Alternative educational experiences from popular education: knowledge, innovations and approaches to transform the margins of the system.

Table 2

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ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES FROM POPULAR EDUCATION: KNOWLEDGE, INNOVATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO TRANSFORM THE MARGINS OF THE SYSTEM — Table 2
International Congress of Fe y Alegría 2026 "Popular education on the margins of the system"

1. WHAT ARE THE MARGINS SHOWING US?

The experiences shared by Fe y Alegría show that educational marginalization is not only found in remote areas or outside of school. It also occurs when people's living conditions, ages, identities, abilities, knowledge, timelines, or life trajectories do not find sufficient recognition and support in the way education is organized.

The answers we found are not limited to formal education. Formal, non-formal, and community-based experiences coexist, and in some cases, a single proposal integrates different educational modalities and spaces. This diversity demonstrates that guaranteeing the right to learn requires looking beyond schooling and recognizing the diverse forms, times, and places in which education occurs.

By comparing the experiences of different countries, we find margins associated with:

- distance, rurality, territorial dispersion and material living conditions;
- work, subsistence, care responsibilities and gender inequalities;
- interrupted educational trajectories and difficulties in entering, remaining, returning or continuing to learn;
- the barriers faced by people with disabilities;
- migration, displacement and other forms of mobility;
- the limited recognition of languages, cultures, identities and knowledge;
- the problems associated with mental health that prevent educational engagement and retention;

- Violence, insecurity, and emergencies that disrupt life and educational continuity;
- deprivation of liberty, which requires building possibilities for learning, continuity and autonomy in contexts of confinement;
- The conditions of vulnerability that affect early childhood and their families, and that make it necessary to coordinate education, care, protection, comprehensive development and community support.

These margins are not closed categories, nor do they operate in isolation. A single life trajectory can be simultaneously shaped by rurality, poverty, cultural affiliation, employment, mobility, disability, caregiving responsibilities, or violence. Experiences, therefore, invite us to examine people's concrete lives rather than classifying them solely by one condition.

But they leave us with an even more challenging observation: marginalization also occurs within the education system itself. A person can be enrolled and still find an education whose schedules don't align with their life, whose curricula don't recognize their prior knowledge, whose teaching methods don't respond to the local context, whose support is insufficient, or whose forms of assessment, recognition, and certification hinder the continuity of their educational path.

Therefore, looking at the margins doesn't just mean asking where education doesn't reach or who is being left out. It also requires asking ourselves which characteristics of our way of educating produce or deepen exclusions and which ones we need to transform.

2. WHAT ARE WE LEARNING FROM THESE EXPERIENCES?

Very different experiences reveal shared lessons. By comparing them, we can also recognize the capabilities that Fe y Alegría has been developing to educate where conventional approaches fall short.

1. When the educational organization becomes a barrier, we need to make it more flexible Schedules, spaces, methods, paces, curricula, and resources can be reorganized so that education engages with real-life conditions. Flexibility doesn't mean lowering educational standards, but rather creating new learning opportunities.

2. Arriving is not enough: you have to sustain the trajectories
Access, readmission, or enrollment is only one part of the right. Experiences show the importance of supporting learning, retention, transitions, return, and continuity, especially when life trajectories cease to be linear.

3. Learning happens inside and outside of school, throughout life
Work, community life, caregiving, culture, territory, and experience also produce knowledge. Recognizing this diversity broadens our understanding of education and challenges the notion that only what the school system teaches and certifies has value.

At the same time, it poses the challenge of building bridges between different learning spaces and forms of recognition and validation of knowledge acquired throughout life.

4. Flexibility does not mean leaving people alone.
Tutors, educators, facilitators, peers, families, organizations, and communities support many of these learning pathways. Experience shows that flexibility requires support: the more diverse the learning routes, the more important it is to build relevant forms of presence and connection.

5. Care and protection are conditions for learning
Fear, violence, hunger, discrimination, excessive caregiving, and insecurity directly impact educational opportunities. Caregiving is not something additional to education; it is a prerequisite for education to be possible.

6. Territory, culture, and community also produce knowledge
When education engages with languages, memories, identities, ancestral knowledge, and territorial experiences, relevance ceases to be a superficial adaptation of the curriculum. The territory and the communities also participate in the construction of that which has educational value.

7. Education and work can be found without reducing education to employability
These experiences demonstrate possibilities for integrating training, technical skills, work, autonomy, and life projects while preserving the civic, community-based, and transformative dimensions of education. This relationship is especially important in the life trajectories of young people and adults, and in contexts where learning also means expanding the possibilities of building a dignified life.

8. The community can go from supporting education to being the subject of the educational proposal
In several experiences, communities participate in understanding the context, defining content, supporting learning pathways, and developing responses. They are not only recipients or collaborators: they are also active participants in the education process.

These learning experiences rarely occur in isolation. An experience can simultaneously be flexible, community-based, intercultural, protective, and work-related. Innovation often seems to lie in the ability to combine responses based on the concrete lives of people and communities.

The question that runs through these learning experiences:

What are the margins of the education system teaching us that the system itself has not yet learned?

3. WHAT MAKES THESE RESPONSES POSSIBLE AND WHAT TENSIONS REMAIN?

Experience shows that answers are not sustained solely by a good methodology. They become possible when different conditions are met:

- **Pedagogical skills** to read the context and recreate practices.
- **Organizational flexibility** to adapt times, spaces, modalities and resources.
- **Support** capable of sustaining diverse relationships and trajectories.
- **Institutional capacity** to sustain and incorporate learning.
- **Community participation and territorial coordination** to build responses with people and not just for them.
- **Partnerships and shared responsibility** that expand response capabilities.
- **Relevant resources, means and technologies.**
- **Frameworks and public policies** that recognize, fund, and guarantee diverse educational pathways.
- **Mechanisms for recognition, validation, and certification** that allow learning produced in formal, non-formal, and community settings to have continuity and social value.

These conditions do not operate in isolation. They are interdependent for responses to be built, sustained, and their possibilities expanded. But educating from the margins also confronts us with decisions that do not have simple answers:

We need…	**And, at the same time…**
• **Flexibility**	• Guarantee recognition and continuity.
• **Innovation**	• Institutionally sustain what has been learned.
• **Building situated responses**	• Identify learning that can be recreated in other contexts.
• **Recognizing learning produced in formal, non-formal and community spaces**	• Build bridges and mechanisms for its recognition, validation, and continuity.
• **Building alliances and co-responsibility**	• Defend public responsibility for the right to education.
• **Responding appropriately to concrete realities**	• Build conditions for its sustainability.
• **Linking education and work**	• Preserve a comprehensive and transformative education.
• **Responding to diversity**	• Guarantee common rights and opportunities.
• **Making pathways more flexible**	• Prevent flexibility from becoming a lower quality education for those facing greater inequalities.

It's not about choosing one of the poles. The challenge lies in creatively sustaining the tension without sacrificing what each pole protects.

This raises a fundamental political question: many initiatives succeed because they create alternatives, streamline procedures, or develop solutions where conventional approaches fall short. The challenge is to ensure that these lessons learned do not remain exceptional responses for populations considered exceptional, but rather contribute to transforming the conditions that generate exclusion.

4. FROM EXPERIENCE TO SHARED CAPACITY

Experience shows that Fe y Alegría has already built capacity to respond where conventional forms of education prove insufficient. However, this knowledge is distributed across countries, territories, teams, and experiences, and we don't always recognize it as a collective body of knowledge within the Movement.

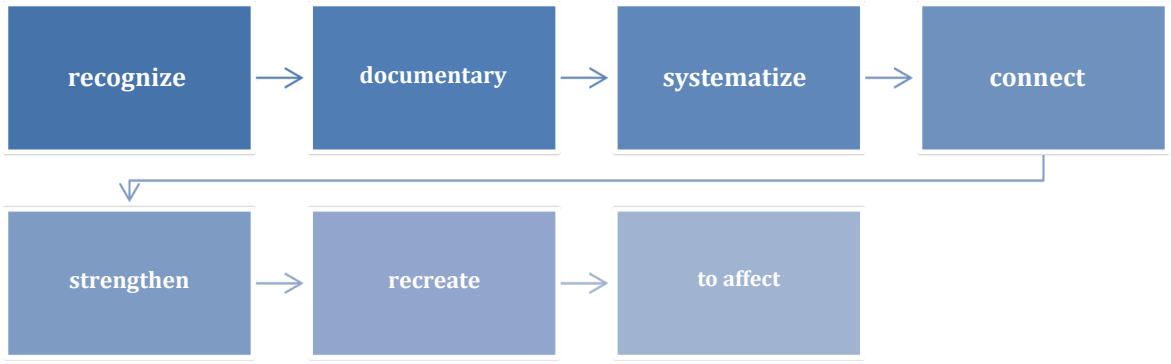
We found trajectories and capabilities built around:

- Education for Young People and Adults – EPJA –, literacy and flexible education.
- Popular education, participation and work with communities.
- Situated, territorial and intercultural education.
- Educational inclusion and diversity.
- Social-emotional education, coexistence, care and protection.

And other fields appear that, although they do not yet necessarily constitute common accumulations, raise important questions:

- Educational continuity in the face of increasingly less linear life trajectories.
- Education, work and autonomy.
- Recognition of lifelong learning.

The challenge is not to turn this diversity into a single model, but to ensure that what has been learned can become a shared capacity of the Movement:



This raises three levels of action:

- **IN EACH COUNTRY:** recognize existing and emerging margins; strengthen and systematize existing responses; identify capacities that can connect with other experiences; and support educational trajectories in an increasingly comprehensive manner, recognizing the complementarity between formal, non-formal and community education.

- **AS A FEDERATION:** to recognize and connect existing achievements; to build common criteria on education in marginalized communities and lifelong learning without homogenizing responses; to promote learning among countries; and to strengthen the production of knowledge and evidence. This also means asking ourselves how to build bridges between different educational forms and spaces, so that the flexibility and diversity of proposals can translate into pathways with continuity and recognition.

- **IN PUBLIC ADVOCACY:** promote flexible, accessible and socially recognized educational pathways; promote public conditions that guarantee inclusion, relevance and continuity; and position lifelong learning as a right.

From responding to the margins to transforming the conditions that produce them

The question is no longer just how to reach those who have been left out or who encounter barriers within the system. We also need to ask ourselves what lessons learned from the margins can transform our own way of educating, and what new margins are beginning to emerge in response to the changes of our time.

Paraqueprofundicemos eldiálogo:

- What learning that originated on the margins should become a common criterion for our way of educating?
- What capabilities that are currently distributed among countries and experiences do we need to connect and strengthen as a Federation?
- What experiences, models, or fields should we systematize to turn accumulated experience into shared knowledge?
- How can we build bridges between formal, non-formal, and community-based learning to foster continuous and socially recognized educational pathways? What aspects of our own
- teaching methods and educational systems do we need to help transform so that they cease to produce exclusion?

WHERE DOES THE ROAD END TODAY FOR FE Y ALEGRÍA?

What does it take to get there, and what do we need to transform so that those who live on the margins don't have to continue adapting to an education that doesn't sufficiently recognize their lives, their knowledge, and their trajectories?

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