

**Declaration of the Societat Catalana de Pedagogia (SCP),  
a subsidiary of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, in relation to scientific,  
pedagogical and social bases of the Catalan school and language immersion.**

The people of Catalonia currently live in an exceptional situation of language contact, as there are more than two hundred and sixty languages present, many of them also in the schools. So note, among others, the Group of Linguistic Anthropology, the Study Group of Endangered Languages (GELA), CIEMEN, Linguapax, UNESCO Center of Catalonia, and so on.

Since many years ago, Catalonia and other Catalan-speaking lands have been constructing a pedagogical thinking of their own – From Ramon Llull to Alexandre Galí, passing by Joan Lluís Vives, Baldiri Reixac and Francesc Flos i Calcat, to mention just a few examples. A pedagogical thinking whereby the first experiences of school were done in Catalan in the first third of the twentieth century.

The school is responsible for the education and the introduction to a universal culture as well as to the country's culture. Fulfilling this mission contributes to education. That is why it is the most appropriate via for awakening in every person a favourable attitude to live together promoting social cohesion.

**Since the end of the sixties of the twentieth century with, complete prohibition of the teaching of the Catalan language, a school in Catalan for all boys and girls has not only been postulated as a pedagogical project but also, at the same time, as a social project.** "The school of a country must be in the language of this country and for all children, regardless of their family language", stated from la Delegació d'Ensenyament Català d'Òmnium Cultural (DEC).

The Escola de Mestres Rosa Sensat, starting in 1970 and with the relative permissiveness of the government, addressed the problem of the language treatment offering to families the option of teaching in Catalan language, first in separate groups that learned in Catalan and Spanish, but soon within the same classroom to prevent social division, eventhough it was a very expensive system for teachers and very inefficient for the students of the Castilian language option.

Gradually, schools gave way to the education in Catalan for all children: "To achieve a good education of the Spanish and Catalan languages for all, the use of the Catalan language as a vehicular language of teaching and education in the school and civilian union of the sons of natives and immigrants" (Marta Mata, *Perspectives*, number. 1, UNESCO, 1985).

**To a large extent, the current model of Catalan school in language and content in our system, although remotely, is an heir of that educational, didactic and social proposal of the DEC where, in the second half of the eighties converged all schools and all the professional and social sectors.** It was years later, having overcome initial uncertainties, in view of the efficacious progress of all students in both languages, when, driven by groups with outside interests, some families asked for education in the Castilian language for their children (1994, in Tarragonès).

The Institut d'Estudis Catalans, national academy of sciences and humanities, has approved several statements on the Catalan language, including one in 1996 which deals with the unity of the language and says **"the conviction that in questions of language, it is desirable that the political action be in accordance with the scientific knowledge"**. In this sense, the Societat Catalana de Pedagogia has made public the pedagogical reasons for the teaching in the Catalan language as it is the most suitable model for personal and social development of all children and young people in the countries where Catalan is the native language.

In the multitude of studies that have been made about the model of school in Catalan language and contents on the part of the scholars of our universities and many other countries, it is unequivocally clear that the principles that define it show full positive accordance with law, science, pedagogy and sociology.

Most of the schools of Catalonia and those that have the possibility in the other Catalan-speaking countries (either Valencian or Balear) applied the language immersion as a method to make possible the incorporation of students of other languages in the Catalan educational model in language and content. **The SCP endorses the language immersion as a procedure to teach a living language present in society to which cannot access certain social groups.** In this way, the school puts them in intense and early contact with this language, Catalan, which for them is the second one. The intention is that this language is equated in knowledge and use to their own family language. **The knowledge of the two official languages -Catalan and Spanish- is always guaranteed.** It is to add a new code to develop a capacity, not a replacement or to abandon the initial language. This is and has always been the base for the immersion; that no teacher, woman or man, has ever forgotten and so no child should renounce their family language, the language of affective bond, in which roots their broader linguistic competence.

It is a fundamental right of the people to freely decide the educational model that they want for the formation of their citizens (Postman, 1996). **The educational model must meet: the right to education in the language of its country which must be guaranteed to all citizens, the right to its transmission to the immigrant population already incorporated into the society (Lambert, 1994: universal**

**declaration of linguistic rights, DUDL, 1996) and also the right to non-discrimination or separation for reasons of linguistic diversity (Galí, 1931).**

**Scientific endorsement in Psycholinguistics and Psychology of the Catalan model of education, the Catalan school of language and content with language immersion is clear and based on the studies by researchers.** Those of our universities: Miquel Siguan, Ignasi Vila, Joaquim Arnau, Josep Maria Serra, F. Xavier Vila, Maria Fornés, Joaquim Arenas, Josep Maria Artigal, among others. Foreign universities count on the work of Wallace Lambert, Renzo Titone, William F. Mackey, Joshua Fishman, Jim Cummins, Christer Lauren, Claude Germain, Raymond Leblanc and many other researchers of maximum prestige.

The congresses of bilingual education that have taken place regularly for more than thirty years (Sitges, Vic, Barcelona and Girona) have served to contrast our teaching model, and make it known to researchers from all over the world. **The reactions of the international scientific community have always been positive and have given their support, before the empirical evidence provided. The neurobiology of brain and language has made important discoveries in the last twenty years that endorse the model applied.**

Journals such as *Nature*, *Neuroscience* (January 2000) or *Science* (October 2009) show the location of speaking and comprehension in the small Broca area with intracranial electrophysiology procedure and show that this area of the brain may make the whole process in thousandths of a second. If a child learns two languages at the same time, this location is close to each other and more distant if the second has been learned years later. It has also been observed that languages that share semantic roots or composition rules commonly tend to be localized close together. Bilingual or multilingual individuals think directly in one or the other language intuitively and that is more difficult when one learns with educational systems more grammaticalized applied to adults. "Bilingualism is good. Makes the brain stronger. It is an exercise for the brain", explains the psychologist Ellen Bialystok (*The New York Times*, May 2011).

Concreting the model will be conducted by each school as an institution in the legitimate regulatory framework, and this one cannot establish pre-set hours, activities and prescriptive forms of grouping of students. It's up to each school in its entirety and the pedagogical direction to analyze the sociocultural and linguistic reality of the students, to develop their own linguistic project, to make the organizational decisions according to the human and material resources, to detect the resources it needs, to check the functionality and effectiveness and to account for its results.

The pedagogical foundations of the school system, the model of Catalan school in language and content, contribute to forming citizens integrated into society and rooted in the country where they live (Joan Bardina, 1906; Eladi Homs, 1913; Alexandre Galí, 1922; Andrew Cohen and Merrill Swain, 1976) and to practice an education that, related

to the environment, considers the way to develop a child's skills and make them know and love the country to transform it positively (Francesc Flos i Calcat ,1922; Artur Martorell, 1932) and so educate the people, as the school, in their teaching practice, should help to transform society (Eugeni d'Ors, 1917; Alexandre Galí, 1922; Joan Triadú, 2008).

**Considering the Catalan school as a training project for citizens, from the sociological foundations is appropriate to give all the boys and girls the same instruments in order to develop in the same conditions, not making the language an instrument of discrimination or separation.** And so it can encourage the integration of all children and young people in Catalonia in the same community as a global will of the country and, for a primary mission of the school, helping to build a single people that must have the language as the most sensitive link. (Kathryn Woolard,1998; Margarida Muset, 2008; Fèlix Martí, 2011).

**In conclusion, the SCP** -regardless of the policy options and the legal interpretations that have periodically been present in public debate- **affirms that the model of Catalan school and the teaching of languages in practice ensures the learning of the official languages to all the young citizens of Catalonia, empowers for the learning of foreign languages and, at the same time, promotes the maximum personal and social development.** For the same reasons, the SCP expresses its support to the equivalent linguistic models that advocate the educational community in the other countries of the Catalan language.

Barcelona, 5 of October of 2011. World Teachers' Day: professors and teachers.