

# **DESIGN FOR CHANGE: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE CHANGE THE WORLD.**

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Many instances, experts and national and international organizations set challenges and trends that push us on the one hand to reconsider seriously our educational practices and, on the other hand, to put into practice new ways of educating.

We are in a new ecosocial setting, in crisis, dehumanized and uncertain, in which the environment worsens at an accelerated step. Therefore, education must change and adapt to the needs and urgencies of today and tomorrow to be effective and meaningful. Education must contribute to social transformation. In 2015, Pope Francis said clearly and directly: *"We must change education to change society."*

Recently, in the preface of the book that I have coordinated internationally with Mónica Cantón, entitled *"Design for Change. An educational movement to change the world"*, Howard Gardner (2017) affirms that *"among the numerous innovative programs and approaches in force today, Design for Change stands out"*. In the introductory chapter of that same book, Sandy Speicher, partner and executive director of IDEO Education says: "I recognize that it is an immense inspiration to see the world through the eyes of children". For his part, Marc Prensky, in his conference at the Annual World Meeting of Design for Change, held in Madrid, in November 2017, in addition to congratulating Kiran and highly appreciating the methodology, indicated that *"it should be in the DNA of the curriculum"*.

This active methodology that focuses on the student and educates him from within, emerged in India in 2009, designed by Kiran Bir Sethi. She developed and implemented it at the school she founded, *Riverside School*; and from there, it spread to India and then to many countries. Riverside has received a lot of appreciation; just last year, it was priced second best school in India, for academic results. In few years, Design for Change, has become a worldwide educational movement present in more than 66 countries. During this time it has received multiple awards and international recognitions, among which I would like to highlight that since 2015, this methodology has been one of the initiatives selected for its contribution to complying with the fourth of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the Quality Education, whose goal is *"to guarantee an inclusive education for all and to promote lasting learning opportunities that are of quality and equitable"*.

Thus, this methodology has become an international movement that gives children the opportunity to put their own ideas into practice to change the world, starting with their environment.

Pope Francis has insisted on several occasions that we must humanize education to humanize society so dehumanized, divided, in confrontation and in deep crisis. He invites us to educate the head, the heart and the hands; favoring the culture of encounter and dialogue; generating

hope and trust in the new generations. He himself urges us to listen to children and young people, to do what he calls: "*work of ear*".

Well, all these dynamisms are achieved through the methodology of Design for Change. This way an atmosphere of empathy and compassion can be created in the educational center, generating respect and solidarity among the students, among them and towards their eco-social contexts in which they develop, that is, outside the center.

Design for Change is inspired by Design Thinking, simplifying it and adapting it to the educational context. With this methodology, children and young people become protagonists and are given the decision-making capacity so that they can learn from projects that change their personal, social or environmental reality and thus transform the world around them. This process is facilitated by their teacher or educational agent, who knows how to take a step back, letting them become protagonists, so that they go through the four stages that configure this methodology, from the identification of what they want to improve or change to the communication and sharing of what they have done in order to inspire others, going through the phases of ideation and doing, putting into practice.



Scheme of the different phases of Design for Change

**Let's see together each of the 4 stages of the Design for Change methodology:**

**Phase 1: LISTEN.**

In this stage children and young people reflect on what they would like to change, using and developing their empathy and compassion. To do this, follow these steps:

- **Investigate their environment** (classroom, school, neighborhood, city ...)
- **They try to understand.** They discuss and delve into the focus of action with realism. They listen to each other. They exercise their empathy.
- **They reach a consensus** on the problem that impacts them the most and they want to resolve.
- **Involve the community,** interview those affected to understand and know their real causes.

Basic scheme to reflect individually and in the group:

1. What do you know about your surroundings?
2. Organize the information.
3. Identify focuses of action.
4. Choose a focus.
5. Win in understanding.
6. Synthesize what has been learned.
7. Generate a challenge.

## Phase 2: IMAGINE.

It is an essentially creative phase in which they propose as many ideas as possible to solve the situation determined in the previous phase. The group chooses the most interesting solution and creates a prototype and draws up an action plan. This would be the sequence:

- **They collect many ideas.** They think about creating a great impact, that benefits many people and that generates a lasting change.
- **They combine and improve ideas.**
- They cooperate and co-create.
- **They land and propose a prototype.**
- They draw up an **action plan**.

## Phase 3: DO or ACT.

It is time to act. They do not remain in the mere lucubration, but they realize the projected and prototyped. It is the moment in which they show that they CAN do it. It is the most exciting stage: in it they feel stronger, that they can change the near or distant world and they do it.

- **They organize the plan**, with the list of all activities to be carried out and document the development of the idea they selected:
  - *What resources will it require and where do they come from?*
  - *How long will it take to complete the project?*
  - *Distribute tasks and assign responsibilities.*
- **They make their idea real.** They build and apply it. They work as a team **and advise** their teachers, experts or those responsible for the problem.
- **They reflect on how they change** their people and their concrete realities.

## Phase 4: SHARE.

In this last phase they spread and transmit to others the "I CAN fever". It is a very important moment, in which they share what they have done with the other classrooms of the center and with other children and young people from their country or the world, inspiring them and motivating them to undertake, like them, projects of change.

- **Involve others** in what has been done.
- **Inspire others** with the process followed or the product obtained.
- **They spread their project** in their classroom, center, neighborhood, locality, world.

- **Celebrate and share** their satisfaction and achievements.
- Gather the notes, photos, drawings, videos or project documents and **make a small video or tell their story of change** ... and upload it to the national or worldwide DFC platform ([www.dfcworld.com](http://www.dfcworld.com)).

Carrying out a Design for Change project in the classroom requires fundamental changes in the educational process: it requires giving prominence to the student, focusing on him, empowering him, trusting that he can do it. The students decide what they want to change and how they are going to do it. It is the children and young people who direct the activity and make decisions. This in turn requires a new performance of the teacher in the classroom, who stops being the one who knows everything, who speaks and directs, but who becomes instead a facilitator of the learning process. It is key that the teacher is trained in this methodology and in everything that follows, to perform well its role and achieve a good implementation of it, without interruptions, involutions or deviations. Design for Change Peru facilitates the training of teachers and other educational agents, while providing a detailed manual to implement this methodology; in turn, it gives advice to schools and teachers; on its web site projects are shared.

Design for Change favors innovation, entrepreneurship and social commitment. Students learn by doing, put into play their multiple intelligences, work cooperatively and open themselves to interdisciplinarity when working on projects. It is therefore an active methodology which combines well with and integrates smoothly into the other active methodologies. When implemented, the four basic competences, known as the 4 C's, are also applied: critical thinking, communication, creativity and collaboration.

There are many stories of change of children and young people which we can see on the website of Design for change Mexico or of DFC-World. They change their lives and that of many, reducing poverty; saving water or purifying it; eradicating *bullying* in general or in classrooms or centers; planning how to welcome refugees; fighting against forced marriage of girls or fighting for their right to education; avoiding the exclusion of their peers; proposing ways to build a culture of peace in violent contexts or in war; favoring interreligious and intercultural dialogue or respect; recycling garbage; creating welcoming spaces for meeting and dialogue; improving the conditions for learning, making schools more livable and human; allowing them to build good news for the most disadvantaged; It leads them to putting their faith into works and witnessing it.

This methodology has been chosen by the Congregation for Catholic Education (CEE) and by other Catholic Education Organizations (OIEC, USG, SCHOLAS OCCURRENTES, OMAEC, etc.), to work with children and young people on the challenges presented by the Pope Francis in the Encyclical LAUDATO Si', so that they are, in their concrete realities, those who co-create projects of change, working together to change their lives, their communities, their environmental contexts.

**For more information:**

<http://www.dfcworld.com/>

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