

Ivan Illich

Subjects: Sociology

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Ivan Illich (1926-2002) was a very well-known author, mainly in the 1970s, for his provocative publications, such as *Deschooling Society* (1970), where he proposed the eradication of the School as an institution.

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1. Introduction

The school institution, one of the most relevant and influential institutions on social life, seen as a codified and socially accepted way of responding to social needs in the form of legitimate massive schooling, is undergoing a crisis.

In the 21st century, we live in an increasingly digital society, with technology playing a central role. In this context, the need emerges to learn and apprehend diverse more specific or more transversal competences to implement in context.

Ivan Illich (1926-2002) was a very well-known author, mainly in the 1970s, for his provocative publications, such as *Deschooling Society* (1970), where he proposed the eradication of the School as an institution^[1]. Ivan Illich offered several somewhat precursor aspects, and was, also and mainly, a heavy critic of traditional schooling. This work, which caused, at the time it was published, deep waves of shock and criticism, but also a strangeness and, in some scientific and social swathes, even admiration.

According to Ivan Illich, in addition to reproducing social inequalities with the legitimization of inequalities, the School also functions as a "model of bureaucratic and class reproduction". In *Deschooling Society* (2013), Ivan Illich advocates, in a synthesis, the need for a deschooling of society as a whole, valuing informal education.

For Illich (2013),

"A good educational system should have three purposes: it should provide all who want to learn with access to available resources at any time in their lives; empower all who want to share what they know to find those who want to learn it from them; and, finally, furnish all who want to present an issue to the public with the opportunity to make their challenge known" (position 1361).

"But this would require that the educational revolution be guided by certain goals: 1. To liberate access to things by abolishing the control which persons and institutions now exercise over their educational values. 2. To liberate the sharing of skills by guaranteeing freedom to teach or exercise them on request. 3. To liberate the critical and creative resources of people by returning to individual persons the ability to call and hold meetings - an ability now increasingly monopolized by institutions which claim to speak for the people. 4. To liberate the individual from the obligation to shape his expectations to the services offered by any established profession - by providing him with the opportunity to draw on the experience of his peers and to entrust himself to the teacher, guide, adviser, or healer of his choice. Inevitably the deschooling of society will blur the distinctions between economics, education, and politics on which the stability of the present world order and the stability of nations now rest" (position 1859).

2. Purpose of Illich's Proposal

The purpose of Illich's proposal would be "education for all means education by all"^[1].

In Ivan Illich's (2013) own words,

"Educational resources are usually labelled according to educators' curricular goals. I propose to do the contrary, to label four different approaches which enable the student to gain access to any educational resource which may help him to define and achieve his own goals: 1. Reference Services to Educational Objects - which facilitate access to things or processes used for formal learning. Some of these things can be reserved for this purpose, stored in libraries, rental

agencies, laboratories, and showrooms like museums and theatres; others can be in daily use in factories, airports, or on farms, but made available to students as apprentices or on off hours. 2. Skill Exchanges - which permit persons to list their skills, the conditions under which they are willing to serve as models for others who want to learn these skills, and the addresses at which they can be reached. 3. Peer-Matching - a communications network which permits persons to describe the learning activity in which they wish to engage, in the hope of finding a partner for the inquiry. 4. Reference Services to Educators-at-Large - who can be listed in a directory giving the addresses and self-descriptions of professionals, paraprofessionals, and free-lancers, along with conditions of access to their services" (position 1419).

For Illich, the de-institutionalisation of society implies concurrently transformations and other social institutions beyond the School.

Concluding,

1. Illich's proposal to replace strict schooling with (self)training networks in a society that is increasingly digitalised and linked by the internet may offer potential benefits, and it is worth, at least, of an in-depth analysis;
2. Provocative scholars that allow us to get out of any ideologically and socially delimited system have the merit of helping to provide instruments that enable a better understanding of the present and, consequently, a rationale for the options for the future. Ivan Illich is one of these scholars.

Note: Text based on Serpa, S., Santos, A. I., & Ferreira, C. M. (2020). Contributions of Ivan Illich to Education in a Digital Society. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 9(2), 23. doi: 10.36941/ajis-2020-0019T. For further development, see Serpa, S., Santos, A. I., & Ferreira, C. M. (2020) and the references mentioned on it.

References

1. Illich, I. (2013/1970). *Deschooling society*. Kindle Edition.

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