
Brazil Can Learn with Iglesias How to Take the Leap into the Future

Contributed by Cristovam Buarque
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Although younger than the Argentine Raúl Presbisch, the Brazilian Celso Furtado and the Chilean Aníbal Pinto, the Uruguayan Enrique V. Iglesias surely is the twentieth-century economist most closely identified with the Latin American economy.

Thanks to his long term - about 17 years - as the president of the Inter-American Development Bank and his service as a director of UN organizations and as a professor at well-known Latin American economic institutes, he has made his name as the principal strategist of our continent's economy.

After occupying these posts, he is today the Secretary-General of the Ibero-American Cooperation Secretariat, concerning himself with relations among Spain, Portugal and the countries of Latin America. Because of his current and past posts, he was in Rabat earlier this month, participating in the Morocco 2030 Forum.

Along with former Portuguese President Mario Soares, former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe González, Mexican politician Porfirio Muñoz Ledo and others, he treated everyone to a class about the future of development. And he defended a new vision, asserting that the future depends, above all, upon all levels of education from pre-school to post-graduation.

Besides the permanent concern with fiscal and financial vulnerability, with competitiveness, with political, judicial and monetary stability, the great problem nowadays, according to Iglesias, is social vulnerability, poverty, inequality.

He recognizes all the enormous advances of the last few decades, in terms of growth, and of the last few years, relative to monetary stability. But from now on, according to him, advances will only be possible if there is a leap in education.

The capital of the future is knowledge, and the mechanism to break with inequality is equal access to education.

Iglesias's class at Morocco 2030 represents a significant change in the traditional strategies that based development upon capital and the economy. In fact, during his lecture, he kindly termed as "prophets" those who, in Latin America, have been defending education as the principal vector of development.

With Iglesias's Morocco 2030 class, this prophecy has been transformed into strategy, gaining a dimension of legitimacy, acceptance and viability. Now, in accord with him, the new worldwide agenda must be composed through public policies to break with the vulnerability resulting from inequality and exclusion.

The new agenda is a revolution in education. And, if we do not make it, in Iglesias's words, "We will continue to be contemporaries of the past."

The earlier generation of economists created the expression "take off" of the economy to define the advance of civilization thanks to development. Today it is perceived that, instead of a take-off, we need an educational "leap." Instead of taking off, a leap. Instead of economic growth, a revolution in education.

At the Morocco 2030 Forum, it was recalled that, at the time of the ancient Egyptians, the southern side of the Mediterranean was much more developed than the northern side. In that era, Europe was a primitive region. This is because the Egyptians possessed technology, something still unknown to the Europeans.

Today, what marks the great difference between the northern side of the Mediterranean (Europe) and the southern side (Africa) is not the number of cars, the size of the houses or the value of the bank accounts.

Today this inequality is marked by the fact that, more than 200 years ago, Europe carried out its scientific, technological and educational revolution.

Henceforth, no country will simply move in the direction of development. It must leap over to the developed side. We live in a time, not of take-offs, but of leaps.

Iglesias formed part of that group of economists who defended the "take-off." For decades, he taught what countries must do to be able to take off, always praising investments in the economy.

Today, he is demonstrating that he continues to be active and capable of recycling himself, and he treated us to a beautiful class about how to make the leap - with an educational revolution. The only manner in which we will be contemporaries of the future.

Cristovam Buarque has a Ph.D. in economics. He is a PDT senator for the Federal District and was Governor of the Federal District (1995-98) and Minister of Education (2003-04). Last year he was a presidential candidate. You can visit his homepage - www.cristovam.com.br - and write to him at mensagem-cristovam@senado.gov.br

Translated from the Portuguese by Linda Jerome - LinJerome@cs.com.