However, they ultimately accept this trend is becoming more influential in late modern education as society has become neoliberal. Furthermore, despite some teachers’ criticism against this approach, their narratives show subtle internalisations of notions linked to entrepreneurial views. These views convey values and ideals that serve the reinforcement of the old capitalist ethos. This is a deeper historical trend that, under its contemporary form of flexible and hypermodern capitalism, challenges individuals to assertively and successfully deal with a triple excess of modernity, namely excess of individualism, information and image (Auge, 1995; Lipovetsky, 2005; Sennett, 1998).

Entrepreneurship as a long-term slogan

As Lucien Febvre (1953) used to say by “illuminating the present with the past” we could access a more critical and deep understanding of present phenomena, in this case contemporary entrepreneurship and its impact on education and teachers’ leadership practices. A long-term historical approach to this phenomenon can help us in more rigorously assessing its alleged “superficial” applications to other education leaderships in a context of increasing marketisation. Thus, by putting a phenomenon in its long-term context we can interpret such phenomenon in light of deeper historical trends and interests operating in the present. Thus, we can, finally, more clearly ponder the implications for human beings of the penetration of education by entrepreneurial views. This is a relevant inquiry if we educators are expected to help human beings in enjoying a meaningful and democratic existence rather than mainly to lead them to survive and succeed in the new flexible and hypermodern capitalism

In this context, Davies (2005:1) invites us to “explore the contemporary nature of school leadership”. It is precisely this journey into the *immediate* history of a phenomenon that requires longer-term considerations. In this sense, Foucault (1991) taught us to uncover the historical roots of discourses, namely the fabrication of phenomena as truthful and ideology-free, in order to generate liberatory processes.

Human beings are linguistic or, rather *conversational*, animals endlessly crafting and inhabiting *webs of significance*, namely spatially and temporally situated cultures (Geertz, 1973:5; Maturana, 1993; Gadamer, 2001; 1998:3)¹⁰. The entrepreneurial capitalist impulse has radically re-shaped the pre-modern human face and the *conversation(s) of humankind* and its possibilities¹¹. The merchant, its attributes and virtues that

appeared during the medieval era are at the very basis of the origin of the capitalist entrepreneurial impulse (Le Goff, 1986; cf. Singer, 1993:65-98). This ideal type embodied a powerful leadership that have survived until our times impacting upon the everyday life (cf. Caldwell 145, 147-148). Entrepreneurship has been historically competing for public positioning with other leaderships over the modern era: the revolutionary; the politician; the artist; the journalist; the activist; the public intellectual and why not the fortune-teller; the missionary and the saint¹². To what extent the late medieval entrepreneur has become the only influential figure in Modernity is probably debatable. However, there is sound evidence pointing out that its impact on human existence, including education, and on our way to perceive and intervene in the world has been dramatic. In other words, the old capitalist economy driven by its progressive impetus has become undeniably a worldview, an ethos, and, even, a dogmatic credo in current times (Saul, 2005: 36ff). Thus, the globalisation of the capitalist ethos and its attributes as a “natural human condition” was not only an economic process but also a cultural one.

The entrepreneurial impetus has struggled to hinder its historicity and become part of the human nature. It has appeared as a “necessary tool” for everyone who wants to survive and thrive in the complex world we moderns have inherited by God’s will. In fact, this refers to the masculine divinity that, far from disappears when the medieval era was allegedly dead, survived in modern individuals’ imagery. God was instrumentally reallocated in the western mentality by the protestant reformation (Calvin in particular with his theology of predestination) in the 16th century (cf. McNeill & Battles, 1960: 179-180, Calvin’s “Articles concerning Predestination”; Singer, 1993:78). This theological contribution to the new bourgeoisie was, ultimately, quite determinant for supporting the emergence of the modern individualism and its entrepreneurial force. The Judeo-Christian God was redefined at this time as the *master clockmaker* of a machine, namely the ecosystem. This master was supposed to deserve human beings’ praises under the form of a profitable exploitation and humanization of the earth (Gen. 1:26; 2:20)¹³. Such spiritual and economic enterprise, apart from God’s grace and approval, required brave individuals to compete and make risky efforts in order to succeed. The fruits of such entrepreneurial endeavours, namely progress, prosperity and success were, in the Calvinistic theology, the only signal of salvation that human beings could achieve in time. Given wicked and sinful human nature, according to Calvin, individuals had been predestined in advance by God to redemption or condemnation regardless of any voluntarism. The entrepreneurial effort to achieve secular success was a reasonable risk to take if the ultimate goals were prosperity here and eternal redemption in the other world.

As a consequence, a rigorist and hostile work ethic stimulating individual entrepreneurship was gradually internalised (Fromm: 1942). In fact, such ethics, seen as a new way of redemption, has been an angular stone of the modern obsession with material and individual success. Such transformation on the level of mentality complemented the economic, political and technological developments that opened the modern era (Saul, 2005; Sennet, 1992:98ff; Singer:1993).

Therefore, the *mentalities* and the everyday life of communal, closed and organic pre-modern worlds suffered a profound and irreversible process of transformation (Burke, 1978; Duby, 1994:71-74, Hutton, 1981). The irruption of Modernity has been identified with Lent, a *penitential* long-term era when human beings “dressed up” with working clothes (Burke 1978; Huizinga, 1970)¹⁴. In this context, the imperial category of “worker” and the concept of life as a “work” are fundamental to understand the long-term transformation operated. Josef Pieper (1952:29) explained that the imperial notion of worker:

Must not to be taken as defining an occupation, as in statistical works; it is not synonymous with ‘proletarian’- although the fact that the words are interchangeable is significant. On the contrary, ‘worker’ will be used in an anthropological sense; it implies a whole conception of ‘man’ [sic]... as an ‘imperial figure’... A new and changing conception of the nature of man [sic], a new and changing conception of the very meaning of human existence-that is comes to light in the claims expressed in the modern notion of ‘work’ and ‘worker’.

Religious hierarchies relieved soon by economic elites have systematically struggled since the 16th century until now against the legacy of the popular culture. It was seen as the source of laziness, vices, and subversion, being the carnival and laughing icons of backwardness¹⁵. The imperative was to purify the sinful, civilise the barbarians and “fix” them according to functional roles. The mission was educating to thrive through the inculcation of truthful and unquestionable moral virtues and appealing key notions of what is to be human. As a consequence of this process, as Peter Singer (1992:88) suggests, “religious and secular ideas about the importance of wealth formed the foundations for our modern conception of the Good Life”.

Thus, throughout the Enlightenment and Industrial centuries a rational notion of History absorbed the former religious aspirations of success and redemption. It was a problematic and yet faith-based conception of History, certain of the existence of risk but aspiring to an indefinite progress. Such view of History, implying the need to prepare entrepreneurial and rational individuals to develop technological powers, was supposed to liberate humankind of madness and non sense. History was interpreted now as conducted by a rational spirit that, in Hegelian terms, was hoped to coach the human efforts, aspirations, risks and impasses towards a definitive telos. This was the ultimate end in which humanity would enjoy the consummation of entrepreneurship and progress (Lowith, 1949).

However, such expectations fell down in the 1800s when the death of Hegel (1831) represented, as a premonition, the failure of this rational dream underpinning and endorsed by entrepreneurship. Social and political convulsions, misery, imperialist forces, an increasing disenchantment and nostalgia of a better past, announced the next era. The results of this pursuit of sense and progress are well known and the historian Eric Hobsbawm (1994) has assertively depicted the 20th century as *the era of catastrophes* while Ernst Junger used to define the past century with the metaphor of the *sinking of the Titanic*. Moreover, after the II World War Pieper (1952:25) assessed our work-based culture, its denial of leisure and obsession with progress and entrepreneurial advance: “we are, after all, busy building our house. Our hands are full and there is work for all. And surely, until our task is done and our house is rebuilt, the only thing that matters is to strain every nerve”. Martin Heidegger (1966) pointed out the risks of an atomic and technological era that putting its hopes primarily in *calculative thinking* and its outcomes devalued the essential *meditative thinking* that could have ensured a responsible action before modern risks and instrumentalism. All these authors, ultimately, refer to the world of uncertainty, war, oppression, terror, devastation, poverty, totalitarianism and, literally, madness and holocaust that was the 20th century (Silva, 1991).

As a result of the consequences of industrialism, faith in leadership and entrepreneurship became problematic beliefs. However, they survived the crisis as the deep historical trend they serve, the capitalist ethos, kept its vigour despite the convulsions (cf. Hargreaves, 2005:173-175). Thus, on the grounds of this long-term context and as a corollary of the last century of being adrift, entrepreneurship and leadership discourses, in education, politics or economy for example, re-emerged. The time and space consecrated to them quantitatively and qualitatively increased after the preached “end of History” in the end of the 1980s by Francis Fukuyama. The context of the collapse of the so-called real socialism and the triumph of the neoliberal self-interest ideology were the perfect stage to resuscitate the faith in entrepreneurship and leadership discourses as renewed forces of the capitalist market.

Slogans and common sense

Advocates of such discourses overlooked the historicity of the new panacea underpinning and endorsed by the capitalist ethos presented as commonsense. Contemporary entrepreneurship and leadership discourses were *re-presented* to the public as useful, unquestioned and neutral slogans. In addition, such slogans were presented as underpinning an alleged new (a-historical) commonsensical worldview for those who believed that an ideology-free, prosperous and free-initiative-based world, the new telos to strive, should emerge from

the ashes of communism. Of course, such utopia demanded to prepare renewed, proactive and brave leaders and followers. Education was, as usual, a privileged place to install and promote the alleged new discourses.

According to Pring (2004:153), commonsense “Refers to statements and explanations. To say is common sense acts as stopper to further questioning. Not only is the statement or the explanation true but it is *obviously* so. Common sense is the range of unquestioned beliefs which groups of people share and which provide a basic view of the world”.

In light of such definition it is important to note that, as in the past, the struggle of the capitalist ethos in the present to become a commonsensical truth for modern individuals has not only been the result of brutal imposition and intervention (eg. the European expansion enterprises in the 16th century). On the contrary, as Fromm (1942) has pointed out, capitalism and its rigorist attributes have conquered the human soul and time by a subtle internalisation process. Such process had been lead by elites with specific and clear interests (Burke, 1978). The capitalist ethos has been de-historised and presented as a commonsense underpinned by unquestioned common places or slogans assumed as neutral and inherently human (Popkewitz, 1980). For instance, long-life slogans with perdurable impact upon human experience would be: individual autonomy, entrepreneurship itself, the dichotomy civilised-barbarian, the Hobbesian maxim *homo homini lupus* and its late modern version *homo homini virus*, freedom of initiative, competition, opportunism or bravery to take risks.

Such slogans, common places or presumptions operate, according to Bourdieu and Wacquant (2000) in the Aristotelian sense and exert symbolic violence upon human beings. They are notions or theses we use to argue about, but about which we never argue¹⁶. Thus, the ideology and theory underlying discourses become transparent for observers. Slogans, therefore, would simply *describe objective* and *obvious* realities¹⁷. Bourdieu and Wacquant explain that the current neoliberal slogans globally circulate promoting a supposedly neutral and natural thinking and worldview (commonsense). The media and international organisations like the OECD, the World Bank, the European Union as well as influential conservative academic institutions, are in charge of spreading a “planetary vulgate” or commonsense.

On this basis, it can be argued that leadership discourses in general, entrepreneurship in particular and their attributes are neither universal, neutral nor just contemporary. In this sense, it is interesting to note that some commentators declare that the entrepreneurial leadership attributes are “descriptive, not normative. Thus they are not inherently good or bad qualities per se. While they are neither “good” nor bad” per se, they can be more or less useful in different roles and environments” (Hentschke and Caldwell, 2005:146).

Entrepreneurship has therefore revealed as an old cultural artefact serving as slogan the development and naturalisation of the long-term capitalist ethos. However, the understanding of the implications of such slogan for education, human experience and society would not be complete without an exploration of one of the core attributes underpinning the entrepreneurial impetus: risk.

Risk society

The more serious risk facing teachers in the 21st century is lacking a rigorous understanding of the present world into which their pupils are supposed to emerge as flexible risk takers in order to survive and thrive. Nevertheless, in assuming ourselves as theorists or *contemplators* we can “read” between lines the many texts forming the world we inhabit in order to transform it. For example, we can critically read official statements (and their silences) that as simple *descriptors* intend to tell us something about an alleged *outside and objective reality*. In light of a critical reading, such texts operate more as *monuments* than *documents* (Le Goff, 1974). They tend to offer clear, controllable and crystallised pieces of reality, but at the same time guide and, thus, shape teachers’ memory, perceptions and practices. The following examples are excerpts of documents informing us about the new learning standards being implemented in Victoria, Australia: “All

young Victorians need a high quality education that equips them with a broad range of knowledge, skills and personal qualities to confidently meet the challenges of life in a complex, information-rich and constantly changing world” (*VELS Overview*, 2005:iii). And:

Expectations for young people are changing. Victoria has good schools, good programs and good teachers, but it is important to continue to explore how students learn and what they need to be successful learners... The Standards aim to meet the challenges of preparing young people for a world in which knowledge is highly valued and constantly changing, a world in which work, society, community and personal relationships are subject to increasingly complex pressures (*Introducing the VELs...*, 2004: 2).

However, in going beyond such monuments when trying to critically understand our world, we will discover readings not considered before and that, intellectually and ethically, challenge our pedagogy. For instance, in order to more critically and responsibly understand what a “complex and changing world” implies, we should contemplate the notion of *risk society*. As Ulrich Beck (1992: 19) asserts:

In advanced modernity the social production of *wealth* is systematically accompanied by the social production of *risks*. Accordingly, the problems and conflicts relating to distribution in a society of scarcity overlap with the problems and conflicts that arise from the production, definition and distribution of techno-scientifically produced risks.

Risk society has to do with what Beck calls “second modernity” in which individuals are not longer dealing with the distribution of the *goods* as in the industrial period, but with the distribution of the *bads* produced by the very innovations and systems (protective institutions) of Modernity (cf. Lasch & Wine, in Beck, 1992:3). Thus, Beck (1999:72) comments:

If modernization is understood as a process of innovation which has become autonomous, then it must also be accepted that modernity itself ages. The other aspect of this ageing of industrial modernity is the emergence of risk society. The concept describes a phase of development of modern society in which the social, political, ecological and individual risks created by the momentum of innovation increasingly elude the control and protective institutions of industrial society.

The realisation of the elusive risks produced by the modern paradigm itself and its institutions have activated the *reflexivity* of the second modernity. In becoming its own theme, modernity makes efforts for political and economic management of the risks of technologies. In this respect, Beck points out that: “the promise of security grows with the risks and destruction and must be reaffirmed over and over again to an alert and critical public through cosmetic or real interventions in the techno-economic development” (1992:20).

We all, more or less explicitly, know risk is an essential component of our existence. However, as Anthony Giddens (1999:2-3) argues we are all neither able to fully understand nor control the frontier in which we have been thrown nor the possible futures emerging:

[Entrepreneurs] are involved with systems which even they themselves do not understand, so dramatic is the onrush of change in the new electronic global economy... It is not just [...] the new financial entrepreneurs, who live at the barbaric outer edge of modern technology. *All of us* now do – and I would like this to be the defining characteristic of what Ulrich Beck calls risk society. A risk society is a society where we increasingly live on a high technological frontier which absolutely no one completely understands and which generates a diversity of possible futures. The origins of risk society can be traced to two fundamental transformations which are affecting our lives today. Each is connected to the increasing influence of science and technology, although not wholly determined by them. The first transformation can be called *the end of nature*; and the second *the end of tradition*... [in other words] there are now few if any

aspects of the physical world untouched by human intervention ... It is a society which lives “after nature”... However, it is also a society which lives after tradition... where life is no longer lived as fate¹⁸.

What are risk-takers up to in the flexible capitalism?

Current educational discourses seem to have a strongly positive opinion of risk-taking as a desirable attribute for “educated individuals” inhabiting the 21st century. However, risk-taking, as entrepreneurship, also tends to operate as an unquestioned slogan that serves the capitalist ethos and hides its historicity and contentious consequences for human dignity.

In the context of radical uncertainty shaping and re-locating our lives into an unclear future, Giddens (1999:3-4) highlights the “positive” side of the idea of risk as a counterpoint to its traditional negative connotation. In fact, this positive sense of the term, Giddens continues, is what makes successful risk-takers worthwhile of social recognition:

The idea of 'risk society' might suggest a world which has become more hazardous, but this is not necessarily so. Rather, it is a society increasingly preoccupied with the future (and also with safety), which generates the notion of risk. The idea of risk, interestingly, was first used by Western explorers when they ventured into new waters in their travels across the world. From exploring geographical space, it came to be transferred to the exploration of time. The word refers to a world which we are both exploring and seeking to normalise and control. Essentially, 'risk' always has a negative connotation, since it refers to the chance of avoiding an unwanted outcome. But it can quite often be seen in a positive light, in terms of the **taking of bold initiatives in the face of a problematic future** [my own stress]. Successful risk-takers, whether in exploration, in business or in mountaineering, are widely admired.

This brief account of the idea of risk allows us to understand risk and risk-taking as commonplace essentially connected with the development of the entrepreneurial impetus. The word would have appeared when the entrepreneurial European expansion and invasion of what today, as a consequence of this clash, is the Third and Residual World¹⁹. The European expansion started a long-term process of control and normalisation of lands, resources, capacities and, even, “souls” operating until the present²⁰. However, the idea of risk also offers the more hopeful meaning of “taking of bold initiatives in the face of a problematic future”. Successful risk-takers today, “travelling” across Beck’s risky society, would keep, at least, the old impulse, courage and ambition of the former explorers. Thus risk-takers should be able to successfully colonise a *flexible terra incognita*, meet new challenges and dominate an unpredictable future. “The idea of risk is bound up with the aspiration to control and particularly with the idea of controlling the future” Giddens says (1999:3)²¹.

Therefore, the genuine risk-taker is willing to tempt fate, tradition or the future in order to move forward on the basis of uncertain calculi always threatened by an ineffable future. According to the musician and sociologist Richard Sennett (1998: 81) concern with risk-taking in its modern sense can be traced from between the 13th and the 18th centuries. Authors highlighted and commented on the capacity of human beings to manage risks being submerged in the torrent of random events that is everyday life (cf. Giddens, 1991:111). Later, nineteenth-century realist French writers like Stendhal and Balzac, through careful descriptions of their society and its psychological characters, reinforced risk-taking as modern virtue. These novels presented nearly heroic characters that dared to risk everything to take big chances and, thus, challenge the fate and test their personal characters (Sennet 1998:80). Again it is possible to contemplate the deeper historical trends in operation. As the writers in the industrialisation epoch pointed out, currently leadership scholars are the ones asserting that the entrepreneurs “are willing to place their **personal** [my stress], economic as well as professional well-being at risk to achieve their aims...” In this sense, regarding

entrepreneurial educators “where other see problems, these educators see opportunities” (Hentschke and Caldwell, 2005:150-151).

Nevertheless, the work of scientists, mathematicians, economists and sociologists of mobility and modern networks is useful to critically illuminate this seductive jargon of risk-taking. Furthermore, day-to-day “common” people’s experience strongly challenges the easily accepted positive view of such a slogan. For instance, Richard Sennett (1998) dissects and theorises on what he calls “the new flexible capitalist regime” by exploring diverse cases of more or less skilled risk-takers and organisations fixed to the new flexible corporate structures. In light of such cases it is clear that uncertainty and anxiety are core emotional and moral states dominating individuals’ everyday lives. In this context, contemporary society has become a fabric of “loose networks” that has replaced the traditional hierarchies of the old capitalist regime. Thus:

Rigid forms of bureaucracy are under attack, as are the evils of blind routine. Workers are asked to behave nimbly, to be open to change on short notice, to take risks continually, to become ever less dependent on regulations and formal procedures... Today... people do lumps of labor, pieces of work, over the course of a lifetime... It is quite natural that flexibility should arouse anxiety: people do not know what risks will pay off, what paths to pursue. To take the curse off the phrase “capitalist system” there developed in the past many circumlocutions, such as the “free enterprise” or “private enterprise” system. Flexibility is used today as another way to lift the curse of oppression from capitalism. In attacking rigid bureaucracy and emphasizing risk, it is claimed, flexibility gives people more freedom to shape their lives. In fact, the new order substitutes new controls rather than simply abolishing the rules of the past – but these new controls are also hard to understand. The new capitalism is an often illegible regime of power (Sennett, 1998:9-10)

According to Sennett (1998:10) “perhaps the most confusing aspect of flexibility is its impact on personal character”. Then, Sennett (1992:76-97) asserts that human encounters in this regime are defined by individualism; competition; weak loyalties; mistrust; indifference; erosion of the self-esteem; fear to be perceived as a parasite or as an old or obsolete human resource; absence of real conflict deliberation and acknowledgment of difference, and high labour mobility. Immediacy, an emphasis in youth, while middle-aged workers and their accumulated wisdom and skills are seen as disposable, of less-value and rigid are also features of flexible society²². Moreover, commonsensical “teamwork”, a “weak form of community” Sennett (1998:143) says, is imposed as a “strategy” to productively cope with human interactions.

In spite of the personal consequences facing risk-takers, the evidence and concerns pointed out by social researchers and philosophers, those “realists” and supporters of the flexible regime, including prospective and practising teachers, have a strong opinion. As “predestination theologians”, they argue that, we like it or not, this is the only system we have. Or, in assuming the Hobbesian slogan *homo homini lupus*, they will explain that human beings are naturally oriented to risk-taking, entrepreneurship and competition. Finally, they could still vociferate that criticism is sterile as there are people succeeding in the flexible regime. On this basis, a more effective and responsive education to today’s challenges will be invoked as the pathway to offer “learning and success for all”.

However, it is a matter of fact that cultural, economic and social capitals (Sennett, 1998:146), weigh heavily on the little connection that social and economic researchers find between risk and reward in neoliberal societies. In other words, the contemporary risk-taking game produces a reduced elite of winners versus an amorphous, faceless mass of losers. Thus, survive and thrive in the flexible capitalist society means that, drawing on our own capitals, individuals have to navigate in *loose networks* performing “ambiguously lateral moves” towards a diffuse future. In this context, it is obvious that flexibility reproduces inequality along the social fabric and its subsystems including education (Sennett, 1998: 84-85, 90)²³. In fact,

fragmented individuals lack the traditional protection nets that existed in the past century, for example strong unions or the concept of the welfare state²⁴.

Thus, highly appreciated by literature in the 19th century and by education in the present, risk taking as expression of entrepreneurship is essentially a game in which “the good risk-taker has to dwell in ambiguity and uncertainty” (Sennett, 1998:85). These psychological and moral states are the source of what critical scholars denounce as the *corrosion of the character* with dramatic personal and social consequences (Sennett, 1998:147). In this context:

Character particularly focuses upon the long-term aspects of our emotional experience. Character is expressed by loyalty and mutual commitment, or through the pursuit of long-term goals... Character concerns the personal traits which we value in ourselves and for which we seek to be valued by others [However] How do we decide what is of lasting value in ourselves in a society which is impatient, which focuses on the immediate moment? How can long-term goals be pursued in an economic devoted to the short term? How can mutual loyalties and commitments be sustained in institutions which are constantly breaking apart or continually being redesigned? These are the questions about character posed by the new, flexible capitalism (Sennett, 1998:10).

Such “corrosive flexibility” challenges the capacity of risk takers to build their identity and sense of belonging. However, if Giddens is correct, contemporary individuals live “after tradition” in an individualistic, that is a non-referential culture. As a result, late modern individuals lack a shared historical narrative and a common past to guide their present. As a result, risk-takers suffer increasing levels of alienation and anxiety (Sennett, 1998:97, 143, Gadamer, 1998:101-113)²⁵.

Given the *personal confusion* of the self (Sennett, 1998: 85, 146) the pronoun “we” becomes a “false locution” (Sennett, 1998: 138). Flexible capitalism devalues heteronomy to celebrate individual autonomy and its non-referential ethics (the source of modern individualism). Thus, a feeling of radical vulnerability is cultivated in risk-takers on the basis of a narrow commonplace opposition of dependence and independence (Sennett, 1998: 140, 142). What we can expect surviving in these “loose scenarios” is essentially *liquid* and *ephemeral encounters* based on a politically correct, but *painless* responsibility for the other, as Lipovetsky has argued (Sennett, 1998:85; Bauman, 2003; Lipovetsky, 2002). The key question, then, becomes, “who needs me?” (Sennett, 1998:147).

Being-for-the-Other

If human beings are more than just human resources and capital to be trained as active individuals to engage and produce in society, we educators are challenged to be rigorously reflective about the role we are to play. If schools are supposed to be more than just “knowledge factories”, namely “wisdom schools” (Fox, 1994:170) to cultivate human beings aware of their power, deeper critical reflection is needed to challenge the hegemonic commonsense (cf. Gadamer, 1998: 119-120). Furthermore, if we educators want to be more than just administrators of a *domestication technology* as education has been, according to Peter Sloterdijk (1999), from the Renaissance, we are expected to contemplate and decide on our formative role. It seems that the expression “professional development” does not necessarily includes, in our case, the contemplative and critical rumination of heavy theoretical languages. Rather, an instrumental orientation dominates such training instances. This demands that educators assume and re-educate themselves as intellectuals and theorists aware that, as the Sub-Comandante Marcos has declared, “without words we are nothing, that is enough!”²⁶.

Therefore, a pedagogical praxis resides in the possibility for us teachers to overcome rather superficial and instrumental ways of thinking about the context and discourses in which we educate. As Michael Apple points out, teachers are to:

Examine critically not just ‘how a student acquires more knowledge’ (the dominant question in our efficiency minded field) but ‘why and how particular aspects of the collective culture are presented in school as objective, factual knowledge’. How concretely may official knowledge represent ideological configurations of the dominant interests in a society? How do schools legitimate these limited and partial standards of knowing as unquestioned truths? (M. Apple, 1975 cited in Giroux, 1988:22).

Such contemplative and reflective teaching implies a fruitful and confident dialogue with theoretical contributions coming from other disciplines and traditions. Such *conversation* should not overlook, of course, a meta-critique of our theoretical endowment that prevents us from transforming theory into another slogan system (Popkewitz, 1980). In fact, educational theory should be to serve “the good” regarding the good life of those being educated (Van Manen, 1982).

Consequently, understandings and critiques of the new flexible capitalism and its implications, like Sennett’s, would allow teachers to deconstruct the jargons that (re)shape their pedagogies. Educators would then be able to evaluate the extent in which capitalist slogans and the ethos served by them have been taken for granted as a priori imperatives for education in the 21st century. This paper argues, for instance, that one slogan colonising contemporary education as an expression of the entrepreneurship impetus, and reflecting deeper commonsensical historical trends informing our society, is *risk-taking*. In fact, in the neoliberal world people in general and students and teachers in particular are assessed as either good or great depending on the extent they embody risk-taking in their everyday lives and interactions (Brazeau, 2005). Thus, Abraham Zaleznick (1992), an author working on leadership and management quoted by Brazeau, asserts about educators: “Great teachers take risks. They bet initially on talent they perceive in younger people. And they risk emotional involvement in working closely with their juniors. The risks do not always pay off, but the willingness to take them appears crucial in developing leaders”.

If we simply accept statements like this one, as a given criterion to measure our performative roles, we are ultimately “dreamt into existence” by the slogan (cf. Pinar, 1992). Therefore, in order to look for alternatives to the capitalist commonsense shaping our pedagogies, politics, moral stances and our students’ characters, we educators should ruminate such slogan on the grounds of challenging theory.

For instance, if teaching is supposed to exceed the mere preparation for taking risks and thriving it can be argued that the actual risk for teachers working with younger people is not *only* emotional, but also, ethical and professional. Educators are supposed to be expert and integral crafters in respectfully and dialogically supporting younger generations or adult people to cultivate a meaningful, more complete and receptive life if they are to achieve significant personal and community *topic utopias*²⁷. However, on the grounds of the previous analysis of entrepreneurship and risk-taking we can doubt if education is nurturing strong characters to creatively and satisfactorily deal with what Giddens (1991:112; cf. also Mason, 2001) calls *fateful moments*:

Fatalism should be separated from as sense of *fatefulness* of events. Fateful happenings or circumstances are those which are particularly consequential for an individual or group. They included the undesired outcomes faced in what I have termed high sequence risks, risks affecting large numbers of people in a potentially life-threatening way, but they also figure at the level of the individual. Fateful moments are those when individuals are called on to take decisions that are particularly consequential for their ambitions, or more generally for their future lives. Fateful moments are highly consequential for a person’s destiny.

Consequently, in assuming that education is essentially a moral phenomenon impacting on students and even teachers there are basic ethical and theoretical demands that educators should address in order to be responsible and consistent (Ortega, 2004). Firstly, a conscious and responsible moral stance is an essential demand for educators, as individuals and community. Secondly, in order to embody their ethical visions, educators should revisit their anthropological notions as a key aspect shaping their pedagogies, for example the concept of “educated person”. In addressing such ethical and theoretical challenges, teachers become neither only nor mainly “facilitators” or “learning managers”, but also, and primarily, virtuous “experts in humanity” that can be relied upon to take charge of our children’s education (cf. Van Manen, 1994).

First of all, regarding the ethical vision, and in drawing on Levinas’ work, teachers could aspire to be primarily virtuous in “cultivating togetherness” as *being-for-the-other* and taking total responsibility for her/his well-being (Levinas, 1985: 52, 77). In this sense, in spite of the pervasive individualism and self-interest in the flexible capitalist society, Levinas (1989:83-84) alerts us that togetherness is an inescapable human condition which whether we like it or not, we have to address:

The Other becomes my neighbour precisely through the way the face summons me, calls for me, begs for me, and in so doing recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question... Responsibility for the Other, for the naked face of the first individuals to come along. A responsibility that goes beyond what I may or may not have done to the Other or whatever acts I may or may not have committed, as if were devoted to the other man [sic] before being devoted to myself. Or more exactly, as if I had to answer for the other’s death even before *being*. A guiltless responsibility, whereby I am none the less open to an accusation of which no alibi, spatial or temporal, cloud clear me. It is as if the other established a relationship or a relationship were established whose whole intensity consists in not presupposing the idea of community. A responsibility stemming from a time before my freedom – before my (*moi*) beginning, before any present. A fraternity existing in extreme separation. *Before*, but in what past? Not in the time preceding the present, in which I may have contracted any commitments. Responsibility for my neighbour dates from before my freedom in an immemorial past, an unrepresentable past that was never present and is more ancient than consciousness of... a responsibility for my neighbour, for the other man [sic] for the stranger or sojourner, to which nothing in the rigorously ontological order binds me – nothing in the order of the thing, of the something, of number or causality... It is the responsibility of a hostage which can be carried to the point of being substituted for the other person and demands an infinite subjection of subjectivity. Unless this anarchic possibility, which summons me from nowhere into a present time, is perhaps the measure or the manner or the system of an immemorial freedom that is even older than being, or decision, or deeds [...] In the face of the other man [sic] I am inescapably responsible and consequently the unique and chosen one.

Thus, a *pedagogy of alterity* based on radical and compassionate reception and responsibility for the Other could be proposed (Magendzo, 2004:73-71; Ortega, 2004; Ortega & Mingez, 1999). Such pedagogy is not justified on reciprocity or social expectations, as part of a social contract or on the basis of any self-serving interest (Levinas, 1985:95-101, 88; Purpel, 2004:274-275). Rather, this pedagogy of alterity is based on the strong belief that human experience does neither find its meaning in a self-centred (ontological) nor possessive attitude. Rather, we resolve our humanity in the inescapable and unpredictable encounter and proximity with the Other, my neighbour, and her/his “conversation” expressed through the face and in a *shared world* (Giannini, 2000; Levinas, 1985: 55-62, 77, 87). In unconditionally receiving the visit of the Other we receive, respect and obey what is neither myself nor the accepted commonsense, but the radical alterity, the infinite and the exceptional. In this context of hospitality we do not have any other alternative than to take care of such otherness and our subjectivity is essentially linked to this relationship. Thus: “I am responsible for the other without waiting for reciprocity, were I to die for it... [my] subjectivity goes to the

point of substitution for the Other... Subjectivity as such is initially hostage, it answers to the point of expiating for others” (Levinas, 1985:98, 100).

Thus, in looking at the other’s face, education cannot be an instrument of the flexible capitalism for adequating, absorbing, colonising or assimilating the exceptional and infinite to the same, to the historically sanctioned as truthful and natural. On the contrary, in light of an ethics based on the reception of the Other, and far from any paternalistic or patronising attitude, we become our sisters’ and brothers’ keepers to whom and for whom we have to respond (Levinas, 1985:88; Van Manen, 1994)²⁸. Obviously the other’s face is what impedes us to colonise or annihilate what is no myself, for example, on behalf of the accepted commonsense²⁹. As Levinas (1985: 86, 89) declared:

The face is exposed, menaced, as if inviting us to an act of violence. At the same time, the face is what forbids us to kill... The first word of the face is the “Thou shalt not kill”. It is an order. There is a commandment in the appearance of the face, as if a master spoke to m. however, at the same time the face of the Other is destitute; it is the poor for whom I can do all and to whom I owe all. And we, whoever I may be, but as a “first person”, I am he who finds the resources to respond to the call³⁰.

Therefore, if teaching is at any degree a risky practice it is because of the ethical nature of the pedagogical relationship demanding radical respect for the Other’s face and dignity. Such relationship is risky, in other words, because of the exceptionality and unpredictability that any pedagogical encounter implies for the pupil and the teacher given the open mystery that the human phenomenon is.

Secondly, teachers addressing the ethical challenges posed by the pedagogical relationship should carefully and critically contemplate the anthropological notions underpinning their practice. We could sustain that risky is a teaching that, against any external expectations and demands, acknowledges that success, survival, thriving, learning, or whatever be the mandated outcome, these are not natural, free-value or universal goals to pursue without questioning. In support of this, educators have sound evidence and subversive theoretical explanations of the human phenomenon to challenge the dogmatic truthfulness and necessity of the capitalist common sense.

In this sense, biologists, anthropologists and ethicists are, for instance, exploring alternative views to explain the origin of the human. The human phenomenon and its survival over time would not have been possible, according to commentators, if human beings were mainly focused on competition, aggressiveness and risk-taking. On the contrary, as Humberto Maturana asserts, human beings appeared more than 3 million years ago on the foundations of love that is caring collaboration that sustained the specie. Such attitude originated language which is the base of culture, the conversational nets mentioned above. According to Maturana the opposite of love is not hate but indifference to the Other. Such indifference is the denial of the responsibility for the Other that, Levinas argued, constitutes human experience. Maturana, of course, does not deny the existence of aggression in human history, however he sustains that no social system can be based on aggression because aggression is the source of mutual destruction. As we have argued, the evidence of such *culture of aggression* is overwhelming in modern history (Eisler, 1987; Maturana, 2003:274; Maturana & Verden-Zoller, 2003; cf. Midgley, 1993: 3-13; Singer, 1993:99-124)

Nothing should impede us to consider our pedagogical role in light of such angles. In doing so we have nothing to loose and much to learn and enjoy as coherent and responsible educators in charge of the Other. We often justify our lack of theoretical reflection appealing to excessive workload. However, it seems that the problem is more profound when contemplating the historical de-professionalisation, proletarianisation and de-politisation of teaching practice. This impoverishment of our identities have made us scared of taking back the control upon our practices by cultivating a solid, creative and brave intellectual and moral stance against any unquestioned hegemonic discourse. On the contrary, in taking control of our pedagogy, as Patrick Slattery (2006:xii) declare, we will be able to contemplate that:

The world is my classroom, and the arts are my vehicle for exploring the terrain. My goal is to challenge students to connect the subject matter of the curriculum to the lived world experiences of their surrounding community. I ultimately hope to inspire them to become prophetic voices for justice in school and society. I reiterate my belief that education is a prophetic enterprise seeking justice, that curriculum is a public discourse seeking transformation, and that teaching is a moral activity demanding compassion and understanding. Teaching is not simply a technical human enterprise of information transmission, cultural assimilation, or career development; rather, as Dwayne Huebner points out, it is a creative process of healing, re-integration, remembering, and re-collection.

Finally, on the grounds of the ethical and theoretical challenges facing our pedagogy, it can be argued that highly risky is a teaching that just or mainly obeys external constraints by promoting unquestioned slogans in order to reproduce the commonsensical view that supports our society and its modern tradition. Teachers taking this risk – despite the Other's face - mean educators not radically addressing central questions in education which are “what am I educating for?” and “on behalf of who and what ideology?”. Rather, they appear mainly focused on or even self-alienated answering the narrower and instrumental question “how to better educate and prepare students for this flexible society?”. Such risky teaching, even if trying to overcome instrumentalism, lacks the essential virtues for serious theorising and ethically reflecting, that is deciding, on our teaching practice, its consequences and possibilities. The question is also raised, of course, for those of us who are supposed to accompany education students in their growth as critical intellectuals and theory makers in school settings. This means the education of educators that fear neither theory nor theorising (Simon, 1992:79). This means the formation of teachers who are willing to assume teaching as a complicated moral practice impacting on others and as a political commitment to a democratic society.

In this sense, and going back to the quote on teachers as risk-takers, we should think of teaching practice as something more than “betting” on other individuals' potential talents or just preparing them for a world importantly shaped by entrepreneurial competition and risk.

Conclusion

Some commentators suggest the links between core entrepreneurial attributes and other forms of education leadership are rather superficial as such attributes are more essentially related to entrepreneurial leaders than other education leaders. However, the examination of a number of teachers' narratives has showed that entrepreneurial attributes, values and ideals are effectively “colonising” other education leaders' narratives. This happens, at some degree, even in the case of educators trying to be reflective and critical against current neoliberal trends shaping society and individuals. This colonisation occurs in the context of an increasing marketisation of education as a result of a pervasive neoliberal ideology implemented over the last decades. A retrospective exploration of our historical walk has revealed that an entrepreneurial impetus and its risk-taking attribute have underpinned, under the form of slogans and through educational practices for instance, the long-term development of a commonsensical capitalist ethos. The strong demands and moral consequences of such phenomenon on human beings have been clearly pointed out by social researchers.

On this basis, in “remembering” we belong to this long-term tradition culturally legitimised and internalised, we educators can challenge and overcome reductive and de-historised views of our own present. The simplistic “presentism” or the future-based approach dominating after the end of 1980s are mutilating views hindering any rigorous critique and transcendent transformation of the present in light of the past (Hosbawm, 1994; Maturana, 2003; Maturana, no reference). Rather, given that we have been “dreamt in to existence by others” (Pinar, 1992), in historical memory resides our possibility to transform our pedagogy in something more than mere implementation of others' paradigms. Thus, the dialogue between our own

present and its past is the starting point of the exercise of our moral responsibility regarding the Other's face and her/his dignity.

In conclusion, it is clear that a solid theoretical cultivation as well as an honest moral commitment with the Other, rather than with external constraints, are the preconditions for a responsible, consistent and prophetic pedagogy³¹. In ruminating and denouncing the instrumentalisation of education by neoliberal interests, educators can become essentially focussed on the reception, respect and promotion of the alterity and its dignity. Furthermore, in liberating our pedagogies of slogans and their mandates, educational encounters can become announce and signal of a more fair, compassionate, joyful and caring society.

Notes

- ¹ Let's do a Google search for "Educational leadership". We got 1,690,000 entries in 21 seconds. At the same time we could do a search in our libraries and, again, have evidence of how important and pervasive the discourses related to entrepreneurship and leadership have become in education and everyday life. A similar inquiry could be conducted by exploring the programs offered in different tertiary institutions of education to discover the role leadership discourses are actually playing.
- ² Fernand Braudel (1992) proposed a novel historiographic analysis of situated phenomena based on diverse temporalities (long, middle and short-term). Furthermore, Carlo Ginzburg (1989, 1980) has proposed his evidential and morphological paradigm of historical inquiry to interpret micro-phenomena over time. He draws on a multidisciplinary range of discourses such as iconology, medicine, or literature. The use of this method in his studies (1980) *The Cheese and the Worms...* and (1983) *The night battles...* is outstanding. In the latter, Ginzburg interprets popular rituals associated with witchcraft and agrarian cults in the 16th European century by looking at pre-Christian rites in the Indo-European area. Both phenomena are connected by clues rather than by explicit, documental or central links. The hermeneutics of such phenomena demands the historian be carefully focused on marginal and subtle details of the "picture" being observed.
- ³ The *hic et nunc*, the here and now, can be interpreted as a liberatory process in assuming human experience in all its density as historical experience open to transcendence. The present becomes clear and problematic in light of the past. At the same time, the consequence of this retrospective reading of the present opens up the possibilities and hopes for a viable future. Thus, the claims and struggles of those crucified for being excluded become meaningful and worthwhile in a present that itself contains the seeds of a future good life understood as Pascua (liberation, Passover). The historical reading of the human walk by theology reinforces the transformative impulse of critical scholarship in other fields. In this sense, it is quite interesting the work of the curriculum theorist William Pinar (2004) *What is curriculum Theory?*. Pinar points out the importance of *contemplation as theoretical attitude* for educators. Such contemplative attitude is, in fact, proposed in this paper as a basic requirement for responsible educators. By being contemplative of their historical experience, educators can become transformative and responsible protagonists of their experiences. Such a theoretical stance implies the careful consideration of the past in light of a problematic present demanding transformation in order to be able to co-create a viable future. Furthermore, Gadamer (1998:16-36) offers an illuminating explanation of *theory* as a contemplative attitude that is not at all separated from the contemplated phenomena. On the contrary contemplation, for Gadamer, implies *respectful participation* in what is contemplated. See also, Pieper (1952), Purpel (2004) and Slattery (2006).
- ⁴ See Brent Davies & Barbara J. Davies, *Strategic Leadership*, in Brent Davies (ed.) (2005), pp. 10-30.
- ⁵ The authors point out, that "we have tried to err towards... more restrictive and distinctive descriptions" referring to a "relatively classical definition [focused] on people who take unusual personal risks in creating new enterprises that address unmet needs and new markets" (p. 148).
- ⁶ For example, "in the public sector... entrepreneurship can represent 'public enterprise', an hybrid of public and private organizations that is considered to be a more efficient organizational form for some government programmes" (Hentschke and Caldwell, 2005: 148).
- ⁷ Matthew Fox explains in his analysis of the medieval Dominican friar Meister Eckhart's sermons that justice was the "work" of compassion in the medieval Christian tradition. In this sense, compassion and justice were supposed to illuminate economics. See Matthew Fox (1977) chapters 31-37, and Matthew Fox (1983) for instance the meditations in pp. 96, 97, 100, 102, 103, 105, 108, 111. See also in Psalm 85:11 the links between compassion, love and justice: "In compassion, peace and justice kiss", in Matthew Fox (1996) P. 106.
- ⁸ The study intends to build a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of a small sample of educators' narratives, a micro-historical phenomenon to use Ginzburg's words (1980). The study draws on a phenomenological approach to assess teachers' insights, the thick description method and long-term historiographic considerations. Thus, it

intends to understand how these teachers, as situated actors, perceive the new curriculum in terms of a normative discourse. Thus, the study tries to understand the explicit or implicit communication of values and the notion of “educated person” promoted by the curriculum to shape students’ identities. It has been also considered to what extent these teachers believe the VELs can be successfully delivered regardless of the school socio-economic context, that is achieving “learning for all” (*success for all*) as the VELs points out. This question is not an instrumental question, but a moral dilemma if we assume education must offer a “good life” for all. In addition, the teachers have been asked about their own beliefs of what it means to be a good teacher under the new framework. They have been also asked how they see the society into which their pupils will emerge as adults and to which they are preparing students to become active members. Furthermore, their own notion of curriculum and the values or attitudes (if any) they would like to communicate to their students and the way to do so in their classrooms and school have been asked.

⁹ Interesting critiques of “modern” or “active citizenship” and related features of such an “educated person” are in Cherry Collins (2005); Abraham Magendzo (no reference); Rolando Pinto (2004). Regarding “modern citizenship” the stress has been on individuals’ duties and responsibilities rather than on their human rights (Pinto, 2004:107). Collins, analysing contemporary curriculum aims in Australia points out that: “Today the aim is becoming the development of the skilled, self-steering, relatively ignorant but tolerant person. This is the person who is bribed with the prospect of being able to focus on maximising advantage to the self, but who accepts that the price is being able to get on with everyone else” (p. 75).

¹⁰ Interestingly Hans-Georg Gadamer (2001), in one of his last speeches on *bildung*, pointed out that education happens only through conversation challenging the current instrumental discourses struggling for dominating education and pedagogy. Somewhere else, Gadamer stated “If... one wants to contribute to this reflection, one is led back to the origins of culture, to the basic, elemental given, which are words and language. Words and language obviously stand at the beginning of human history and the history of humanity” (1998:3). Geertz also pointed out: “The concept of culture I espouse... is essentially a semiotic one. Believing with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning” (p. 5). On curriculum as a “complicated conversation” see Pinar (2004) and Pinar et al (1995).

¹¹ The new capitalist ethos appears as creating a radical fragmentation of human experience and a new focus on immediacy. The painting “The banker and his wife” (1514) by the Dutch artist Kwinten Metsys is a powerful iconographic source to trace how the human face and attention was changed and captured by the new capitalist forces and ambitions. The banker’s wife stops paying attention to the invisible and transcendent (symbolised in religious objects) to turn her face towards her husband profits in the immediate present. The secular interests superposed the spiritual ones and reassigned the role of religion in the modern era as just another instance in individuals’ lives. At the same time, meditative and critical dispositions are annulated or impoverished when individuals’ attention is mainly focused in the immediate experiences. Finally, the new forces also reduce individuals’ notion of their own historicity. Note that the counterpoint of this phenomenon is embodied in Francis of Assisi in the 13th century who tried to challenge the emergent bourgeois ethos by preaching an ethics of care and compassion based on *eros* rather than *logos*. Such tradition has been essential to understand some of the contemporary liberation movements that consider historical memory as a key aspect for a critical, liberatory and transcendent reading of one’s own present time (Boff, 1982). See also *The Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco. The novel offers powerful depictions of the theological debates about Christ’s poverty and the Catholic church’s secular power and wealth. Again, in some sense what is at stake here is the new focus of the church on immediacies. This results in compromising its responsibility with its followers’ historicity, including their transcendent dimension considered as an essential experience for a medieval individual. Even the traditional list of the seven capital sins suffered the impact of the new entrepreneurial force of capitalism. The cardinal virtue of leisure (the source of celebration and cult) became associated with laziness, so it was included as a new capital sin displacing the medieval sin of *acedia* (the interior bitterness that mystics suffered and that in the 19th century psychiatry redefined as an illness under the label of melancholy and depression). In this respect see Humberto Giannini (1993).

¹² The medieval worldview was only challenged, according to Jacques Le Goff, in the 19th century by the rising of industrialism and its faith in indefinite progress that substituted the Judeo-Christian telos (*parusia*).

¹³ “Good said, “Let us make man, in the likeness of ourselves and let them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild beasts and all the reptiles that crawl upon the earth’. God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them... The man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of heaven and all the wild beasts”.

¹⁴ The exegetical analysis offered by *The Jerusalem Bible* teaches us about the *mastering* and *naming power* of human beings upon the rest of other beings. This *attribute* has been mentioned and legitimated in the first book of the Old Testament and is understandable in the light of the alleged likeness that links God and human beings. Intellect, will and authority constitute the main features of the human person. On the contrary, on work as a festive and sacramental event, see Mathew Fox (1994). Furthermore, Fox in his critique of industrial era asserts that “work

carries us into a dark night of the soul” (p. 43). Note that Fox tries to overcome self’s modern fragmentation by (re)linking spiritual and mystical experience with everyday life.

- ¹⁵ Cf. the works of Burke and Huizinga. It is also important to mention Febvre’s book (1942) on Rabelais, incredulity and laugh in the 16th century as a seminal study of mentalities and the control of popular culture. Ginzburg thinks that, although the book is an amazing piece of historical work, wrongly concluded that religion completely controlled the mentalities of individuals in the 16th century. Febvre would have underestimated individuals’ *interior freedom* that Ginzburg analyses in *The Cheese and the Worms*.
- ¹⁶ Bourdieu and Wacquant denounce a cultural imperialism as a new form of symbolic violence that has been administrated by “neoliberal revolutionaries”. Those self-proclaimed “progressive” intellectuals and technocrats universalise and impose a neoliberal de-historised worldview by difusing a jargon under the label of “modernisation”. Such jargon, Bourdieu and Wacquant add, circulates globally as a “planetary vulgate” made of unquestioned common places. For example, the authors mention globalisation, flexibility, governance, employability, underclass, exclusion, new economy, zero tolerance, communitarianism, multiculturalism, ethnicity, minority, identity, and fragmentation. They point out that paradoxically the neo-language does not say anything about notions such as capitalism, exploitation, class, domination and inequality. Slajov Zizek, the Slovenian philosopher, has also systematically deconstructed slogans as empty policital and linguistic constructions reinforcing the current capitalist ethos administrated by political and economic powers.
- ¹⁷ Maturana (1992) suggests that *objectivity* as it is understood, for example, in our scientific tradition is rather an argument to force others to accept my own categories allegedly truthful. Such critique of objectivity is quite illuminating for other spheres as education or politics.
- ¹⁸ Note that Giddens asserts we live “after tradition” in a world with no *fate*. As classical modernisation, according to Beck (1992:11) tried to modernise tradition and nature current reflexive modernisation tries to modernise industrial society itself. Thus, it could be argued that industrialism has become the very tradition of our society. These distinctions prevent us from assuming we live in a *neutral* moment and space of history. Secondly, it is difficult to accept that “life is no longer lived as fate” when at least 90% of humankind is suffering some type of subjection or inequality even in the affluent nations. In other words, risk itself becomes the fate for the more and probably for the less.
- ¹⁹ *Residual World* is the concept used by some sociologists to refer to the extreme and outrageous situation affecting the African continent.
- ²⁰ Giddens defines Modernity in its current form as a “world-wide project of production and control” (Anthony Giddens (1990) cited in Alain Touraine. 1995, *Critique of Modernity*, Blackwell, Oxford, p. 29).
- ²¹ Note that the association between risk-taking and the modern techniques of exploring, controlling and normalising is quite suggestive for teaching practice. In fact, some school and university scholars, such as Ted Aoki, have redefined teaching as more closely linked to the practices of *listening* and *improvising* than to a visual practice strongly identified with modern control and disciplining techniques. For Aoki’s works see William Pinar & Rita L. Irwin (2005) *Curriculum in a New Key. The Collected Works of Ted T. Aoki*, Laurence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, New Jersey. See chapter 23 “Sonare and Videre: A Story, Three Echoes, and Lingering Note (1991)”, pp. 367-376. See also Levinas, 1985: 87; Pieper, 1952.
- ²² In linking this social analysis of human relations in flexible capitalism with teachers’ reality and schooling there are outstanding films to be considered as a source of ethical deliberation: “To be and to have” (2003) and more recently “Half Nelson” (2006).
- ²³ The Australian education system has been empirically and rigorously analysed by fine scholars such as Richard Teese (2000) and Simon Marginson (1997). The former has critically analysed the undemocratic schooling system driving Australian education, while the latter has pointed out the market-based ideology that has reshaped the Australian education over the last decades in the context of the implementation of neoliberal policies.
- ²⁴ The medievalist George Duby (1995) offers powerful insights when compared the fears of medieval and contemporary societies. He challenges our stereotypes and its psychological function in neoliberal society of attributing to others and/or other epochs a worse quality of life in order to convince ourselves, we live in a better society despite some problems. Duby teaches us that, although medieval people suffered poverty and misery, they did not know the radical indigence and abandonment that characterises our modern society. The feudal society, as a corporate, organic, communal and religious fabric, had resistance dynamics to tackle the consequences of starvation or natural catastrophes.
- ²⁵ Gadamer (1998:101-113) proposed *friendship* as an alternative to the increasing modern alienation. This is a relevant issue for teachers to consider regarding pedagogical relations.
- ²⁶ Marcos is the leader of the EZLN (National Liberation Zapatatist Army) a “postmodern” Mexican guerrilla composed of indigenous people and peasants. From the early 1990s it has been resisting the neoliberal policies of

the Mexican Government without using the violent ways of traditional revolutionary movements. This statement appeared in one of the songs of the tango band “Gotan Project”.

- ²⁷ The first time I saw the expression was in an article by the historian and philosopher Eduardo Deves in the 1990s. In the context of modern fragmentation in flexible capitalism, structural transformations, as those undertaken in socialist and communist nations or proposed by the revolutionary movements in the past century, became virtually impossible. Such transformations were operated from the top by political elites in rigid bureaucratic structures. However, the late modern era has revitalised the viability of smaller-scale situated (that is *topic, topos, place*) utopias, for instance social movements. Such utopian phenomena have the chance of being expressions of transformative dynamics if they are able, from their specific localness, to communicate, seduce and, as a result, impact other areas of local and global society.
- ²⁸ Cf. Genesis 22 (Isaac’s sacrifice) which is a paradigmatic narrative about alterity and the face as key manifestations impacting ethical decisions. See also Max Van Manen (1994).
- ²⁹ It would be an interesting inquiry to assess to what extent and how educators address “the problem of the face” in their everyday teaching.
- ³⁰ In my teaching experience with education students I have discussed concrete examples of this Levinas’ statement as a starting point to consider the viability and necessity of an ethics of alterity in education. In Latin America, in the context of the dictatorships planned and funded by the United States Government from the 1970s, we have known several cases in which political prisoners survived the secret services practices when their torturer, by chance, contemplated the face of their victims. They recognized the humanity and themselves in their victims and made the ethical decision to respect and save the alterity they have in their hands.
- ³¹ The biblical prophetic tradition as praxis of denounce-announcement situated in a historical horizon with political implications is clearly depicted through Jeremiah’s character. See Jer. 1:4; 14:17-21.

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