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Human Right to education: horizons and meanings in the post-pandemic



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por el Derecho
a la Educaci3n

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AMERICA LATINA *en movimiento*

Human Right to education: horizons and meanings in the post-pandemic

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Coedition **CLADE ALAI**



Within the framework of its 11th General Assembly, the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE, for its Spanish acronym) has carried out a series of meetings to reflect on key issues of its strategic agenda. With the broad participation of national, regional and international members, we have taken on the task of identifying challenges and horizons that, in 2020, urge us to deepen our commitment to public education at the level of human dignity for all. We share here some of the keys that cause us concern, but at the same time, push us on to sustain our struggle.

Public education: our banner

Nelsy Lizarazo

For nearly twenty years, CLADE has raised the banner of public, free, secular, relevant, inclusive and lifelong education. We are aware of the multiple cracks, inequalities, inequities and absences of public education in most of our region, but we also know that it is there, in public education, that it is possible to ensure the full exercise of the human right to education for all. The period of the pandemic has brought to the attention of all those willing to see them, the enormous debts that our States owe to education. It has cruelly shown us the deep gaps between the rural areas and the cities, between girls and boys, between socio-economic levels, between whites, mestizos, indigenous people and people of African descent, not to mention the class divides that historically cut across our societies. Similarly, this period has allowed us to observe new nuances and situations about which it is necessary to warn and act decisively and quickly:

- More than 160 million students have interrupted their educational courses in our region. The figure is scandalous and the reasons are multiple, but it is clear that, after decades of advancing in overcoming it, we are now once again facing a gap in access to education at all stages and cycles. Rapid recovery to pre-pandemic levels of access, in safe and adequate conditions, is urgent.
- One of the factors which has had a strong impact on this situation is the so-called digital divide which, moreover, has shown us its various faces: that of access, that of connectivity,

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that of the absence of free public internet services, that of the lack of sufficient devices in families. But also, that of the limitations in knowledge and the difficulties in handling technology and virtual tools in large sectors of our societies. Alternatives for access, connectivity and use of the internet are indispensable.

- The working conditions of our teachers have deteriorated and become more precarious. More working hours, with minimal infrastructure and training, often using their own economic resources. Time overloads, especially for women, divided between their teaching and their domestic work. Unemployed teachers due to reduced education budgets. Decent conditions and comprehensive training for our teachers are necessary.
- A decrease in public education budgets, which were already insufficient. ECLAC estimates that there are around 9% less budget resources available for education, giving rise to a scenario of austerity, debt and cutbacks, which must be resisted and clear alternatives proposed. Tax justice and monitoring of investment in education are such clear alternatives.
- New models of privatization and business that are expressed by families looking for solutions so that their children can continue studying, teachers paying for the internet to be able to give their classes, private foundations offering standardized educational packages, among others. Creative proposals for responses from public education policies are essential.

Public education is today more threatened than ever and CLADE is raising this banner higher than ever.

Facing the emergency: intersectionality and integrality

In each person or more precisely, in each body, multiple discriminations, violence and inequalities intersect. Gender, place of origin, disabilities, socio-economic status and even age, make up complex exclusions in the face of which the voices of indigenous peoples, migrants, people of African descent, women and LGBTIQ people rise up from all corners of the continent demanding education policies committed to overcoming all these forms of oppression/exclusion. Public education systems that work from and with differences and that overcome and help us to overcome, from the outset, the colonial, patriarchal and racist matrices that are functional to a perverse economic model.

Meanwhile, today, more than ever, it is necessary to actively participate in the design and implementation of comprehensive and safe plans for a return to school, from early childhood to higher education, without forgetting of course the response to the educational needs of young people and adults. This will only be possible by listening to the voices of the legal subjects themselves, that is, children, adolescents, their families, teachers, young people and adults who demand learning opportunities. In each case according to their needs, their contexts, their demands.

Education is in a state of emergency, but it is no good responding to it just anyhow, nor with “more of the same”. This is key at all levels and stages, starting from early childhood, through youth, adults - all levels that have been addressed from their specificities in our discussions.

It is true that we are in a state of emergency and it is perhaps precisely for this reason that the responses must be collective, comprehensive and intelligent.

The virtual and education: the Internet as a free/open public good

Here a debate and a complex problem arise for the full exercise of the human right to education. Not that it did not already exist, but it had not been given the relevance it has. In our reflections, we have emphasised the need to democratise the internet, to define it as a right and as a public good. At the same time, we are not indifferent to the reflection on how to guarantee this connectivity without handing over our information, this precious commodity, to the large technological corporations, which already feed their business models thanks to precisely this, our information. Thus, the proposal of public virtual platforms, of digital sovereignty, of data protection, of technological autonomy, is gaining ground in our agenda.

On the other hand, a new form of literacy is on our horizon: digital literacy, that of algorithms... always with a critical and transforming perspective, so that our teachers take over the technology and make it one more tool for the transformative processes of our reality for which we will continue to fight.

All rights for all people: intersecting our struggles

Once again, we have shown that multiple rights converge in the human right to education. It is an enabling right but it is also a synergistic right. When educational institutions were closed, millions of children were left without food, for example. And now that safe return is being considered, in many places it is not possible, because there is no clean water, for example. Our struggle for educational change goes beyond the specific field and is articulated with much broader, strategic, political struggles.

We are called upon and committed to interlinkage, to knotting ourselves together and becoming entangled with movements, collectives, organizations and their agendas of struggle, with an inter-sectoral and also global perspective, which unites us with the entire Global South, at an timely historical moment for not returning to normality... in order to construct another reality which we had better not call normality... in this way we avoid, from the outset, the binaries to which this system has accustomed us. (*Translation ALAI*)



**Campaña
Latinoamericana
por el Derecho
a la Educación**

The Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE, by its Spanish acronym) is a pluralistic network of civil society organizations with a presence in 18 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, which promotes social mobilization and political advocacy to defend the human right to education.

Our mission is to defend the human right to a transformative, public, secular and free educa-

tion for all, throughout life, as a responsibility of the State. An education that responds to the dimensions of availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability, that recognizes diversity, promotes citizenship and the realization of human rights, as well as the overcoming of all forms of discrimination.

Contact: clade@redclade.org
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The following morning

Vernor Muñoz

We have been asked to share some comments on the right to education in the context of the post-pandemic, so the first thing to say is that, while there is no clarity on the effectiveness of experimental treatments and vaccines, we do not give up hope that COVID-19 will never become endemic, like influenza, HIV and chickenpox. In this sense, the spaces of our certainties do not allow us to foresee how things will be the following morning and everything seems to indicate that the world can recover from this hard blow and, at the same time, that this experience should lead to new attitudes, demands and community and political purposes, which undoubtedly include the field of education.

States have an indisputable obligation to guarantee the right to education even in times of emergency and especially to ensure access to learning opportunities. COVID-19 produced a global health emergency, which in turn led to a series of concurrent crises in the economic, financial, institutional and social spheres. We saw how education systems closed their doors and, when possible, switched to non-face-to-face modalities, without having the resources and preparation to do so.

Governments have tried to ensure that their response to the pandemic is equitable, inclusive and rights-based, but this attempt has been ineffective in many countries. The impact of the pandemic threatens the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including SDG 4, as school closures in [130 countries](#) still affect nearly one billion students, further entrenching patterns of inequality and exclusion. Ensuring accessibility means establishing plans to reopen schools, as well as urgently attracting those who would be excluded, once schools resume their face-to-face functions.

From an economic viewpoint, disaster is weighing on many countries, and especially on the informal sector: an estimated two billion women workers are in the informal sector, corresponding to 61.2% of the world's employed population¹, at permanent risk of vulnerability and precariousness. In fact, according to the International Labour Organisation, informality has a strong adverse impact on income adequacy, occupational safety and health and obviously also on the public budget.

Nevertheless, depending on a successful renegotiation or (less likely) cancellation of debt and a relatively short-lived COVID-19 collapse, the World Bank expects economic activity to recover slightly in the fourth quarter of 2020 and recovery to continue in 2021-2022².

A crisis within a crisis

Among these one billion students referred to above, the COVID-19 outbreak is affecting

1 https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_626831/lang-en/index.htm

2 Banco Mundial. La economía en los tiempos del COVID-19, 12 abril de 2020.

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girls and boys, young women and men differently. In other words, the pandemic has not hit everyone equally, but rather made more visible the inequality, inequity and neglect of social sectors that have historically been discriminated against and excluded. In fact, some countries are facing COVID-19 as a crisis within a crisis, as the disease imposes new constraints on societies already suffering from economic fragility, war, occupation or extreme poverty.

We thus see that health care is only one dimension of the necessary responses, because policies and interventions must also be protective of human rights, especially of the poorest and most vulnerable people, including people with disabilities and those already affected by humanitarian crises. In other words, they must respond to the different needs, contextual realities and risks that people face.

Education is an enabling human right and, at the same time, is part of a social protection framework that includes the right to health, information, work and integral human safety. These rights cannot be guaranteed in isolation. The COVID-19 pandemic shows that the rate



Children playing in harmony and equality at La Granja School Center. - San Salvador, El Salvador. Photo: Jazmin Elena

of economic growth will decrease globally and that the crisis will increase geopolitical and technological rivalry. However, projections of the social impact of the pandemic do not show key data on the terrible consequences it will have on people's lives, especially on the most vulnerable, and on patterns of poverty and inequality.

In terms of the availability of education in the post-pandemic context, governments must ensure that all economic stimulus packages are equitable, inclusive and explicitly pro-poor. It is important to note that many developing countries do not have sufficient resources to respond to the pandemic, as their health systems are weak and they also lack social safety nets and financial resources

to provide a fiscal and monetary response to counter the recession. At the same time, many industrialized countries have put in place sanctions and restrictions that have negative consequences for developing countries.

There is therefore an urgent need for action, both nationally and globally, to release resources and ensure that they are targeted at countries and populations in need. Immediate solutions include debt relief and increased official development assistance (ODA).

These difficult times must not encourage the commercialisation trends and instrumentalist approaches to education, which have unfortunately increased as a result of weakened public funding, proving that the voracity of privatisation meets no limits in emergency situations.

In the dimension of acceptability and adaptability of education, there is particular concern

about the risks associated with the tools and platforms used for online and distance teaching and learning, including threats to education as a public good and the safety and integrity of students and teachers. At this time, strengthening public education systems should be seen as an essential part of a more robust public response to protect the lives and dignity of individuals, including ensuring that measures taken throughout the response to COVID-19 contribute to the strengthening of the education system, not only during the crisis but also after the reopening of schools.

Prioritizing education

Civil society organizations play a key role in supporting governments during the crisis, including raising awareness of protection measures, disseminating official information, activating networks to support the most vulnerable sectors, facilitating distance education and producing resources for teaching and learning.

The Global Campaign for Education has called upon national governments and donors to prioritise education in all emergency responses with immediate effect and to include education in their COVID-19 response policies and ensure continuity of learning and the return to school for all people.

We believe that governments must ensure the continued provision of services, including the distribution of meals, protection from violence and abuse, the establishment of clear referral routes, and provide comprehensive education in sexuality as one mechanism to, among other things, reduce gender-based violence and the incidence of early and unwanted pregnancies and marriages.

The Campaign has also called on donor governments to fulfil their commitment to allocate at least 0.7% of GDP in official development aid and to ensure that aid is channelled to the sectors most in need, including education.

Low-income countries' external debt payments to all creditors must be cancelled urgently to unlock funds in developing countries' budgets, and emergency funding must not put countries at greater risk of over-indebtedness.

It is also essential that teachers be at the centre of the education response through their participation in the design and development of emergency measures, and that they be sufficiently supported and prepared to teach in safe and protective environments when schools and universities reopen, with their salaries and jobs maintained at all times.

The COVID-19 pandemic has left great lessons that we must make the most of. Now more than ever we appreciate the need to promote crisis and post-crisis assessment plans to guide new forms of social and economic response, especially the role of education during and after emergencies. These plans must always be transformative of the inequitable social environment, protective of human rights, and established with deep understanding and constant socio-cultural and gender consultation.

Civil society organisations, youth-led organisations and teachers' unions have a key role to play in bringing education back to the goals set by international human rights law. This role includes the right to protest and to receive prompt answers to demands emanating from social organisations. States, for their part, have the obligation to be accountable for their obligations and to progressively advance in the realization of the right to education for all. *(Translation ALAI)*

Ruptures, plural voices and the struggle for rights: Horizons for overcoming educational inequalities

Giovanna Modé and Laura Giannecchini

The multiple historical and structural inequalities in Latin America and the Caribbean make up one of the most critical cruxes in the realization of the human right to education for all. The data show that throughout the region, educational opportunities change according to socioeconomic conditions, race, ethnicity, gender, origin, or geographic location. In addition, there are a number of obstacles faced by people with disabilities and those who migrate to another country or move within their own country to access and complete their education. The Covid-19 pandemic lays bare and intensifies this profoundly unjust dynamic, revealing well-known inequalities, which are interconnected and amplified, as well as highlighting new challenges.

According to the recently launched UNESCO Global Education Monitoring report - *Latin America and the Caribbean: Inclusion and Education: All means all*, in 21 countries of the region, students belonging to the richest quintile of the population are, on average, five times



*"Children, not mothers". This mural won a contest in Bolivia in the framework of the "week of prevention of pregnancy in girls, adolescents and young people".
Mural: Noemi Ruth Romero León. Photo: Gabriel Villarpando*

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more likely to complete upper secondary school education than those belonging to the poorest 20%. The school attendance rate among adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 who are of African descent is lower than that of non-African descent groups in seven of the 11 countries where data are available—and here the lack of data is already another concern. In seven countries with available data, LGBT students reported facing hostility at school. Only 16% of the countries provide inclusive education for people with disabilities—the rest opt for segregationist combinations, which do not respond adequately to education from a rights perspective. Such barriers exist not only in access to school, but also, once they are in the system, students have to deal with irrelevant content, discriminatory dynamics, and violent environments.

The pandemic, in turn, highlighted the digital gaps in the educational field, which were previously present but are now gaining centrality for the realization of the human right to education. According to ECLAC, 46% of children between the ages of 5 and 12 in the region are not connected. The scenario is even more dramatic in the lowest income households of Bolivia, El Salvador, Paraguay and Peru, where more than 90% do not have access to the Internet, pointing to the urgency of policies to democratize connectivity, with emphasis on access in marginal urban, rural, and Amazonian areas. This is a new vocabulary in regional debates on educational policies, which also involves the creation of public platforms with open access.

Historical challenges

The debate on inequalities in the field of education policy is not new. Especially from the beginning of this century, the issue became part of the education policy agenda in our region. Ministries of Education, multilateral organizations, and civil society organizations have produced a wide range of research and information on the subject, which has given it greater expression and visibility, which in itself is an important first step. In fact, over the past 20 years, general data shows significant progress in access to and completion of education, especially in primary education, as well as the formulation of laws and policies that seek to guarantee gender parity in access to education and expand access for specific groups, such as persons with disabilities, native peoples and ethnic minorities. In other cases, there were efforts to contribute directly to curricula, including, for example, Afro-Latin American culture and history, which for many years were invisible within educational institutions.

Far from resolving such a structural issue in our societies, between successes and mistakes, these experiences made it clear that overcoming inequalities depends on a renewed commitment to the development of laws, policies, curricula, practical and concrete teacher training processes, and finally adequate financing of education. In all these dimensions, there must also be a clear intention and commitment to break with processes that come from afar and are mixed with the very history of our Latin American and Caribbean States, their colonial, racist and patriarchal logic, and their exclusionary projects. Our educational systems were built on the idea of homogeneity, which is related, in turn, to the formation itself of nation-states and a certain national identity, which in this case excludes references to indigenous, Afro-descendant and immigrant reality in our region. It is the legacy of a modern binary logic, in which everything that does not belong to the dominant “model” is erased, eliminated, and devalued.

In spite of the progress made in the past five years, once again there has been a regression, with neoliberal overtones, to a new upsurge of racism, a strengthening of religious fundamentalisms and of ultra-rightwing positions that go hand in hand with totalitarian and

exclusionary stances. The arrival of the pandemic coexists with an extremely challenging context - and there can be no doubt that the struggle for educational rights more than ever must be framed within a broader political struggle, one of transformation, and one that has as its horizon more just and egalitarian societies.

The case of Brazil is symptomatic: in recent years, the growth of religious groups advocating against the rights of women and LGBTI people led to the growth of a viewpoint in the country that schools were instigating a dynamic of “indoctrination” and what they call “gender ideology” - and that in this case a neutral, technical school were what is needed. The ideas took shape in an organized movement that became evident in the approval of various municipal education plans, and also in the national curriculum base. They tried, by all means, and not without meeting resistance, to eliminate the mere mention of the word “gender” in the orientation documents of educational policy. The example, which is repeated to a greater or lesser extent in various countries of our region - with great resistance to including comprehensive sex education, for example - shows to what extent the educational debate is interrelated with social, political and rights struggles, challenging the movement for the right to education to assume an intersectoral approach and construction, interconnected with the struggles against racism and sexism, and for health, food security, promotion of decent work, income redistribution, and various others.



*“It is a privilege to educate yourself about racism instead of experiencing it”.
Bogota, Colombia. March 21 2020. March against racism, for rights,
cultural and labor equity for Afro-descendants. Photo: Andrés Ramos*

An intersectional outlook

If the subject is complex, then it requires a broad outlook and comprehensive responses. Another fundamental contribution in this sense comes from the intersectional perspective, a contribution especially from black feminism of recent decades. An outlook that seeks to understand and make visible how the structures of inequality and oppression operate inseparably and combine in each context. In other words, it is fundamental to recognize that the

indicators of difference and hierarchies in our societies - especially the categories of class, race and gender - are not neutral, but rather have been socially constructed and cannot be understood in isolation from our colonial, slavery-based and patriarchal past. The fact that native peoples, peasants, Afro-descendants, women, people with disabilities, migrants, or any other discriminated group face unfavorable conditions of existence on a daily basis is related to the social construction of these indicators of difference between dominant and dominated groups, which emphasize prejudices and stereotypes. Furthermore, these are inseparable categories that cause cumulative situations of discrimination, which explains why women - despite having achieved a higher level of schooling when compared to men - continue to receive lower wages in the labor market or to assume an uneven share of domestic work and family care.

As well as careful analysis of data, this outlook requires listening attentively to the voices of its political subjects, the first persons in singular and plural, narrating their experiences, world views, proposals, resistance strategies and struggles for rights. Throughout the various meetings that marked the 11th Regional Assembly of CLADE, we listened to testimonies such as that of Daniela Ester Guzman Huenchuleo, 23 years old, Mapuche from Chile. For her, segregation, abandonment and precariousness are part of the reality of education, which it is assumed will affect those who were born in some village, slum or favela in Latin America. And if we add to this the fact that you belong to a native people, these factors increase considerably: "here, being Mapuche implies facing a history that has not valued your identity, that has treated your ancestors with violence, and therefore entering a system that far from respecting your identity has contributed to folklorizing your culture". Or the testimony of the young Afro-Mexican David Alejandro Gómez Arriaga, founder of the Center for Afro-Mexican Studies Tembembe and member of the National Network of Afro-Mexican Youth: "Thinking about racism as an act of structural violence gives us the opportunity to formulate various defense processes, starting from intersectional positions to combat violence and discrimination that affect the quality of life of our people. (...) In the educational environment, the decolonization of education through ethno-pedagogy that challenges Western colonialism is a starting-point for political advocacy and community self-care".

In closing

Thinking about ways of overcoming the multiple forms of inequality, in and through education, is indeed a synthesis of many disputes, and among them the meaning we desire for education, in particular for public education. They are essentially political disputes. Who participates in educational policies? Who defines their content and meaning? What is valid knowledge? What is it for? Revisiting the prolific set of available and ratified rights instruments points us to an important path that, since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, has reaffirmed the purpose of education as development of the person and human dignity, and also the promotion of the fulfillment of all rights and fundamental freedoms.

Within the framework of the search for the fulfillment of these purposes, which can only be achieved through the effective participation of political subjects and from a truly inclusive perspective, then diversity and overcoming inequalities and asymmetric power relations will necessarily become structural stakes. If our challenge is to reinvent the meaning of education, based on multiple voices and on an equal footing, then we have a horizon. (*Translation ALAI*)

What is being done?
What can educators do?

Youth and adult education in times of pandemic

Education Policy Advocacy Group - CEAAL

I. The Scenario

Throughout the world and Latin America and the Caribbean, we are facing the consequences of what began as a health crisis, caused by Covid-19, which today is a crisis with serious consequences in the economic, educational and environmental fields and that of care for life and nature. It is making even more evident the weak public policies in health, education, employment, among the most important ones; and thus deteriorating the living conditions of millions of people, especially the poor, the marginalized urban areas, indigenous people in the rural areas, Amazonians and people of African descent.

The isolation measures bring the existing asymmetries to light and further exacerbate them, leading to an educational setback that tends to deepen inequalities, mainly due to the economic and social conditions of the vast majority of the population.

This situation leads us to reflect on the fragility of the capitalist system (which in its neoliberal variant has destroyed education, work, health, labor rights) and demonstrates its instability, its inability to solve the most urgent and pressing needs. At the same time, it deepens the existing inequalities and precariousness in this situation (material, social and cultural inequalities).

We are facing a moment of crisis, which, in its most Gramscian sense, is equivalent to opportunity: this pandemic places us before the historic challenge and the possibility of the emergence of something new, of the emergence of new paradigms, new frameworks and - why not - new social relations that could allow us to build another possible world.

However, we must recognize the possibility of a resurgence of capitalist hegemony in its most authoritarian and violent forms. In this sense, the challenge is to not renounce a hopeful perspective from Popular Education, but also not to be naive but rather to seek a full understanding of the problems that the pandemic has revealed.

This document is the result of collaborative work between different members of the Educational Policy Advocacy Group (GIPE, for its Spanish acronym), which is part of the Council of Popular Education of Latin America and the Caribbean (CEAAL). <http://ceaal.org/v3/>. Fernando Santana, Rosa María Goldar (Argentina), Timothy Ireland (Brazil), Jorge Osorio (Chile); Angélica Paniagua, Felipe Rivas (El Salvador), Francisco Cabrera (Guatemala), Yadira Rocha (Nicaragua), Nélida Céspedes (Peru), Miriam Camilo (Dominican Republic).

II. Youth and Adult Education (Y&AE)

The education of young people, adults and older adults is characterized not only by the age of those who are outside the education system, but also by their social condition. There is a close relationship between social class and living conditions and the possibilities of completing their studies. Thus, it is not surprising that the popular social groups, the marginalized, workers, women, young people, are the main beneficiaries of this proposal, which, nonetheless, continues to be governed in its logic by the parameters of primary and secondary education and therefore perpetuates inequality and the possibilities of permanence.

In other words, they are those that the system has already excluded. They are the ones who the system hits once again in this present situation of isolation. This population is in a situation of vulnerability in every sense of the word.

At the dawn of the 21st century, in the context of the fourth industrial revolution and of the emergence of artificial intelligence, it is these same students who find themselves left out of this process. Access to technology is only instrumental and minimal, and is not available to all: access to these devices remains a matter of class privilege, and is far from being a guaranteed right for the entire population.

Although the States have implemented several social plans in order to alleviate the crisis, these proposals are far from solving the structural violence of inequality, much less the problem of hunger or unequal access to goods, services and a decent life.

The local and global scenario forces us as popular educators to confront new challenges and to face up to a new situation, which not only aggravates the conditions of economic and social inequality, but also deepens the already existing educational gap.

Doubly excluded

Young people and adults who enter Y&AE are studying now because in their childhood they were excluded from formal systems, whether due to poverty, marginalization, racism or machismo, or all of these causes combined.

When Y&AE programs should be reaching out to them to learn and improve their lives, once again they are not being prioritized and very often, they are not even being considered. Because Y&AE funding is insufficient to reach everyone. Because Y&AE programs are targeted and there is no way to reach more people. In other words, it was not possible before and it is not possible now.

III. What is being done in different countries?

We conducted a survey of how Y&AE was being addressed in the context of Covid-19 in several countries of the region such as: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Peru, and the Dominican Republic, based on seven reports compiled by members of GIPE-CEAAL.

In general terms, we find that, as regards educational policy, little is being said about the situation of young people and adults in this educational emergency. The official proposals by the State do not contemplate a particular way of working with this sector of the population. Instead, they point to a certain democratization of access to education, through the elaboration of booklets for primary and secondary education (in order to reach the most remote

territories of the local geography) and the generation of audiovisual or radio content, which is presented as a substitute for teachers: classes continue; the Ministry of Education educates through these devices.

However, if we speak of a hegemonic proposal within the framework of the State's decision, it assumes virtuality. That is to say, that teachers are in charge of replacing the face-to-face coursework by means of digital platforms, which often become the best example of bank-like education, to the extent that they favor a type of education that is measurable, in terms of amounts of work, knowledge is presented as an accumulation of watchwords, while the process of reflection on it, in the best of cases, takes place through the teacher, who unilaterally explains what he/she considers to be the most important things.

There is talk of “pedagogical continuity”, as if the usual cognitive situation that occurs in the face-to-face exchange with others could be transferred to this new scenario of virtual reality. In other words, when classes are suspended, it is the obligation of educators to guarantee the educational act, even when they do not have the minimum requirements to do so. This situation is also evidence of the marginal place that youth and adult education has always occupied in terms of educational policy.

IV. Responses to Y&AE

Several issues can be identified that characterize Y&AE responses to the health and social crisis of COVID 19:

- Immediate adaptation to remote education through various available communication technologies.
- Development of learning guides and materials for all students, both for those connected to the Internet and for those who must receive these materials at home.
- Suspension of evaluation procedures and preparation of formative evaluation materials for the possible return to face-to-face classes.
- Attention to the emotional and social welfare needs of students through psycho-social professionals.
- Mechanisms to offer students and their families food assistance.



“For me, violence is an act by which one or more men prohibit those from another social class from BEING. There is the lack of love” (Paulo Freire).
Alexander Reyes (Nicaragua)

- Reinforcement of the teaching community's capacity to react autonomously.
- Rethinking the capacities that are necessary in Y&AE in a time of social, health and climate transition, which makes it necessary to take a close look at the new Y&AE curricular bases (still in the process of approval).



“More libraries. Less torture centers”. After a night of riots and fires in the CALs (police units), citizens of Bogota took over the spaces to turn them into popular libraries (10/09/2020) Photo: Andrés Ramos (Colombia)

V. Challenges

This situation must necessarily pose anew the role that we as popular educators play in society and the debate that we must hold with respect to the whole educational system. The responses implemented fail to consider the specifics of this modality, nor do they make it possible to declare the universality of education as a human right, regardless of the age range.

The following challenges can be recognized at the regional level:

Challenges of meaning¹

- To stop seeing Y&AE as a remedial or subsidiary modality or subsystem and to see it (in terms of tension) as the modality that constitutes the guarantor of lifelong education. This will help to move away from the view that there is only one time (in life) to study. That is to say, to attribute to Y&AE a “restitutive” character of a right that was not fulfilled in normality. And what must be questioned is this supposed normality of one time or space to study.
- To understand that Y&AE and formal education systems are spaces where it is possible to exercise the dispute of meanings and orientations and to create counter hegemonies that are linked to the processes of societal disputes towards projects of fairer, more egalitarian societies, civilizing models that lead us to confront multiple oppressions and from there the political and ethical dimension of popular education around Y&AE.

¹ Desafíos de sentidos. Contribution of Rosa María Goldar in the virtual Seminar organized by GIPE, entitled: EPJA y Educación Popular en países de América Latina en tiempos de pandemia. July 9 2020. <http://ceaal.org/v3/nblogepja-conversatorio-epja-y-eppandemia/>

- To recognize that the diversity of Y&AE subjects expresses inequalities of various kinds and not only as a synonym of “poverty”. And, therefore, to be able to approach the educational processes of Y&AE from the intersectionality of multiple oppressions and inequalities: class, but also ethnic, sexual, age, place of residence, among others.

General challenges

- To demand that the States, as guarantors of rights, in all their entities, ensure intersectoral policy measures that interconnect the economy, health, education, decent work, food sovereignty, especially for those in marginal urban, rural and Amazonian areas, with a gender and intercultural approach.
- To demand the fulfillment of measures that guarantee the right to education and public policies that take into account the real subjects who are recipients of proposals for Y&AE, is a historic requirement of the moment.
- To demand territorial work linked to community education because it responds to the needs and demands of organizations and individuals to build an educating society, by sharing knowledge, self-care, strengthening bonds of solidarity and strengthening citizen values.
- To develop campaigns that defend a gender perspective, to ensure respect for the human dignity of women, girls and boys, confronting patriarchy.
- To develop policies for the democratization of connectivity as a form of democratization of our countries, especially for marginal urban, rural, Amazonian and Afro-descendant areas.
- To demand the financing of Y&AE at a time when it is decreasing in the education sector, because without resources it will not be possible to face the deep crisis of this modality.

For popular educators

- - We must think about what education we want and where we want it to go. That is to say, it is not a question of fighting for a capitalist education that continues to leave out the most neglected sectors of society. It is about building a new education, that is more egalitarian, more humanitarian, that does not reproduce the coloniality of knowledge, that does not reproduce patriarchy, that allows for the construction of other social relations in pursuit of the fight for a fairer and more humane world. We must generate a great pedagogical movement that includes all the actors linked to the educational community to think of another education in the frameworks of current inequalities and the fourth industrial revolution.
- - We must start from our realities towards a common horizon, building bridges and dialogues with popular educators and critical educators who seek other ways to build another society through education, questioning the established relations, neoliberalism, fascism and current capitalism in its financial stage.
- - We must, in short, create the conditions to generate a more just society, making popular education become the banner that restores for us the political nature of the educational act and thus, allows us to project in the here and now, the society to which we aspire.

(Translation ALAI)

In times of pandemic: Casualization of the teaching profession

Omar Orlando Pulido Chaves

The critical limit of the pandemic has not yet passed and the issue of the return to classes is already being discussed. The urgency is justified. Nothing replaces physical presence in the educational routines of the school. Since Comenius, to locate its origin at some point, the configuration of the school space shared by students and teachers became an irreplaceable cultural marker¹. The school is a universal iconic institution. The educational act is relational; it is unthinkable otherwise. The school is a habitable space that tames time and leads it through its labyrinths. It does the same with behavior. Anyone who has entered a school when its usual inhabitants are not there has experienced that feeling of strangeness that gives shape to the idea of absence, of emptiness.

The central reference of this cultural marker is the teacher. Students go to school to look for the teacher. This fact determines teaching practice. We speak of the “classroom teacher” to specify his or her job. However, the school is more than the “classroom”; it is a collective sphere of complex relationships that configures a specific ethos. The school is a border territory that relates its inhabitants to the specific environment, to the territory and to the memory associated with it, since the territory is what those who build it make of it. That is why no two schools are alike. Teaching practice is linked to this process of construction of the school territory, to territoriality, to the school ethos (Champollion, 2011). This is the process that has been broken with the confinement produced by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had clear effects on teachers’ work. Not only are face-to-face classes interrupted; the process of construction and consolidation of the school territory, of the school with all that it means for society, and of the role that teachers play in it, is interrupted. The teacher’s body has been destructured; all the links that made him/her a specific being, a way of being, have been altered.

The teaching relationship transformed

As the rector of a Colombian university rightly pointed out (Henao, 2020), the pandemic generated syndromes that affected everyone: “abolitionism of the other”, “relational paralysis”, “social isolationism”. And the teacher did not escape them. The context imposed them as preventive imaginaries to avoid contagion. They are all a constituent part of the quarantine

1 “It is of great interest to the whole Christian Republic, not only to preserve this wholesome custom, but to increase it in such a way that in every well-ordered gathering of men (whether city, town, or place) a school be opened as a common educatory of youth” (Comenio, 1998, pág. 20) (free translation).

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phenomenon. Of course, these imaginaries had an impact on the transformation of the relationship between teachers and students that, in the school environment, are unthinkable. In the school, to use an expression of Maturana (2002), referring to the phenomenon of structural coupling, “everyone is the means of everyone”.

The teaching relationship was transferred to the virtual environment. But as Deleuzze (2020) points out, the virtual always reacts on the actual; which means that it modifies it, affects it. The living relationship became an imagined relationship, in the sense of a relationship mediated by images, by coded electronic signals coupled to behaviors appropriate to technological mediation. The panoramic vision of the “course”, the sensation of shared physical space, body movement, gesture, color, temperature, smells were lost. Image and sound were also distorted, because to avoid congesting the connection it was recommended to turn off the cameras and microphones while not speaking. Simultaneity was replaced by sequentiality.

The pedagogical act, the materialization of teaching work, was strongly impacted by distance education, since the rush generated by the emergency limited the scope of “virtuality”. Inequalities in terms of technological infrastructure and cultural capital in families, students and teachers, generated impacts on the teaching work that were not present in face-to-face schooling. In some way, the school space equalized these conditions in a “neutral”, common ground. At home, this condition disappeared and educational segmentation deepened. In some cases, there was no access to a computer and in others to a mobile phone or data plan. In other cases, it was necessary to work with physical guides that had to be delivered to the students by whatever possible means.

The material conditions offered by the school for the teachers’ work, one of the State’s obligations in order to guarantee the right to education, were transferred to the teaching staff: they had to use their own equipment, the electricity in their homes, and pay for data plans. Added to this is the disappearance of the working day, overloading, the blurring of the weekend and rest time. These are features of the labor flexibilization brought about by the adoption of neoliberal policies, which have been incorporated as characteristic features of “entrepreneurship”. Of course, a new form of educational privatization has taken place here, characteristic of the adaptation to the conditions imposed by the pandemic.

Curricular impacts

From a strictly pedagogical viewpoint, teaching routines related to curriculum development were also severely impacted. The first concern arose in relation to the possibilities of following the curricular programming. The initial pressures overwhelmed the capacities of all involved. It was impossible to continue with the same routines. The formal curriculum took a back seat. Attention to the daily experiences of the students in their family contexts took precedence. This was a gain. It became more important to learn about daily experiences and the impact of isolation. This is a learning process that should undoubtedly be maintained when returning to face-to-face education, regardless of the modality it assumes, to the extent that the emphasis is placed on the capacity for reflecting on experiences; that is, on the construction of experience, which undoubtedly reinforces the development of critical thinking.

The impact of this transformation has not been sufficiently documented in the field of evaluation. However, it is foreseeable that there have been interesting experiences in this area and, as they become known, it will be possible to systematize them. What has been circulated refers to automatic promotion for the following year, a position that is not well received in the organized teaching profession. The impact on teacher evaluation is also unclear, as it will

no longer be possible through student learning achievements by means of standardized census tests.

The annual performance evaluation with an impact on the career ladder is also unclear. School directors and administrators have seen their administrative functions overloaded, further deteriorating their already weakened academic responsibilities. Most of their energy had to be channeled into emergency mitigation actions, especially those related to infrastructure affordability. In a recent CLADE webinar, Martha Alfonso (2011), member of the Executive Committee of the Colombian Federation of Education Workers (FECODE), noted with concern the strengthening of “teacher functionalism”, characterized by the concentration on fulfilling “functions” related to standardization, the market, efficiency and effectiveness, to the detriment of pedagogical work; as well as the increased pressure for teacher training related to ICTs, in a sort of retrieval of Freire’s literacy proposal in the context of the acceleration of innovation brought about by digital platforms, social networks and apps, the use of which increased in the context of the pandemic.

Work overload and health

A final aspect related to teaching work is the health of teachers. In addition to the risk of infection and death from COVID-19, illnesses related to stress and work overload increased during the pandemic. The aggravation of burnout syndrome stands out: a silent enemy that does not generate evident physical affectations, but cognitive and self-esteem ones, leading to depression, dissatisfaction, lack of commitment and the desire to leave work (Mejía Serrano, Silva Giraldo, & Rueda Mahecha, 2020). This was confirmed in another webinar conducted by the Quindío Node of the Latin American Network of Studies on Teaching Work -Red Estrado Colombia- with participation of teachers from Armenia, Tebaida, Quimbaya, the Association of Official Teaching Directors of Quindío (ADIDOQ) and the Single Union of Education Workers of Quindío (SUTEQ), who reflected on teacher health and teacher working conditions in times of Covid-19, around the questions: What are the implications of work overload and changes in the work space on the life and health of teachers? (Red ESTRADO Nodo Quindío, 2020). (Translation ALAI)

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Trends of subordination to profit after the pandemic: The privatization of education

Theresa Adrião

To begin this dialogue, I consider it fundamental to highlight the unequal nature with which relations in capitalism are presented and constituted. This means that, even though we can identify global trends, the processes of privatization of education occur with particularities in different contexts, since they materialize in locally operated educational policies, which involve actors in historically constructed relations and varying mechanisms of regulation and deregulation of state action in education.

These particularities or singularities are also present among Latin American countries and, sometimes, within the same country. So, in order to analyze and counter the processes of privatization of education in our region, we need to interconnect and learn about the ways in which the privatization of education manifests itself in our countries. Nevertheless, this article will only point out general aspects of these processes.

The challenge here is to systematize the ways in which education can be an object of profit, albeit indirectly. To this end, I refer to the work published in 2018 (Adrião, 2018), in which forms of privatization of education are systematized considering three dimensions of educational policy: public education management, educational supply and curriculum. It is worth remembering that this division stems from a methodological strategy to facilitate recognition of the ways in which education has been privatized, since in educational policy there is a connection between these dimensions.

The meaning attributed to privatization is based on Belfield and Levin (2004), for whom privatization involves processes of transferring activities, assets, and responsibilities from government or public organizations to individuals or private agencies. Privatization also involves the absence or relaxation of governmental regulations for the private sector, and the creation of new markets as alternative services to the government.

Considering the diversity of our region, but taking into account that in most countries the action of the State in providing education, including in the stage of compulsory schooling, more especially in pre-school education, special education and higher education, is not very effective, the privatization of educational supply is a reality and is expanding in this period of the pandemic. Even more so in countries that adopt neoliberal economic policies and budgetary adjustment.

Theresa Adrião: Unicamp/Unemat.

In a general view, I point out two ways that tend to expand at this juncture: public financing (direct or indirect) for educational supply by private providers and the introduction of policies or programs of parental choice.

In the case of direct financing, there is a tendency for governments to establish or expand agreements with private schools, passing on part of the public funds in the form of value per pupil as a response to pressure from school owners in the face of falling family incomes and the consequent decrease in the number of enrollments. Part of the demand is based on statements regarding the impact of school closures on job losses. Indirectly, public funds subsidize private education through the adoption of tax exemptions, as a mechanism to encourage private providers.

A second set of measures that reinforce the subordination of education to profit stems from the introduction, maintenance or expansion of parental choice policies as a mechanism for access to education. Here, I highlight in particular public subsidies for the payment of scholarships in private schools, the adoption of educational credit programs and the introduction or expansion of home-schooling programs. In the first and second cases, public funds are channeled to private organizations that are not always clearly non-profit, while educational credits tend to put families in debt by prioritizing financial market remuneration. Home-based education, on the other hand, deserves an addendum, since even though it is not a mechanism of direct profitability, it mobilizes a huge publishing market, enhanced by technologies and digital platforms during the pandemic.

Distance learning

Considering the capillarity of global communication companies and the subordination of schools and education systems to their tools, as a condition imposed by the adoption of distance learning for a large portion of students and teachers, it is undeniable that the privatization of the curriculum of our schools is advancing. The process of purchasing resources and educational inputs from global corporations and publishers (Clade, 2014; Croso and Magalhães, 2016) and the hiring of private consultants to design and reform curricula, is associated with the adoption of platforms and tools developed by corporations and offered “free of charge” to schools, public education systems and home education practitioners. It is worth mentioning the warning made by Scasserra and Sai (2020, p. 4) for whom:

the problem of large technological companies is not so much the private ownership of data (they could cheerfully say: “the data is yours, the data is of each person, it belongs to you”), but the private ownership of the algorithms, which are the true means by which products (apps) or services (streaming, social networks, segmented or personalized advertising, etc.) are generated, allowing for enormous profit.

Digital platforms and distance learning stimulate yet another “niche” of the education market which are the franchises of private classes or tutoring. Companies in this sector offer the outsourced and casual services of teachers registered on their websites to support children and adolescents, families, or even schools facing a cost containment regime. In higher education, the adoption of remote teaching moderated by “tutors” to replace teachers, a pre-existing practice, also tends to expand.

Finally, privatization of education management is accentuated through the adoption of forms of transfer of school management to private organizations, a policy associated with the reduced direct presence of the state in public education management; and even where non-profit or-

ganizations are involved, it tends to generate a market of private providers whose “financial surpluses” are not clearly identified as profit.

The actors

To conclude this dialogue, I would like to point out the actors who foster these privatization processes, taking into account the consent, commitment or omission of the governments. In the first place are transnational corporations, especially technology and communications companies and publishers, in many cases associated with national companies. Secondly, investment funds, especially Venture Capital, which give leverage to educational sector start-ups. A third group is made up of advocacy organizations, which press for the implementation of liberalizing policies and the allocation of public funds to the private sector. A fourth group, the philanthrocapitalists (Bishop and Green, 2008) induce the adoption of educational policies designed by “partners” and sponsor educational reforms that present a return, including financial ones, as a counterpart. Finally, there are the owners of private schools, the entrepreneurs of education, who in the face of the post-pandemic crisis accentuate the dispute for public funds.

In this context, it is essential to reaffirm the need for public funds to be applied directly to public education and for eventual transfers to private institutions to be an exceptional alternative, associated with the commitment of public authorities to apply their resources to expand and qualify their own network. Likewise, there is clearly a need for increased transparency and social control over the allocation of public funds as well as reaffirming the importance of building alternatives to the offer of corporations, undertaken by civil society, universities, schools, unions, etc. Finally, we reaffirm the importance of public educational institutions as a space for meeting and building inclusive and citizen values and practices. (*Translation: ALAI*)

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Action to end the education financing crisis

David Archer

1. Introduction

The right to education has been strongly asserted and embedded in human rights treaties for decades. Global leaders have also made bold political commitments to Education For All (EFA) first in Jomtien in 1990,¹ reiterated in Dakar in 2000 and reformulated as Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 in Incheon in 2015.² But the right to education is routinely violated, with over 61 million primary-aged children out of school, a further 60 million out of lower secondary school³ and an alarming 250 million children estimated to be in school but failing to learn. This article argues that the root cause of that failure is that grand commitments and declarations have not been matched by financial resources. Indeed, many of these commitments have been made during the decades when neoliberal economic thinking has been in the ascendancy, enforced around the world by the IMF and World Bank, whether through their loan conditions or coercive policy advice. Indeed, public education systems in most countries have been chronically underfunded for forty years.

The scale of the education financing crisis is being laid bare and exacerbated by Covid-19. At the height of the pandemic 1.5 billion children were forced out of school and it is unclear how many of them will be able to safely return. It is likely that millions of girls will not return to school owing to early pregnancy, early marriage or gender-based violence. It is equally likely that children who do return will find their schools with even greater resource shortages than ever. UNESCO estimates at least \$210 billion will be cut from education budgets next year simply owing to declines in GDP. Pressure on governments to reallocate scarce resources to health might cut a further 5% from education budgets amounting to a total loss of \$337 billion in education spending. Education systems that have already been underfunded for generations, may well face their most severe financing crisis in the next three years.

1 UNESCO, World Declaration on Education for All, Jomtien, Thailand (1990), adopted by the World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien, on 9 March 1990, https://bice.org/app/uploads/2014/10/unesco_world_declaration_on_education_for_all_jomtien_thailand.pdf.

2 UNESCO, Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning, UNESCO Doc. ED-2016/WS/28, 2016, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245656>

3 UNESCO, GEM Report 2016, <http://uis.unesco.org/en/news/263-million-children-and-youth-are-out-school>. The impact of COVID-19 on school attendance is discussed below.

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Thankfully, this bleak scenario is not a certainty. The Covid crisis could instead mark a turning point, with a renewed commitment to expanded financing of public education and other essential services. The solutions are clear but whether they are adopted depends on mobilising sufficient political will to seize this moment.

2. Action on Debt

An immediate first step has to involve action on debt. There was a [new debt crisis](#) emerging well before Covid came along. An increasing number of countries have been spending more on debt servicing than on education or on health. [ActionAid's research](#) with the Jubilee Debt Campaign, published in April 2020, studied 60 countries, finding that the 30 countries with the highest debt servicing (over 12% of their national budget) had cut spending on public services by 6% in recent years. In contrast, those countries with debt servicing under 12% of their budgets, increased public spending by 14%. The link could not be clearer.

The latest Global Sovereign Debt Monitor has determined that 122 of 154 countries analysed should be considered “critically indebted.”⁴ According to UNCTAD, in 2020 and 2021 alone developing countries will be forced to hand over up to \$1 trillion in external debt payments, money that is desperately needed for education and other frontline services. In the light of Covid various efforts have been made by the G20 and others to suspend debt payments for low income countries. This acknowledges the problem but fails to offer a viable solution as it does not reach all the countries needing help, does not address all the debt that they owe (including to private banks and China) and crucially only suspends payments for a short period. There is now a growing demand for full debt cancellation. This would have a transformative effect because it would give countries instant access to revenue that is already in their treasuries, enabling them to use that for a comprehensive response to Covid. Rather than paying back old debts, countries could spend their revenue on health, education and social protection.

In the longer term there is also a case for a new debt compact - between creditors and debtors - to ensure that all new loans are taken out based on a clear and transparent process, with proper democratic oversight. Loans can play an important role in enabling countries to invest in their development, but no country should ever find itself having to sacrifice crucial development goals in order to pay back old debts.

3. Action on Tax

Most education advocates have long focused on the share of the national budget spent on education - using the benchmark of 20% as an indicator of good practice. However, a fair share of a small pie is a small amount. By focusing almost exclusively on the share of the budget, education advocates have failed to pay sufficient attention to the overall size of government budgets - which is determined more than anything else by tax revenue.

Currently, tax revenues in low- and middle-income countries fall short of what is needed to guarantee universal quality public services. The average tax-to-GDP ratio in OECD countries is 33% of GDP in taxation with Scandinavian countries often having a ratio of over 40%. Lower middle-income countries average about 24% and low-income countries have an average tax to GDP ratio of just 16%. The countries with the lowest tax to GDP ratios - Pakistan and Nigeria - are also home to the largest numbers of out-of-school children. This is not pure

⁴ Jubilee Germany/Erlassjahr, Global Sovereign Debt Monitor 2019, p. 4. <https://erlassjahr.de/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Global-Sovereign-Debt-Monitor-2019.pdf>.

coincidence. If a government does not collect sufficient tax revenue it is like a ‘regalian state’ (Thomas Piketty’s term), having the ceremonial appearance of a state but not in a position to deliver on its obligations to be a ‘social state’.

The IMF estimates that most countries could raise their tax-to GDP ratio by 5% in the coming years, so that the average low income country could rise from 16% to 21% - putting them in a position to dramatically increase social spending. [ActionAid’s research](#) showed that such increases could be delivered through [Progressive Tax reforms](#) ensuring that those who have more, pay more. This could be achieved through action on harmful tax incentives (through which countries lose \$138 billion a year), aggressive tax avoidance (through which countries lose \$500 billion a year), property, land and wealth taxes, carbon taxes, corporate income tax and digital taxes.

One of the great advantages of focus on tax reform is that this enables education advocates to find common ground with health activists, water and sanitation or social protection advocates. If we focus only on the share of the budget for education we are in competition with other sectors, but focusing on the size of the overall budget makes us allies. The table 1 shows what a 5% increase in tax to GDP ratio would mean for public services in a selection of countries.

ActionAid’s most recent research in this area looked at the amount of revenue that could be raised from just [3 big tech companies](#). If simple global reforms were made a selection of 20 countries could raise \$2.8 billion between them from Facebook, Microsoft and Google. That could pay for 879,000 new teachers - who between them could transform education in each of the countries

4. Action on Austerity and Public Sector Wage Bills

Reducing debt servicing and expanding tax revenues could transform the resources available for education and other public services. But not if you are not allowed to spend the revenue you raise owing to coercive policy advice and loan conditions from the IMF which insist on austerity. In ActionAid’s 2020 report [Who Cares for the Future: finance gender-responsive public services!](#) one of the most startling statistics revealed that in 78% of low-income countries⁵, the IMF had advised countries to cut or freeze public sector wage bills in the previous three years. This has a particularly devastating impact on education as teachers are the largest groups on most public sector wage bills - so you cannot realistically recruit more teachers or pay teachers more if you have an overall limit. So, despite desperate shortages of teachers in many countries, Ministries of Finance have their hands tied by the IMF. This directly impacts any attempt to increase overall spending on education as teachers are often 90% of the education budget.

Revisiting this research six months later, in October 2020, the policy briefing [The Pandemic and the Public Sector](#) showed that although the IMF was being apparently generous in giving out emergency loans and allowing increase in health spending, they were also forecasting a rapid return to ‘fiscal consolidation’ - which is the IMF term for austerity. Indeed, most countries receiving emergency loans for Covid health responses were required to make clear commitments to revert to austerity within the coming year

5 In a review of IMF country documents for 2019, we found that of 23 low income countries (covering all the LICs with sufficient data available), seven (30%) expected to cut wage bills, 11 (48%) were freezing wage bills. Only five (22%) planned to increase wage bills.

Table 1

Country	Extra revenue in 2023 with 5% increase (compared to 2017)	Could double budgets from <u>current</u> levels across social sectors...	...and still be left with
Afghanistan	\$ 1.5mm	Education, health and social protection	\$371m
Bangladesh	\$32mm	Education, health and social protection	\$ 17mm
Benin	\$1.3mm	Education, health, social protection & WASH	\$556m
Burkina Faso	\$1.8mm	Education and health	\$410m
Central African Rep	\$172m	Education, health and WASH	\$70m
Colombia	\$30.8mm	Education, health and social protection	\$3m
Congo, Rep	\$1.9mm	Education, health and social protection	\$1m
DRC	\$8.2mm	Education, health, social protection & WASH	\$6m
Ecuador	\$6.3mm	Education ^r	\$963m
Ethiopia	\$11.6mm	Education, health and WASH	\$5.89mm
Gambia, The	\$156m	Education and health	\$19.9m
Ghana	\$7.8mm	Education, health, social protection & WASH	\$3mm
Guatemala	\$6.2mm	Education, health and WASH	\$2.7m
Jamaica	\$1.2mm	Health, social protection and WASH	\$218m
Jordan	\$3.2mm	Education, health and WASH	\$2.8m
Kenya	\$10mm	Education, health, social protection & WASH	\$3.8m
Lesotho	\$283m	Education ^z	\$62m
Madagascar	\$1.2mm	Education, health, social protection & WASH	\$547.4m
Malawi	\$732m	Education, health, and social protection	\$97.6m
Mali	\$1.8mm	Education, health, social protection & WASH	\$620m
Mozambique	\$1.3mm	Education and health	\$0 ^a
Nepal	\$4.4mm	Education, health, and social protection	\$2.3mm
Niger	\$979m	Education, health, social protection & WASH	\$121.6m
Rwanda	\$1.3mm	Education, health, social protection & WASH	\$697.5m
Senegal	\$7.6mm	Education, health, social protection & WASH	\$5mm
Sierra Leone	\$380m	Education, health, social protection & WASH	\$56.2m
South Africa	\$27.9mm	Education	\$3.5mm
Tanzania	\$6.4mm	Education, health, social protection & WASH	\$3.3m
Togo	\$598mn	Education, health and WASH	\$201.5m
Uganda	\$3.1mm	Education, health, social protection & WASH	\$1.5mm
Zambia	\$6.2mm	Education, health, social protection & WASH	\$3.7mm

From: <https://actionaid.org/publications/2020/who-cares-future-finance-gender-responsive-public-services>

The root cause of the problem is that the IMF continues to see public sector wage spending as a problem rather than a solution. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the fact, that the IMF does not consider the wages of public employees working in public services or other “pro-development” pursuits to be development spending; that designation is reserved for infrastructure such as schools and books for education, or hospitals, lab equipment and medication for health. If the significance of trained, quality workers for those areas



“A budget for education”. Graffiti, Bogota, Colombia, 2018. Photo: Jazmin Elena (El Salvador)

were so recognized, it would be subject to “social spending floors,” which the IMF should, by its own guidelines, not recommend freezing or cutting.

Our latest research reinforces the case for a **comprehensive evaluation** of the IMF’s approach to public sector workers and public sector wage bills. There is a strong case for arguing that Covid-19 is the right moment for a fundamental re-think by the IMF, the time to move away from past policies, norms and practices which have left so many countries so ill-prepared for this health and economic crisis. Recognising that we are also facing a climate crisis increases the pressure for change - reframing how development is understood and moving beyond the narrow measure of GDP growth to factor in progress on human rights and development goals as integral to any economic measurement. And if the IMF does not embrace change then it is time for citizens everywhere to pressure their governments and international institutions to resist neoliberal dogma and adopt social and economic policies that value and care for both people and the planet.

5. Action on Increasing 4Ss

Whenever we argue for action on tax and debt and austerity a common response is that there is no point giving more money to governments because they can’t be trusted. Corruption is endemic and the money won’t end up improving public services in practice. Of course, we need to take this challenge seriously. There is corruption and mis-use of public resources (even though the bigger scandals are often in the private sector). We cannot just argue for more money for public education without a credible framework for how it should be spent. That is the logic behind the 4 S framework - which does not translate so easily into Spanish!

This concerns the size of the budget overall, the share spent on education, the sensitivity of allocations and the scrutiny of spending in practice:

Increasing the share of the budget to education - as referenced above there is a well-established benchmark calling for governments to spend 20% of budgets on education. Tracking what share a government spends is a critical part of the bigger picture - but not enough on its own.

Increasing the overall size of government budgets - as outlined this is determined mostly by the tax revenue collected. However, it is also influenced by the macro-economic policies followed and by the level of debt

Increasing the sensitivity of the budget to policy priorities - some governments invest a disproportionate percentage of their education budget to benefit a small (but powerful and vocal) elite who access higher education. A more progressive and sensitive approach involves targeting spending to re-dress disadvantage. [Pasi Sahlberg](#) from Harvard University shows that countries who invest sensitively to make their education systems more equitable make significant progress in improving overall learning achievement.

Increasing the scrutiny of the budget - perhaps most important of all is that we need to ensure that there is independent scrutiny of education budgets. If people are not confident that budgets allocated will be properly spent it is hard to advocate for more resources. There are many positive examples of national and local [budget tracking](#), of community audit groups tracking school budgets and of budgets being posted on school walls to ensure full transparency. These are crucial for ensuring that governments are held to account by their own citizens (rather than feeling accountable to external donors).

6. A Concluding Call to Action

In September 2020, 190 organisations signed a [Call to Action on Domestic Financing of Education post-covid](#) which touched on many of the key points raised in this article. The focus on domestic financing is key - as 97% of revenue for education is raised domestically (see The Learning Generation, Education Commission report). Aid and loans are relatively marginal - but they can make a difference when they incentivise or leverage deeper domestic commitment. Rich countries should play their part and reversing the recent decline in aid is important. But that aid should not come with conditions driven by donor countries. They should support the strengthening of public education systems based on national priorities set by national governments in consultation with national civil society. Sadly the aid effectiveness agenda is in decline with donor countries now more concerned to protect and advance their own trade and security interests. In this context, large increases in aid seem highly unlikely, though we can hope to defend and even increase the funding for some key actors who still seek to harmonise efforts, such as the [Global Partnership for Education](#). Beyond that the call to the international community might more usefully focus on calls for debt cancellation, for changes to global tax rules and for ending the neoliberal obsession with austerity that has done so much to damage education systems around the world. Raising more funds from the international community always seems tempting as a way to make things better - but the real challenge is to stop the international system from continuing to make matters worse.

Following the pandemic: The dilemma around digital rights in education

Fernanda Campagnucci

The Covid-19 pandemic imposed the fastest and widest adoption ever seen of technologies for distance learning and communication between students and teachers. It was often lacking due transparency of the donation or public procurement in question. This situation left the right to education facing a real “dilemma” of rights: transparency versus privacy. While it is necessary to reaffirm the right to privacy and to prevent setbacks, it is also necessary to advocate for retrieving the notion of **public data as a common good**. The fulfillment of this idea depends on public governance of the digital infrastructure, in which the State is placed as the guarantor of these digital rights.

There is a complex personal data market in the world today, in which we are all active participants – whether we are aware of our role or not. Our “digital footprints” are collected at every moment and place, on every device, fixed or mobile, on the sites we browse. Such a constant flow of data is stored and shared among different institutional and corporate actors, formally and informally, in a complex value chain of a lucrative and invisible market.

Data obtained and monetized through technological surveillance has become so central to the functioning of this “new economy” based on the Internet that it has inspired a new attire for capitalism: **surveillance capitalism** (Zuboff, 2015). This system has as one of its main inputs the flow of individual attention, and the data collected are raw material for analyzing and forecasting tastes, interests and desires (Silveira, 2017).

Education, especially public education, is a coveted territory. First, because the state collects a large amount of citizen data to operationalize policies and services. Second, because this movement of searching for economic exploitation (or “commoditization”) of personal data finds and potentiates another: the privatization of education (Adrião & Domiciano, 2018). The possibility of collecting personal data and attention becomes worth more than the software itself. These products come to be “donated” by interested companies.

Such mechanisms of usurpation of personal data from the educational community, and deviation from their intended purpose, can potentially deepen inequality gaps and make those groups that have historically been exposed to processes of exclusion and discrimination even more vulnerable.

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The right to data protection

The significance of the debate on privacy is situated unequivocally in the field of fundamental rights and freedoms. Since the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the texts have sought to protect the right to privacy and to safeguard all forms of telephonic, telegraphic or telematic communication, such as the Internet. And not only from public authorities, but also - and increasingly - from private actors (Comparato 2010).

This principle is maintained, but today, the idea is gaining ground that privacy also includes the individual's right to control what is collected about him or her – data protection. **Personal data** are those that refer to identified or identifiable living persons, including those data that, in aggregate, may lead to their identification¹. The issue has been gaining new momentum with a new wave of approval of specific laws in the last decade.

Among all the personal data to be protected, two dimensions deserve special attention: so-called **sensitive data** and data whose owners are **children and adolescents**. For such data, the legislation reserves specific conditions for treatment and extra layers of protection.

The idea that “privacy is dead” – propagated by the technology industry – is one of the

¹ European regulations are a reference for other legislation in this area.. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-topic/data-protection/reform/what-personal-data_pt#referncias. Latest access 29/10/2020.

major drawbacks to claiming the right to data protection. To the general public, this negotiation may sound fair: what's the problem in providing personal information in exchange for free services such as games and communication apps that are useful to me? *In the end* – people often say – “*I have nothing to hide*”. The problem is that they are often unaware of the extent of the data that is collected about them. Moreover, they are unaware of the uses to which they can be put, and of the immediate and future consequences of this concession.

Risks of improper processing

In digital markets, this data is often used for data profiling – automated processes to build detailed individual profiles aimed at “predicting” and inducing behavior. This occurs through the collection and analysis of “digital footprints” during internet browsing and application use.

Digital profiling classifies people individually into categories, according to “scores” for education, employment, political views, health interests, religion and ethnicity, media usage, consumption, income, economic stability and personality. They also include analysis of their online behavior, including types of sites and content visited, and interests. One of the companies with the world's largest consumer database, Acxiom, already claimed, in 2013, to have up to 3,000 attributes on 700 million people. Oracle, a technology giant, claims to supply more than 30 thousand items on 2 billion profiles (Christl, Kopp & Riechert, 2017).

This market and its “profiling” techniques are not just for advertising purposes. The world of work and employment, the real estate sector, insurance and credit companies, even the dynamics of democracy and electoral debate, the justice system and the social welfare state – all these fields are beginning to be affected by the use of technologies, algorithms and automated decisions that feed on this data. And that is why, when targeted at traditionally marginalized groups, these technologies can accentuate inequality, creating a real “feedback loop of injustice” (Gangadharan, 2017).

That is why data protection is not only about violations such as situations of leakage, system invasion or improper data exchange. The legal debate on privacy has often been framed by the notions of consent and data processing. With **consent**, citizens who submit their data declare that they agree to the intended collection and processing of their data. It is in **privacy policies** – the “fine print” contracts of online applications and services – that this consent is usually collected. Educational institutions are considered **responsible for the processing**, as long as they determine the purpose and means of one of these operations with personal data of the educational community. Even if they opted for hiring third parties.

Educational technologies

These third party actors - edtechs - are increasingly present on the scene. The acronym, Education and Technology, broadly refers to companies that produce products for the educational sector – hardware (equipment) and software (applications, programs and systems). The fad of joining the suffix “tech” to the “industry” prefix (agro, gov, ad, fin, legal, health) is generally intended to highlight the innovation aspect of the segment's technologies, whether they are startups (nascent companies) or not. In Chile, there were 100 such companies. In Brazil, 449 (CIEB, 2020; Omidyar, 2019). To thrive, this market depends on **infrastructure**: in telecommunications, electricity and internet. Therefore, it is usually accompanied by strong lobbying for the expansion of public-private programs of this type, for the use of technologies inside and outside schools.

There is still no general and systematic mapping published on data collection and surveillance practices in the field of education, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean. Much is discussed about the role of big tech in the violation of digital privacy, but smaller edtech companies may also have their business model linked to the collection and transfer of personal data to third parties, or the targeting of advertisements and personalized content to users. This objective is not always explicitly stated. The tools may be purchased directly by schools or adopted by education departments. Often, adoption is offered free of charge for use in public networks, through terms of cooperation between networks and institutions such as foundations or private institutes. Precisely because it is not yet on the radar of studies on surveillance in education, it is necessary to focus attention.

The lack of adequate materials in schools and the underfunding of education faced by the countries of the region make schools more susceptible to the uncritical adoption of “free” technological tools that collect data from the school community. This also makes it difficult to advocate for the development of in-house software or customized solutions, as these incur possible costs that will be seen as higher than those of “donated” tools.

Payment for such services is usually made in the form of personal data of students and teachers, something not uncommonly considered by those responsible for educational institutions to be a fair price for an expensive service. Not only should governments and public education secretariats/departments be held accountable for personal data protection policies. Every unit that operationalizes public education policy and deals with technologies, whether administrative or pedagogical, is also responsible.

The educational community must know exactly what is being done with their data. Hence the need for processing to always be accompanied by transparency and accountability policies. As long as they do not expose individuals, data must be treated with maximum transparency, as a common good – including that of the source code of the technologies adopted for educational activities. The right of access to information and the right to privacy are not discordant rights, but complementary. Especially in times of pandemic, they will be fundamental for the full guarantee of the right to education in the digital environment. (*Translation ALAI*).

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Criminalization and human rights violations

Foro de Educación y Desarrollo Humano
Foro Dakar / Honduras

Reflections based on the cases of high school and university students in Chile, Colombia, Nicaragua and Honduras.

In recent years, there has been an increase in the repressive response of many States to the demands made by students and teachers in the face of coercive actions implemented by the executive powers.

Added to this is the coming into force of laws, decrees, protocols and reforms to criminal law, which in government practice function as instruments to marginalize dissident positions and discourage the exercise of democratic freedoms. This despite being contrary to regional and international regulations that protect human rights.

Therefore, CLADE assigns particular relevance to the “Regional Report on Criminalization and Human Rights Violations”¹, which is dedicated to the situation of students in Latin America and the Caribbean, who in recent years have taken the lead in the defense and promotion of the Human Right to Education and other human rights.

There are numerous examples and countries in which police repression, persecution and political harassment, use of lethal weapons, raids, arbitrary detentions, prosecutions without legal guarantees, among others, have been the response of the States to the mobilization of students in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Chile

The student sector in Chile has stood out as one of the most mobilized in the region, in which several moments stand out, such as the year 2001 with the *mochilazo*, 2006 with the penguin movement, 2011 with the demand to end education for profit and recently, in 2019, when various university and high school organizations called for a national mobilization in repudiation of the decisions taken by the executive that had a negative impact on the educational community.

¹ For further information (in Spanish) see: [Criminalisation and Violation of Students’ Human Rights in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)

Foro de Educación y Desarrollo Humano de la Iniciativa por Nicaragua (Education and Human Development Forum of the Initiative for Nicaragua) (FEDH-Ipn) <http://www.fedh-ipn.org/>
Foro Dakar / Honduras (Dakar Forum / Honduras) <http://forodakarhonduras.info/>

Meanwhile, we see how the State persists in offering world opinion an image of Chile as a stable and safe oasis of democracy; while at the same time legitimizing the actions of the State repressive forces with the discourse of protecting public order, by which it disregards the demands of the students and of the civilian population that joins the demonstrations.

From the material gathered in the interviews in the case of Chile, it is clear that there is a strong presence of state actors who participate in the processes of criminalization of the student movement. In this vein, the Executive Power, the Legislative Power, the Judicial Power and the Carabineros can be distinguished.

Colombia

In Colombia, while in recent years, certain examples stand out, such as the case of a student killed during a university demonstration in 2005 and more recently, in November 2019, the death of another student as a result of the excessive use of force by the Mobile Anti-Riot Squad (ESMAD) of the National Police, the fact is that Colombia has been experiencing this type of repression for a long time, even after the signing, in 2016, of the latest peace agreements, in which the situation of human rights defenders (HRDs) is contemplated, in terms of guaranteeing their rights, risk prevention and strategies to ensure their safety and comprehensive protection.



“If those below move, those ‘above’ tremble!” Demonstration in Bogotá for Zero Tuition Fees in the city’s public universities, 09/25/2020. Andrés Ramos (Colombia)

From a hearing held with the IACHR in 2019, data from civil society organizations enumerated, between 2010 and the first half of 2019, at least 3,434 threats against HRDs; from August 2018 to June 2019, at least 632 threats were recorded and in 2019, the OHCHR documented 108 murders of HRDs.

Some of the most frequently expressed demands by the Colombian educational community include: guaranteeing and increasing resources that allow the State to provide free public education; decent conditions for the teaching profession, with fair salaries and working hours; educational centers as territories of peace and social justice, free from all types of violence; the implementation of post-conflict reparation processes established in the peace agreements; full respect for the right to freedom of expression and teaching, the physical integrity of students, teachers and other actors of the educational community, as well as their right to association and social protest.

Honduras

Since 2009, Honduras has been socio-politically convulsed as a result of the coup d'état against former President Manuel Zelaya, a year in which the student movement increased its mobilization, demonstrating against the various governments that have emerged since that event, which have promoted privatization policies, democratic restrictions and reduced university autonomy, although it was the demonstrations of 2015 that had the greatest international repercussions.

The latest decade of Honduras' modern history has been characterized by a significant increase in murders, criminalization and persecution of students mobilized around the country. According to data provided by the National Observatory of Violence, from January 2010 to May 2018, 1,522 students from all educational levels in Honduras have been killed in contexts of protests, strikes, and violence by armed groups.

Nicaragua

For Nicaragua, the year 2018 went down forever in history when a socio-political upheaval took place that had repercussions at the international level due to the excessive repression with which the Nicaraguan State and its executive branch responded to demonstrations led by students. These demonstrations were expressions of their discontent, initially due to the lack of attention to the emergency initiated by a forest fire in one of the most important natural reserves, subsequently to reforms to the social security law, which overlapped with accumulated discontent over the dismantling of democracy, its institutions, citizen participation and access to public information, as well as impunity for acts of violence and partisanship in education and demands for access to other rights.

The dismissal of student and civil society demands, through public speeches by current President Daniel Ortega and Vice President Rosario Murillo, where they expressed exotic expletives such as “tiny groups, Satanists, traitors, bloodsuckers, terrorists, among others”, was accompanied by political harassment and persecution by their close associates, sympathizers and national police, physical and psychological torture, use of lethal weapons, raids, arbitrary detentions, unconstitutional prosecutions, closure of spaces for denunciation, murders, kidnappings and disappearances. The IACHR reports 325 people who lost their lives, however, official figures recognize 195. (*Translation ALAI*)

Implications in the pandemic era: The right to education from the start

Desirée López de Maturana Luna

*“A crisis becomes a disaster only when we respond to it with preformed judgments, that is, with prejudices”
Such an attitude exacerbates the crisis and also prevents us from experiencing reality and deprives us of the opportunity to reflect on what that reality has to offer.
Hannah Arendt*

The ideas expressed in this document are inevitably affected by the pandemic situation generated by COVID-19, which has highlighted the weak social, economic, democratic and ethical scaffolding in which we are living, built and perfected since the beginning of the last century with the introduction and continuous strengthening of the economic philosophy of neoliberalism (Foucault, 2001). The enormous inequalities and social precariousness, as well as the inefficiency of public policies in health, education, housing and labor, have once again put the spotlight on our Latin America as the most unequal region on the planet.

According to the UNDP report (2019), the richest 10% concentrates 37% of income and the poorest 40% receives 13%. This is exacerbated by the strengthening of a very present Eurocentric system that systematically colonizes us, oppresses our analytical and reflective capacity and makes everyday and ancestral knowhow invisible, as an original and inspiring source for knowledge generation. Education has been taken as the main instrument of adaptation and techno-disciplinary fragmentation, to consolidate capitalism as a mode of production with the consequent *status quo* of inequality.

Thus, the consequences of the health crisis and the different social manifestations that have been felt in different countries of the region cannot go unnoticed, given the ethical and political imperative to recognize and evidence these demands in order to give them the relevance they require and claim. Therefore, the pedagogical hope (Freire, 1993) whose basis is the conception of the world from the decolonial and transformative educational practice, becomes an impossible mission in a framework preconceived for training. Citizens today are questioning themselves, recognizing their own awakening from a submissive lethargy, but also questioning the set of educational and social organizations, so that we reflect critically, assuming a more active role of political advocacy. People have lost their fear and, little by little, a civil society with conviction and the will to transform history has been growing

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stronger.

Now more than ever, it is necessary to rethink education from the initial level, recognizing it as the only and essential tool to advance towards the development of a more egalitarian and equitable society, within diversity, which embraces the major goals set forth at the planetary level for Sustainable Development, in the 2030 Agenda (UN 2015). The 17 Goals that make up this agenda constitute a commitment and a great challenge to complete what has already begun with the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015 agenda). Addressing the most urgent problems facing the world today and responding to the threat of climate change are tasks that commit us and invite us all to create a genuinely livable world.

Goal 4, quality education, states that it is precisely this process that is the basis for improving people's quality of life. *Access to inclusive and equitable education contributes to providing the local population with the necessary tools to develop innovative solutions to problems.*

Undoubtedly, these agreements involve us as an organization to promote actions that favor the full development of people, particularly children, through respect for their political, social, economic and cultural rights, as expressed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Since its creation in 1948, the World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEPE) has had this purpose that gives meaning to its existence. Thus, in the framework of the Declaration of Panama (2019), 30 years after the Convention, it renews its commitment to prioritize the best interests of the child, considering the four guiding principles that this Treaty establishes: the right to non-discrimination, to life, to survival and development, to freedom of expression and to be heard. However, the Declaration also notes that too many children in the world are living in conditions that deserve immediate action, such as famine, armed conflict and its physical, mental and emotional consequences; migration and displacement that has left children living in camps, separated from their parents or in prison; climate change, pollution, environmental degradation and increasing natural disasters, racism, xenophobia, gender discrimination and sexual and labor exploitation.

Lines of action

The task is enormous and complex, and requires joining forces and the necessary synergy to meet these demands. OMEPE, assuming the commitment to make an effective contribution in this sense, has proposed 4 broad lines of action that allow for interaction with other organizations and institutions and the recognition of its own actions. Thus, even within this complex and systemic reality, these actions can find their strategic place, concentrate individual efforts and contribute effectively to the common purpose of breaking with the social and economic structural determinism, which has strongly affected children, women, the elderly and the indigenous population, in a much more unfavorable scenario as a consequence of the pandemic.

Among the proposed lines, we can mention political advocacy, which aims to amplify the voices of children and promote the respect and fulfillment of their rights in the construction of public policies and in social and citizen mobilization, in order to generate intersectoral actions that tend towards the transformation of reality in pursuit of the integral wellbeing of children and their families.

Make visible and raising awareness of the importance of early education and positive parenting, means defending the citizen's right to participate from the start of life. Another



Alexander Reyes, Nicaragua

line is the construction of scientific, pedagogical and political reference, which aims to generate knowledge that gives a genuine basis to their struggles and actions, whose guiding principle is the ecoprotection of children and their relationship with the environment, human caring, and immunization against those elements that interfere and harm them in their development and hinder their self-building as full human beings, able to design their own life project, to expand their possibilities, their field of action, and to strengthen their sense of freedom. (*Translation ALAI*)

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UN Rapporteur on the Human Right to Education: A social pact for education

CLADE, ALAI

“Education must be regenerated, it must be an education in which, more and more, there must be a social pact, which is essential to be able to organize among communities, among individuals. There should no longer be these issues of power... this power-play that exists, in which a small minority holds power at world level and imposes its criteria on others. And for this to change, the majority of the population must be educated; but an education with critical thinking and a good capacity for resilience”. Thus affirmed the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Koumbou Boly Barry, in an interview with CLADE.

In the interview, the Rapporteur spoke about the situation of the human right to education in Latin America and the Caribbean, in the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as its projections for the coming years and she stated that, although we already know the first phase, “we still do not know all the consequences of this COVID-19 on education”, not only from the viewpoint of quality, but also of governance and access for the most marginalized groups. Even before the pandemic, there were one billion illiterate people in the world, mostly women and disadvantaged people: refugees, migrants, poor families and other minorities with specific needs, she added.

COVID-19 reinforced inequalities at various levels, but most shockingly in education, where “**more than 1.6 billion students, in all systems combined, worldwide, dropped out of the classroom** because schools had to be closed rather quickly.” In this, she said, Latin America was no exception, either in school closures, nor in all that this implies, in terms of non-access and ineffectiveness of learning processes. Moreover, she believes that all the issues related to inequalities are going to get even worse, both due to funding cuts and to the increase in violence, as well as the fact that, by staying out of educational establishments, many children and young people are left at the mercy of drug traffickers, among others.

However, Barry believes that not all the picture is negative and that there are important citizen initiatives underway: “Latin America has that space in which there are organizations such as CLADE or the Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education”, which have lobbied for increased budgets, which “is really for me a victory for civil society at this level; and that is also the hope, for me it is the important potential of Latin America, the fighting strength of its citizens who are mobilized and organized”.

Interview conducted by CLADE; edited and translated by ALAI.

Interrelated rights

In her latest report, published last July, the Rapporteur affirms that the human right to education is interrelated with other rights, such as the right to water and basic sanitation. In clarifying this relationship, the Rapporteur explained that it is framed within the interdependence of rights: “for example, the right to health, the right to drinking water, the right to a decent life, the right to development, all issues related to non-discrimination, but also to strengthening the status of women and girls, the right to food, the right to security, etc.”, which are necessary to guarantee the right to education. In other words, “education cannot take place without, for example, peace. Education cannot take place without children having access to drinking water. When there is no drinking water in the classrooms, and when there are no bathrooms, especially separate bathrooms for girls and boys, this has a great impact on attendance and also on the quality of education.”

When there are children in a state of malnutrition, it affects their learning ability, so “we can see that in a certain way there is a relationship between the right to food, the right to drinking water; and above all that the context of COVID-19 makes the problem much more visible, not to say much more scandalous”, stressed the rapporteur, considering that, to fight against COVID, it is necessary to wash our hands frequently. This means that all schools must have drinking water points and soap as minimum equipment, issues that must be discussed with the health service when a school is going to reopen.

To make these decisions, the rapporteur considers it essential to talk to families and communities. “In my latest report on the interconnection between the right to water, the right to sanitation, but also the right to hygiene and especially monthly hygiene for girls, I proposed a rights-based approach before reopening schools. This is the fundamental lesson we can draw from the impact of COVID19 on the education system. It is the capacity of the actors to devote their time to work at the local level, but also at the national and international levels to ensure that there is dialogue and that good decisions are made taking into account the opinions of all the actors.” To this end, she emphasized that governments should dialogue with the network of teachers’ unions and listen to them before making decisions and defining orientations.

How to guarantee education in the context of the pandemic?

In the context of the pandemic, one of the major issues is the implementation of distance learning classes. Many children, adolescents, young people and adults in the region find it difficult to continue their studies, whether because they lack access to a good internet connection, or because they do not have an environment conducive to study, among other things. The question, then, is: how to guarantee learning in this context and what measures should governments take to guarantee education?

Koumbou Boly Barry recalls that practically all the States in the region have signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which means that they are obliged to guarantee the right to education. In times of pandemic, this means guaranteeing distance education. COVID revealed that the educational system was already operating with inequalities - even in rich countries - and this implies that, in families that do not have decent housing, children do not have the necessary space to be able to learn; or poor families cannot afford to buy an internet line, or cannot pay for electricity; or in the case of refugees, they live in places where it is difficult to connect; and in addition, cases of domestic violence have intensified. In this sense, she considers that transparency and accountability of the State

is very important and that “civil society must continue to do this work to force the State to comply with its obligations through actions of communication, actions of dialogue, actions of challenging.”

However, the rapporteur recognizes that COVID19 also presented opportunities: it gave rise to the idea that learning should focus on the child, on the student. It also showed the capacity to innovate and adapt with flexibility: where there was no Internet, radio was used in the countryside; or television in the city; in other cases, even documents were used, for example, for children with disabilities. In addition, she points out, it revealed the ability of women to get organized, especially in Latin America, to take charge of their children’s education at home, and this is also a great lesson we learned from COVID. And finally, it showed the creativity of the teachers, who, when the schools and educational institutions were closed, organized themselves quite quickly, and each teacher took individual initiatives to make sure that in some way, they could continue to help the children learn. “That’s a lesson of great value: it’s the role of the teacher. **The teacher is creative, but we must give them their own spaces and opportunities, listening to them more.**”

Regarding the reopening of face-to-face classes, Barry believes that it will be indispensable for the States to coordinate with all the actors: the network of teachers’ unions, parents, students, the community, the school administration; also, with the other ministries in charge, for example, of water, health, housing, etc. “For me, it is that ability to have a holistic approach in terms of human rights because these rights are interdependent and inter-related, that coordination must take place at the national level but also intrinsically at the level of municipalities and schools.... Without this dialogue and without this coordination, it is dangerous to open or reopen schools or academic institutions.” And another important component is psychosocial support, because COVID19 caused a lot of stress and a lot of fear.

Finally, with regard to the strategies that social movements, organizations and national, regional and international institutions must take to ensure that the right to education is guaranteed, the Rapporteur emphasized the crucial role of civil society. “I mentioned earlier the issues of power relations, where a minority imposes its views on others. But they are also those who have the greater part of the wealth worldwide, when we see the vast majority stuck in poverty... I think it is up to civil society to be able to both continue this work of political dialogue with governments, and of pressure at the same time, to ensure, for example, that teachers who claim their rights are not imprisoned; **it is indispensable that students are not jailed, because they have the right to express themselves, they have the right to speak, they have the right to defend the intrinsic interests of their body.** I think this is the role of civil society: to continue doing this work of dialogue, of information, of communication, but also of making proposals to the government, because civil society is also capable of implementing concrete actions on the ground, in terms of educational and pedagogical innovation.”

In this sense, Barry concluded the interview by affirming that “civil society has a fundamentally important role in this, and I would really like to acknowledge it once again and congratulate you, and give you encouragement and support to continue on this path”.

Final Declaration of the XI CLADE Regional Assembly

Letter in Quarantine

After a reflection process carried out through seven thematic virtual meetings and the subsequent systematization of the contents that emerged, in order to evaluate and ponder them in intense work days developed through assemblies also virtually during this last week, CLADE (Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education) has issued its final document that - in some way - constitutes the roadmap for the next two years. Here is the full text:

The XI Assembly of the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE), held virtually between October 13 and November 26, was attended by more than 100 people from member organizations of CLADE, student and teacher representatives, movements, civil society organizations, researchers and academics, in a context where in our Latin America and Caribbean and throughout the world, we are living the consequences of the pandemic caused by Covid-19. This health crisis has serious impacts on the economic, educational, environmental, political, and life and nature care sectors, highlighting even more the weak public policies on health, education, and employment, among the most important ones.

The pandemic impacts the various populations differently, increasing the historical structural inequalities of our region, a legacy of colonization, patriarchy, and neoliberal policies. It generates new inequalities that once again impact historically excluded populations such as women, the impoverished population in urban and rural areas, indigenous, Andean and Amazonian peoples, the Afro-descendant population, people with disabilities, migrants and refugees, peasants, the LGBTIQ+ population, early childhood, children in child labor, youth and the elderly. On the other hand, it can also mean an opportunity for us to react and find alternatives to this depleted model of life and consumption, which is essentially unjust and deeply destructive.

Historical disparities and inequities in the exercise of the human right to education increased and deepened during this period. The consequences for all actors in the educational communities, from early childhood and throughout all educational pathways, the violations of this right have multiplied and deepened. Additionally, teachers, especially women, have seen their labor rights violated and the privatization tendencies of education have deepened, further threatening public, free, secular education for all.

We knew a new model of privatization (families, students and teachers assuming the cost of equipment and connection), student stratification (based on the possibilities or not of connection) and hundreds of thousands of students unable to continue their educational process in these contexts. This situation threatens to continue and expand with the announcement of hybrid teaching models.

The Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education, its national forums, regional networks and international NGOs that are part of it have made a great effort since the beginning of the present crisis, to accompany processes that guarantee the rights of the people, to reflect on the consequences of the pandemic, to denounce the deepening of inequality and to encourage the commitment of the educational community not to give up in front of the difficult situation that was worsening.

In this context, from our XI Regional Assembly,

WE AFFIRM

That the right to education is a central obligation of nation states. This demand must be updated in a context of the arrival of virtual media, digital content and the siege of presential schools.

That from CLADE we assume as our duty the elaboration of proposals to guarantee that States comply in these circumstances with their responsibility to accelerate scientific-technological innovation.

That political democracy must have a full educational correlation. Open educational democracy is a challenge for teachers, families and students in the third decade of the 21st century, in harmony with human beings and nature. Democracy for encounter, social justice, intercultural dialogue, care for life and for the constitution of creative and critical subjects.

That a de-colonial education is indispensable in order to dismantle the system of domination in which we live, and to build our own educational projects inspired by the legacy of Paulo Freire.

That the pandemic demonstrated the importance of presence in education and in lifelong learning, because learning is a relational act, which requires dialogue, embracing and acting in the territories and that, when virtuality is indispensable, it must also guarantee the human right to education, with all that this means.

WE EXHORT

That States assume their role as guarantors of human rights, considering the indivisibility of these rights and education as an enabling factor for the exercise of other rights. That they reduce inequalities and make our societies more just and egalitarian.

To meet international commitments by accelerating the development of policies that seek to achieve the goals of the Education Agenda 2030 and the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

That they issue intersectoral and inter-sectional policies to advance towards inclusion, equity and quality, considering the multiple dimensions of diversity (gender, religion, ethnicity, culture, language, disability, geographic location, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, among others), which are sources of discrimination. Anti-discriminatory education that leads to the emancipation of individuals, their peoples, and movements is imperative.

That they guarantee universal and public access to the internet as a right, and not as a commodity. Developing our own open virtual platforms, which guarantee our sovereignty in educational technology.

That they ensure teacher training based on a rights-based approach and updated in terms of advances in science and technology, knowledge and respect for nature as a source of life, nourishment, and care for planet Earth, our common home.

To guarantee strategic planning for the construction of knowledge about the right to education and care in early childhood, and to recognize the importance of the diverse experiences of civil society.

That they value the proposals of girls, boys, young people, and adolescents in the formulation of policies and norms that protect their right to education, health, integral protection, and

participation.

That they recognize the importance of community education that responds with territorial pertinence to their needs, shares knowledge, and strengthens the bonds of solidarity among the diverse institutions that operate in their environment, including educational institutions.

That they guarantee the necessary financing to ensure a public, sufficient and relevant education from early childhood and for life, and that with this goal they put in place mechanisms of tax justice and not of debt.

WE PROPOSE

That the centrality is retaken and public services are strengthened not only in education, but also in health, social protection, housing, among others, with a view to avoiding the aggravation of inequalities. It is urgent and necessary that the different social movements articulate themselves in order to collectively fight for the achievement of all rights.

- That intersectoral policies be adopted with emphasis on:
- Political and citizen education for all actors in the educational communities.
- Education in Human Rights.
- Education with a gender perspective.
- Education focused on life and the rights of our “Mother Earth”.
- Popular education and critical pedagogies.
- Education based on territoriality.
- Education for the care and attention of early childhood
- Youth and Adult Education.

For the reopening of schools, which should be progressive and decided in a participatory manner, the States should commit to strengthening school feeding policies as a strategy to guarantee food and nutritional security for children, adolescents and their families.

WE REAFFIRM

Our irrevocable commitment to strengthening democracies and the permanent participation of civil society in decision-making in public affairs, which must include women, children, young people and students, and groups that have historically been discriminated against on the basis of gender, ethnicity, age, language, sexual orientation and disability, among others.

Our commitment to decolonization, de-patriarchy and, in general, to the strengthening of humanist and emancipatory visions of education, which include the promotion of peaceful coexistence in all educational communities, the deconstruction of machista patterns, the promotion of collective learning environments, popular education and the opening of schools to their communities.

Our commitment to on-site, technologically updated educational spaces, reaffirming our willingness to work to demand fair budgets, equipment and technological infrastructure to sustain these meeting spaces under equal conditions.

Our commitment to the youth, their demands, their struggles and their organizational processes, in defense of all their rights.

Our commitment to building networks and articulating social movements in the promotion and defense of the Human Right to Education.

For an emancipatory, updated and rights-guaranteeing education!

November 26 2020