



Intercambio

Education Research Bulletin of the IDEA Network

**Rights threatened:
Social Movements defend public
education.**



Chicago teachers on strike last September (2014) to demand a fair contract. Photo: Reuters

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PRESENTATION

In 2014 IDEA celebrated 15 years as a space for the convergence of struggles for public education throughout the Americas. In defense of education as a social right, we have built spaces for interchange, analysis and debate regarding privatization and the policies of dispossession of rights, and we have advanced in generating alternatives for emancipatory education as a central element for the construction of democratic societies.

In this issue, the reader will find articles about ten emblematic struggles carried out by diverse labour and social organizations from Canada to Argentina. In the face of offensives by transnational financial capital and its governments to take possession of education and convert it into merchandise, it is our hope that these stories contribute to a greater understanding of the importance of resistance and the construction of democratic alternatives,

Privatization policies have become widespread in many of our countries, recently finding exacerbated forms of dispossession of rights and repression in Mexico with constitutional “reforms” that erode teachers’ rights, and the right to education, and with the murder of three and the forced disappearances of 43, student teachers from the Ayotzinapa Normal School in Guerrero.

But the analyses of the situation in Peru and of California and Chicago in the USA, demonstrate the limitless voracity of capital to seize the education sector, and that neoliberal privatization reforms in the sector will not only continue, but are capable morphing and refocussing in order to overcome resistance.

The attacks on our rights across the Americas have forced us to shift from labour action for better salaries and working conditions to social and political action to improve learning conditions for our children and youth, for a sense of meaning of education as a social right. Today the struggle for our peoples’ rights compels us to build broader social alliances with grassroots movements.

It compels us to turn to traditional forms of struggle - rallies, meetings, slowdowns, strikes, and

road blocks – but we have also added seminars, workshops, forums and teach-ins at the local, regional, national and international level, demonstrating that students’ and education workers’ knowledge is fundamental for solutions to the problems faced in education.

Social communication networks have become a powerful means to activate responses and consult, and to share and debate our proposals. The campaign against standardized testing (SIMCE) in Chile and the BC Teachers’ Federation’s long strike are instructive examples.

Despite the smear campaigns against teachers’ unions, educators and even students, we continue to be social leaders and essential reference points in social and political struggles for democracy and social justice. Exemplary and moving is the case of the Honduran teachers’ organizations’ steadfast resistance to the coup d’état in their country.

The articles about current struggles in Brazil and Ecuador help clarify the limits of governments that have achieved power via broad progressive political fronts, but along the way have resumed neoliberal policies such as the use of public funds to subsidize private education or the expansion of high stakes standardized evaluation.

However, it is clear that the challenges outlined above can also be overcome. The experience of the Confederation of Education Workers of Argentina (CTERA), demonstrates that it is possible to develop alternative education policies to privatization and influence their establishment as government programs.

A key tool for analysing each case is to highlight international solidarity as a central element for withstanding attacks on social and human rights, and for enriching the common programs and actions for struggle that will enable us to build societies with justice and freedom for all.

They were taken alive. Alive we want them back!

We are missing 43 student teachers in Ayotzinapa, Mexico.

The Mexican Teachers Revolt of 2013

María de la Luz Arriaga Lemus*

Mexican teachers carried out intense and continuous demonstrations throughout 2013 to defend their rights and to fight attempts to de-professionalize them through the so-called "Education Reform" bill. Indeed, the law has nothing to do with education and everything to do with privatizing the education system by changing Article 3 of the Constitution.

In this paper, my intention is to describe the strength of the movement, the new strategic elements in the struggle, the gains made and the challenges faced.

I. The content of the reforms

On December 11, 2012, ten days after President Peña Nieto had taken office, he sent the House of Representatives a bill to modify articles 3 and 73 of the Constitution. It was approved by the House on December 20th, and by the Senate the next day.¹ Article 3 used to guarantee education as a social right that was public, secular and free. Article 73 regulated the ability of the Congress to change the constitution.

The main changes were: 1) the Professional Teachers Service was established 2) the National Institute for Education Assessment became autonomous and 3) schools were also granted their autonomy.

Thus, the government adopted the demands of the private sector and of international organizations such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to strip elementary school teachers of their rights, to impose new regulations and controls over their labor, to eliminate job security and to eliminate the role of unions in collective bargaining and managerial tasks under the framework of "periodic teacher assessment". This was the culmination of 30 years of attacks against the labor, social and political rights of teachers.

But the constitutional amendment and the by-laws that were approved nine months later are not only aggressive and predatory against labor rights, they also de-professionalize the activity of teachers since they attempt to change the essence of being a teacher and of education itself to promote privatization. Furthermore, the media -especially the television stations- deployed a campaign, on the instructions of the hegemonic powers, to viciously attack teachers. They were blamed for everything that is wrong in the education system and they were depicted as ignorant, quarrelsome and opposed to being evaluated. Thus, thou-

sands of outraged teachers decided to fight the reforms.

II. The dynamics of the movement

Let us remember that in Mexico, as in many other Latin American countries, teachers are social leaders who are committed to their communities. As such, they get in the way of businessmen and international organizations who seek to transform the social right to education into a commodity. In addition, the teachers who belong to the National Coordination of Education Workers (CNTE) have been fighting for almost thirty-five years to defend public education and their labor rights. They have also joined forces with other social sectors in popular regional movements, like the one in Oaxaca in 2006.

However, 2013 was a historic year for the teachers' movement due to the strength of the masses and the length of the demonstrations which grew incrementally to include the whole country. It was historic because the government let the teachers know it will not abrogate the reforms or open a national conversation regarding education to solve its problems. Teachers were criminalized and repressed, but not only did they persevere in the fight, they made the protest stronger. It was also historic because of the political gap that was opened up when the president of the teachers union, Elba Esther Gordillo, was imprisoned. She had served in the position for 23 years at the behest of the government, and now, because of a presidential order, she has been politically exterminated.

To give you an idea of the size of the movement, approximately 600,000 teachers participated in the partial and/or prolonged strikes that lasted up to three months, as well as in the demonstrations, sit-downs, protest rallies, tent cities in Mexico City's main plaza (Zocalo) and in other plazas around the country. There were also road blocks, closures of airport entrances in Mexico City, Cancun, Quintana Roo, Tuxtla Gutierrez Chiapas, occupations of oil plants and of local and national Congressional offices. Demonstrations took place at the headquarters of the PRI, PAN and PRD political parties and at the studios of the TV monopolies, as well as at the Stock Exchange, malls, embassies, etc. But local and regional forums were also organized, as well as book reading events, massive classes in public plazas and national and international conferences.

III. What was new?

The rebellion of teachers

When the teachers strike started, on February 25 in Guerrero, the foundations of what would define the movement were established. The National Coordination of Education Workers (CNTE)² was recognized as the historic referent of

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1. To learn more about the initiative, see the paper by María de la Luz Arriaga : "Propuesta empresarial para la mala medición y el despojo de los derechos laborales, Reforma al artículo 3º Constitucional." Published by the Tri-national Coalition for the Defense of Public Education, Mexican Section, January 2013.

2. The National Coordination of Education Workers includes the democratic



Solidarity meeting with Mexican teachers. Photo: Trinational Colalition in the defense public education, mexican section

the country-wide movement, but the teachers who engaged went beyond its traditional groups. Many teachers who had previously been under the influence of “official” leadership joined in as well, which was foreseeable due to the great discontent amongst all teachers alike.

It was also during this period that the governmental strategy to face the movement was rehearsed: relentless media attacks to discredit the movement by portraying teachers as irrationally violent and defending their selfish interests; simulating a dialogue with state agencies after the protest grew stronger and finally, not honoring the agreements and practicing a selective repression to intimidate and inhibit the actions of teachers.

Breaking through

In May, CNTE signed an agreement to carry out nine regional forums as well as a national one with the Ministry of the Interior. However, the government’s intention was to trap CNTE into a discussion of the secondary laws regarding autonomy - the new attributes of the National Institute of Education Evaluation, the General Education Act and the Professional Teacher Service Law. If CNTE had followed through, that would have implied its acceptance of the reforms. But from the onset of the Guerrero strike, and in its Congresses and National Assemblies, the Coordination

clearly established that its central demand was to abrogate the law and have a say in true education reform. This demand was deeply rooted in the grassroots movement and forced the leaders not to accept any negotiation that could be interpreted as an acceptance of the attack.

Time has proved us right because as the forums progressed, it was possible to correct the stereotype the media had created of violent teachers who were only concerned about their own well-being and did not wish to be assessed. Teachers were able to show that they had proposals -as in the case of Guerrero and Michoacan- where the democratic sections have promoted alternative education programs that are humanistic, that include looking after the integral development of children and youngsters, that recover our multi-cultural nature and that emphasize the collective nature of the teaching-learning process. They also included real and useful assessment options, unlike the official standardized tools. The Altamiranista schools in Guerrero³ and the Holistic Schools of Michoacan⁴ are already operating. Teachers in Oaxaca are currently negotiating with the provincial government to create their Education Transformation Program

Furthermore, two important political victories were achieved: the Coordination was acknowledged as the representative and the forums allowed it to increase its area of influence into areas of the country that had collaborated very little with it in the past.

Nevertheless, the forums were limited from the beginning since the Peña Nieto administration would not honor its commitments. The representatives and senators who attended on behalf of the government did so just for appearances sake and to claim they “listened”, but they would

teachers of the National Union of Education Workers (see below). They have fought in favor of public education for more than three decades.

3. The Altamiranista schools are education projects created by democratic teachers that are working in 236 schools in the State of Guerrero, in the regions of Costa Chica, Montaña Alta, Montaña Baja and Tierra Caliente. More than 850 teachers are participating. They were established in the 2011-2012 school year as one of the gains from a general strike of the forty thousand teachers in the state against the Alianza por la Calidad Educativa attempt in 2008 that tried to impose standardized assessment as a tool to allocate resources, measure the quality of teachers and schools and change the education approach by wiping out the multi-cultural nature and the history of indigenous peoples. It takes the name of Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, a free thinker of the XIX Century who was a teacher and political leader born in Tixtla Guerrero.

4. Section XVIII of SNTE was a pioneer in the promotion and implemen-

tation of alternative education programs created through the vast participation of teachers from the schools and regions in the state of Michoacan. They are also a part of CNTE. The project was launched in 2002 and there are currently 56 holistic schools at the beginners levels (the non-integrated indigenous schools), pre-school, elementary and high school levels. There are currently 476 teachers in 30 municipalities and 7040 students.

leave as soon as they could.

Another limitation was the fact that in spite of the claims that all stakeholders were invited to the forums, the truth is that little was done to include other sectors that have defended public education, especially students and university teachers or civil society organizations that could help win the fight for public education. In the end, the forums only included CNTE people.

Education for emancipation - the dispute

In spite of the enormous effort that had to go into the organization, elaboration and discussion of the documents in the forums agreed upon with the government, in the end the great breakthrough were the acts of collective reflection with about ten thousand participants and the writing of hundreds of presentations and proposals stemming from the reality that is currently lived by teachers and students in numerous regions around the country. Main achievements were the analysis and compilation of experiences in different regions, from 2008 and the uprising against the *Alliance for Education Quality (ACE)*, the teachers strike in Morelos and the demonstrations in numerous places in the country.

No return to school: defending the dignity of teachers

Between August 19 and September 13, a tent city was set up in the Zocalo main plaza while indefinite strikes arose in Oaxaca and Michoacan. The revolt spread throughout the country in response to the evident deceit of the government and the wretchedness of politicians who installed a working office at a bank nearby when the House of Representatives and the Senate were surrounded by the camping site.

The decision not to go back to school and to declare an indefinite strike in Oaxaca and Michoacan, plus the reinforcement of the camp in the Zocalo in Mexico City with massive numbers from those states, was the first demonstration that the democratic teachers would not accept the imposition of the reforms and the secondary laws. And even if the politicians tried to fool them and the government, representatives, senators and all of the media pointed at them and called them criminals, teachers were willing to show that they had right on their side and the strength to defend not only their rights but also their dignity as professionals.

The siege around the Congress showed how rotten the political class is and how little the representatives and senators care about the republic and its institutions. Blocking the entrances to the airport and embassies made the teachers discontent visible at an international level.

A tactical limitation of the movement during that period was not taking advantage of the great potential of thousands of teachers in Mexico City—the political heart of the country— who could have formed brigades at the main universities, hospitals and public offices to reach out to public workers, students and the general population. They could have not only sought their solidarity, but could have helped in getting those groups organized and insert local struggles

into a general one to defend social rights. It was not until the teachers were evicted from the Zocalo that the brigades started in universities and higher education institutions.

A very important initiative that generated high expectations was the First National Popular Teachers Encounter organized by CNTE. The relevance of this event was that CNTE was conveying that the movement was much more than a single organization fighting, and that social organizations were called upon to join forces in the defense of public education. Thus, the creation of a true national front against neo-liberal reforms became a possibility, even though it never materialized.

The return to school was done gradually, with the intention of keeping the fight against the reforms alive.

IV. The impact

Firstly, the movement revealed the true nature of the newly-installed Peña Nieto administration as one of great illegality and authoritarianism. It showed how much it was bending to the desires of Capital and for-profit transnationals such as the OECD, which is still dictating public policy.

Secondly, it showed the reactionary nature of the media in publicly lynching and criminalizing social struggles, especially those concerning teachers. Their attitude was almost fascist as they used so-called “specialists” to try to impose social consensus on the reforms.

Today it is crystal-clear that our government has no legitimacy and intends to achieve acceptance through coercive media. The use of public forces and the army to intimidate and repress is becoming more and more frequent.

The teachers’ fight has also triggered a questioning of the constitutional changes, not only in Mexico but also abroad. This came about because of the strength of the movement and the solidarity actions of several groups, but especially by the Tri-National Coalition for the Defense of Public Education, and the Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas (IDEA), not just from the start of the protests but throughout its 20 years of existence.⁵ It is no accident that wherever Peña Nieto travels -or any public official from the Ministry of Education- he has been forced to defend the virtues of the “Education Reform”.

Finally, we believe that because of the fight by the thousands of teachers who risked everything in 2013 to stop attacks on the right to education and to defend historic labor victories, we now have a better chance of changing the balance of forces in favor of popular struggles.

5. The Tri-National Coalition to Defend Public Education was founded in 1993 by unionists and academics from Mexico, the United States and Canada to confront the privatization of education they could see coming with the signing of the North America Free Trade Agreement. The Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas (IDEA Network) was founded in 1999. In September and October 2013, as a result of an international solidarity campaign, more than 50 statements of solidarity were received from unions and social organizations in the Americas, England and France. There were protests at the Mexican consulates in Los Angeles, Chicago, Vancouver and Toronto as well as radio interviews, information campaigns in American cities, participation at international conferences etc. For more information: www.forolaboral.com.mx

Ayotzinapa and the offensive against the Mexican people



The structural reforms imposed in Mexico (educational, labour, telecommunications, financial, fiscal, political and to energy) have not achieved the economic growth and the general welfare that the government promised Mexican society.

On the contrary, the reforms have deepened the social crisis, and increased to alarming rates violence and militarization in the country.

One of the most aggressive reforms has been to education, which far from being a pedagogical project to improve conditions in public education, it concentrates on constitutional changes that make standardized tests obligatory, and base teachers employment and advancement on the results of those tests. Since the beginning of this reform the Mexican government declared an offensive against public education and against teachers unions.

In this scenario the September 26, 2014 state crime against students from the rural normal school "Raúl Isidro Burgos" in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero adds to the list of grievances against teachers and Mexican society. The police attack on student-teachers in the city of Iguala, Guerrero, close to the 27 Battalion of the Mexican army, resulted in the killing of César Ramírez Nava, Daniel Solís, Julio César Mondragón; and severe injuries to Aldo Gutiérrez (whom, after being shot is still in coma), and Edgar Vargas (whom his right jaw and the base of his nose were destroyed); and the forced disappearance of 43 other student teachers.

The attack generated an international commotion; Mexico and the doings of the current president Enrique Peña Nieto were at the center of attention. At the national level there was a broad response backed by university students, the democratic current of the teachers' union (CNTE), and social organizations, as well as society in general who joined the different actions called by the students of Ayotzinapa and the fathers and mothers of the 43 disappeared. The most notable actions were marches, collection of food provisions, occupations, 24, 48 and 72 hour university strikes, and different and extensive actions designated "Global Action for Ayotzinapa." In the international arena, solidarity pronouncements were present from the beginning, as well as different acts of solidarity such as protests in front of Mexican embassies and consulates in different countries around the world.

These actions put in evidence the crisis of legitimacy and credibility of the Mexican state and its institutions. The outrage, strength and creativity present in the protests have made a clear statement to the government that the support for student-teachers and the fathers and mothers of the disappeared will remain firm to demand justice for the appearance alive of the 43 disappeared students and punishment of those responsible for the killings of Cesar, Daniel, Julio Cesar, as well as the aggressions against Aldo and Edgar.

A matter of great concern has been the direct intervention of the United States in this state crime. Since the Merida Initiative, the United States has contributed to the militarization of the country and to the instrumentalization of counterinsurgency measures. That is why it is crucial to focus national and international attention on what happened in Ayotzinapa.

Ayotzinapa uncovers the criminal policy that is being exercised against the youth, and against all of those opposed to the privatization, the violation of social and labor rights, as well as those who demand the government to stop the destruction of natural resources and who demand an end to the handover of the country to foreign investors.

¡Alive they were taken! Alive we want them returned! ¡WE ARE NOT COMPLETE, WE ARE MISSING 43!

María Ramos
IDEA, April 2015

California public education – 2014

The stakes grow ever higher!

Steve Miller, Steve Teixeira y Rosemary Lee*



Photo: Latino California

The past year saw a new generation step onto the political stage in California and in the USA. The same students who are being driven out of higher education have united with their peers from the streets to protest police murder, especially of African-Americans and Latinos, and the rise of the militarized police state in America.

This precariat generation is forced to work for temp jobs, contingent jobs, part-time jobs, day-labor jobs... whatever. Many will never work 40 hours a week with benefits, making enough to afford a house and health care for their family as most of their parents were able to do. The new generation is not waiting for politicians “to fix” the situation.

The US is beginning to manifest growing movements that parallel the more powerful national movements in Mexico. Ferguson and Ayotzinapa show that class warfare, police murder, the Drug War and the New Jim Crow are inseparable from the increasing battles to protect and expand public education.

In public education we are quite familiar with the

“school-to-prison pipeline”. Education policies drive students out of public schools at all levels, to then be seized by the police, arrested and incarcerated, and spending years in prison. The US jails more people than any country in the world, mostly for non-violent offenses.

This historical political rising in the United States is still developing. It also manifests itself in protests against the privatization of public education. University students in California immediately took to the streets in protest against the latest proposals to raise student fees. Protests against police murder in Ferguson, Missouri, New York and California have occurred in both colleges and high schools across the state.

In Jefferson County, Colorado, students walked out in protest of a new, sanitized curriculum that drops the history of civil dissent and civil disobedience by African-Americans, Native Americans, Latinos and working people in

* I (Members of The Trinational Coalition in Defense of the Public Education)

1. The term precariat refers to the growing numbers of workers in the United States trapped in a cycle of poorly paid temporary “contract” employment with little or no medical coverage and few benefits.

2. A town near St. Louis Missouri, that was the scene of many protests and a militarized response by the State in 2014 following the shooting death of African-American boy Michael Brown by local police.

3. “Jim Crow” refers to a series of laws enacted in the southern US states that reinforced the segregation of African-Americans in public places, including schools, hospitals, restaurants and public transit. These laws also impeded African-Americans ability to vote. The original Jim Crow laws were declared unconstitutional and overturned in US Supreme Court rulings in 1954, 1964 and 1965. But in recent years a number of southern states have enacted



the United States. In California, the El Rancho, Los Angeles and San Francisco school districts, students, teachers and parents successfully fought to make ethnic studies a high school graduation requirement.

The situation is polarizing as it continues to develop. Corporations continue to dominate the discussion and drive the agenda!

The surging privatization of public education in California in 2014 reflects the national picture in the US. Whereas for-profit corporations have been penetrating and deforming public education for more than a decade, they are now in the position to call the shots.

"The market size of K-12 education is projected to be \$788.7 billion. And currently, much of that money is spent in the public sector. "It's really the last honeypot for Wall Street." Worldwide, the education market is now estimated to be \$6 trillion a year. (1)

Billionaires like Bill Gates and corporations like Pearson have forced the country to adopt national standardized curricula and performance standards known as Common Core. They claim that these are much-needed educational reforms. James Shelton, Deputy Director of the US Department of Education (and a long-term education investor) explains it differently:

"Common Core standards will allow education companies to produce products that "can scale across many markets," overcoming the "fragmented procurement market" that has plagued investors seeking to enter the K-12 sector. Moreover, Shelton and his team manage an education innovation budget, awarding grants to charter schools and research centers to advance the next breakthrough in education technology. Increased research and development in education innovation, Shelton wrote in testimony to Congress, will spark the next "equivalent of Google or Microsoft to lead the global learning technology market." He added, "I want it to be a US company." (2)

Corporations in California have the political initiative

and define "education reform". In the Fall, 2014 elections, Green Dot Charter Schools founder, multi-millionaire investment banker Marshall Tuck ran for California State Superintendent of Education, a secondary post. Though he lost, corporations spent \$20 million in his behalf, far more than was spent for the governor's election.

Meanwhile, Los Angeles, home of Green Dot, showed what corporations do when they control public education. The LA school superintendent spent \$1.3 billion to buy iPads from Apple. The FBI is now investigating the iPad program, because the Superintendent himself stood to make money from the deal.

Silicon Valley billionaires, near San Francisco, have become crusaders for "education reform." Their yearly report calls for turning public schools into a market for corporate profits. Billionaire Reed Hastings, CEO of Netflix, is a funder of charter school corporations like NewSchools.org, Aspire, Green Dot and KIPP. Hastings has called for the end of community elected school boards and for moving 90% of America's children into charter schools in the next 30 years. The New America Foundation is prominent in the ongoing attack to privatize California's community colleges. The chairman of the New America Foundation's board of directors is Eric Schmidt, the CEO of Google.

Another Silicon Valley billionaire, David Welch, won a lawsuit against teacher tenure, the right of teachers to have due process instead of being fired without protection. The decision is now on appeal. An additional lawsuit is in play to prohibit teacher unions from dues check-off, essentially sabotaging union finances. After all, the "problem" is that public schools spend 85% of their money for America's 3.7 million teachers. Solution: get rid of the teachers.

California teachers, like other public workers who work for state and local government, across the country, are under attack. Our labor rights are being whittled away. For example, California has two pension funds, one for public workers and another for teachers. These are the largest in the country. Pensions, which are deferred wages, negotiated as part of past contracts, are now under massive attack by Wall Street and their government allies, including Obama.

new laws impeded the vote of African Americans.

5. "Charter schools are schools administered by or other private organizations, but funded by the State."



California once had the world's finest system of public education. After completing high school, students were supported to continue an affordable education at either the University of California level, at one of the 23 campuses of the California State University, or in the largest community college network in the world, which served students who needed to get ready for university or for a career. This system, which was all covered by the

The game is that the state governments and public employers refuse to make their legally-mandated employer contributions. Next “experts” proclaim that pensions are not making enough money to cover future expenses 20 years down the road. Then financiers promise to invest the pensions to make an 8% profit in risky investments to cover the losses... and then charge huge fees, which eat up the profits.

The University of California, one of the most respected public universities in the world, is demanding a student fee increase in order to compensate for the University's failure to make pension payments. This pits students against professors. Meanwhile, at all levels of higher education, California follows the national pattern: 70% of the faculty are contingent workers who work from semester to semester, must travel from campus to campus, and have no job protection.

Charter schools are publically funded but privately owned. They are expanding across the state and the country in elementary and secondary schools. They have become extractive industries for the financial industry nationally because the charter school corporation can withdraw 40% of the money that it receives from the state. Here's how: financial capitalists get a 39% New Market Tax Credit on investments to build charters. The charters then pay the rent and the debt-servicing. The money is then withdrawn from the state-supplied funds that they receive. (4)

Rocketship Schools charter corporation, was the poster child for privatization, touting a business model that eliminates teachers . . . until test results crashed their glowing promises. That didn't stop CEO John Danner, however, from his new venture: an app for smartphones called Zeal that

re recipients off welfare under President Clinton in 1995. They also demanded payment up front to attend community colleges at the beginning of the semester, without giving students any notice.

Now the goal is to re-make the Master Plan to address “the realities of the 21st Century”. With over 1/3 of the workforce now forced into temp jobs by electronic laborless production, corporations now need to educate fewer workers. The social conclusion means ending the chance for an affordable education.

Private for-profit colleges like the so-called University of Phoenix, and a number of others, have fought for “market-share” against community colleges for a decade or more. They see community colleges as their direct competition. For-profit colleges hook students on lifetime student loans, which are government guaranteed and therefore go directly to profits. However only about 20% of their students graduate, and many who do graduate are underqualified for jobs. If community colleges are destroyed, for-profits obviously stand to profit.

Colleges and universities have not only faced attacks, but also have birthed an inspiring movement of thousands of undocumented students, who challenged their second-class status by protesting on campuses, in the streets and even in meetings of state legislatures and the U.S. Congress. They were a key part of the huge national mobilization against a proposed anti-immigrant law on May 1, 2006 – with almost 500,000 people taking to the streets in Los Angeles alone, the biggest political protest in the city’s history. Close to a million marched in San Jose with hundreds of thousands more across the state. But as Alfonso Gonzales reports in his book *Reform Without Justice*, political elites skillfully steered much of that energy into election campaigns for Democratic candidates such as Barack Obama in the 2008 elections, using the slogan “Today We March, Tomorrow We Vote”.

Hopes stayed high during the first years of the Obama Administration, as the President issued his DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) order allowing hundreds of thousands of undocumented students to study and even work. But student activists began to realize that instead of being their champion, the federal government was deporting other undocumented people at a higher rate than President Bush had. After a period of intense debate, the most aware undocumented students began returning to the streets across the country, though the less conscious activists defended the president and blamed the Republicans for not allowing him to pass immigration legislation.

Then Obama issued a new executive order in November 2014, and DACA students were stunned to learn that he had betrayed their families by protecting only undocumented parents with U.S.-born children. As 2015 began, undocumented students were making plans to renew their struggle and safeguard its independence from politicians and their parties.

Undoubtedly, in 2015 corporate capital will manipulate technology, money and politicians to continue its effort



Fast food restaurant workers and allies march on a MacDonalds' to demand better salaries and the right to unionize.
Photo: Associated Press

to privatize public education. It is also certain that resistance will continue to arise in every region of the country among those who work in, study in, and rely on public education. The lessons provided by these struggles, as well as our historic struggles for justice, can inspire working class parents, students and teachers to help them maintain their independence from economic and political elites.

Just as undocumented students learned the importance of uniting with non-students to fight against anti-immigrant laws, students, parents and educators must continue to join with the growing number of displaced workers to fight against the increasing impoverishment and repression generated by the turmoil of global high-tech capitalism. We are at a historic crossroads. Either we will see millions of people displaced and completely stripped of all their rights or the new generation will lead us forward in the creation of a truly democratic world.

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- (4) Democracy Now. Leonard Isenberg. “There’s Gold In Them Charters! Big Banks Making a Bundle On New Construction as Schools Bear the Cost.” (<http://www.perdaily.com/2010/05/theres-gold-in-them-charters.html>)
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Elements of the education situation in Peru

Hamer Eduardo Villena Zúñiga*



Photo: CENSUTEP: Peruvian Education Workers' Union

25 years ago Latin America was experiencing a process of resistance to the economic neoliberal model implemented by both civilian and dictatorial governments. That process resulted in changes and the emergence of governments in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Uruguay and others that apply economic models distinct from the neoliberal one.

Unfortunately, this is not the case of Peru, where the neoliberal model has been imposed for the past 24 years, exacerbating the crisis in education, which has existed since the foundation of the republic. This is why we characterize the education crisis in Peru as current, structural and historical.

When president Ollanta Humala Tasso's government assumed office in 2011, there were hopes of change because of what he promised in his campaign, but the situation has remained the same. Furthermore, this government has deepened the **neoliberal economic model**, and maintained the **education model subordinate to those economic interests**.

One characteristic during the past 24 years has been the creation of conditions to advance in the privatization of education. Currently, 50-80% of basic education (early, primary and secondary) is already privatized; and privatization of higher education has reached 80%.

In other words, all governments since the 1990's have maintained the same educational system that supports the dominant economic model in the country, a "resource export" model.

Humala's government began its education mandate with a sociologist as education minister and recently assigned economist Jaime Saavedra Chanduvi to that post. We are dealing with a technocrat, trained and specialized in the quarries of the International Monetary Fund in the application and implementation of "Public-Private Partnerships" (P3). The Minister

has already announced the implementation of this mode of privatization in Peru, starting with the construction of infrastructure in some schools. To no surprise, the announcement has been well received by the business sector and has merited the praise of every commercial media outlet and other right wing bodies across the country.

In view of this situation, our organization, the Education Workers Union of Peru – SUTEP – has deepened research and debate about P3s among teachers from all regions of the country. The union has carried out to raise the awareness of teachers, parents, students and society in general of the **dangers of implementing P3s in Peruvian education**.

SUTEP's proposal is to generate a National Pedagogical Movement in defense of free, quality, public Education. This is a movement not only to reject neoliberal policies in education, but also to build alternative proposals, being aware that it will be a difficult struggle, considering **neoliberals control the government and all state powers, as well as most national media**.

By launching this proposal, through participation in the media and carrying out days of action, SUTEP has reached partial, yet important results. These include an increase in education spending to 3.00% of the Gross Domestic Product; the progressive restitution of the full school schedule in one thousand pilot schools; a \$35 increase in wages for contract and secondary school teachers; and payment of special allowances for teachers who work in conflict areas. Through these actions SUTEP has managed to position itself as a union which open to dialogue and which generate proposals.

It is clear that results so far are partial and SUTEP will continue struggling to achieve better conditions for teachers. It is also clear that if the Ministry of Education continues to push Public-Private Partnerships in their management of education confrontation with this government will become more intense.

* Secretary General of the Education Workers Union of Peru-SUTEP.

“Modernizing” education reforms and the attack on teacher organizations in Ecuador

Edgar Isch L.*



UNE hits the streets to reject unpaid increase in teaching hours.

Neoliberal policies were imposed on Ecuador in a comprehensive way from the 1980s until 2007. However, indigenous and popular organizations, including the National Union of Teachers (UNE) and student organizations (mainly the federations of university and secondary students, FEUE and FESE respectively), were able to mount powerful resistance and prevent the complete application of neoliberalism.

This popular struggle also led to Rafael Correa becoming president and the start of a government that was based on the support of the popular movements and that declared itself to be anti-neoliberal. At the beginning, this government carried out some important actions and established constitutional principles that responded to the social demands of past decades. Later, however, it became more identified with the kind of “modernization” that bolsters capitalism while maintaining some social democratic measures.

Among the positive aspects of the government’s early years, increased funding for education must be acknowledged. In addition, there was an increase in the number of public schools, particularly in marginalized urban areas, providing school breakfasts and lunches (although in 2013 the lunch was eliminated and an “enhanced breakfast” offered instead). Free uniforms were given to students in rural schools and textbooks to about three million elementary students.

However the idea of modernizing by copying the world powers was expressed by President Correa himself: We must globalize in order to compare ourselves with the best... to aspire to the highest level: a system of higher education that can stand among the best in the world (cited by Vidoz, 2014). Increasingly, the focus has been on following the hegemonic measures of developed countries: university entrance exams; standardized testing; private programmes such as the International Baccalaureate; PISA tests; ranking of universities; almost complete destruction of university autonomy; diminishing the importance of humanities and social sciences and expanding technical programmes; dividing students into “winners” and “losers”; prioritizing “indexed journals” over scientific texts, among many others. Contradictorily, this is all being done with increased funding for public education, which more students have access to now than before, and through a broad scholarship programme which allows young Ecuadorians to study in foreign universities (currently more than 8,000).

The legacy of neoliberalism is the idea that education should be at the service of corporations and their needs. This means that public resources are serving private interests. Even the new and very expensive university, created as a “City of Knowledge”, will carry out the research that industry requires and establish a mainly private industrial centre.

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The current situation

There continue to be many conflicts. The first is because, despite the decision announced by the government to offer appointments to 12,000 teachers through a new funding formula introduced in 2007, there is a high rate of precarious employment. Of the 147,129 teachers in the national education system in 2013, only 99,611 have permanent positions that ensure job security. 47,518 are working under “temporary contracts” with salaries of between \$430 and \$530 dollars (approximately half that of a teacher with a permanent position).

In terms of the federal budget, 3.7 million dollars were allotted to education in 2014. This is only 4.9% of the GDP and clearly fails to meet the constitutional mandate of at least 6%.

Another critical aspect is the construction of the so-called “Millenium Schools” - schools which are given all the necessary technology, in contrast with the approximately 30,000 other educational institutions which have only 7,758 computer labs, 1,280 science labs and 205 language labs (AMIE 2009-2010). At the same time rural indigenous and community schools keep being closed under the pretext that every school can't have laboratories and that they want to reduce the number of schools to 6,000. This breaks down the community social fabric around schools and the children have to travel many kilometres every day, which adds to the cost of their education.

In terms of quality, the government highlights certain achievements (El Ciudadano, 2011) that raise questions about what has really been accomplished because of the lack of a comprehensive educational proposal after four years of government. There are curriculum projects (Unified Baccalaureate, International Baccalaureate, upgraded elementary curriculum) that are worked on in isolation, along with others that meet the needs of a few rather than the general population. Thus the state is creating new forms of discrimination in education, all under the desire to create a “meritocracy” which, in the case of teachers, will be reflected in “performance pay.” Awards and punishments are clear mechanisms of social discipline.

The attacks on UNE

In Ecuador there is just one teachers union, the National Union of Teachers (UNE). It represents teachers at all levels of education, has a national structure and is recognized as one of the largest labour organizations in the country. At the beginning of its term, the government recognized the union as an ally and proponent of important reforms.

However, when the government of Rafael Correa began to implement measures to weaken social organizations, they tried to develop a process of voluntary re-affiliation which mobilized the majority of teachers in the country to defend their organization.

Another measure taken against UNE was to suspend the union dues paid directly by the membership to the organization. Through a difficult process it has been necessary to establish a payment system through a private bank, affirming the

support of the members for the union and its leadership. At the same time, union activities were prohibited from being carried out in public schools because they were considered political acts that destabilize the democratic system.

The government has also eliminated leaves for union business. This means that union leaders must work eight hours every day in their schools before leaving for the union office to carry out union activities.

Additionally, a process of criminalizing social protest is underway which has about 200 movement leaders charged with rebellion or terrorism. These charges are also being used against students who participate in public demonstrations, along with other measures that aim to publicly humiliate them. In the case of teachers, three measures are currently in place: the prohibition on strikes or participation of teachers in protest activities during work time; the prohibition on public pronouncements by school principals (which was used to justify the firing of the UNE president in the province of Guayas¹); and finally, the prosecution of leaders who criticize or oppose government policies.

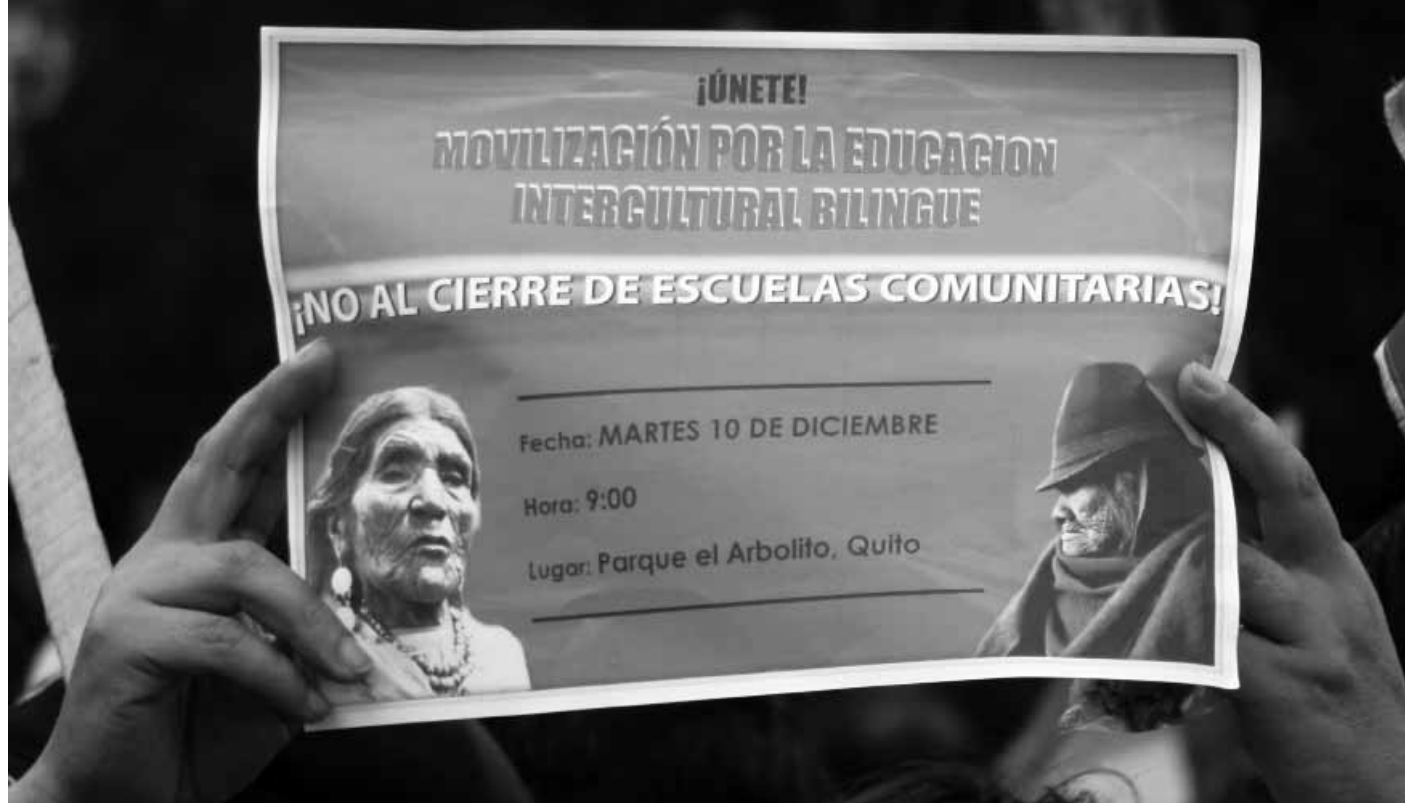
One of the most serious cases is the one against Mery Zamora who, in her capacity as national president of UNE, happened to visit a school on September 30, 2010 when an uprising by the police took place. She was charged with “sabotage and terrorism” and sentenced to eight years in jail to begin once all legal recourse had been used in her defense. After a long process, the sentence was reviewed and she was declared innocent, but the government is trying to reopen the case, which could happen in the near future.

There are also the cases of the Cotopaxi Three, whose sentence to one year in jail ended in December 2014, and Rosaura Bastides, a teacher accused of terrorism. In all these cases, the alleged crime is participating in popular demonstrations.

A few months ago, an Education International-Latin America (EI-LA) delegation was in Ecuador to examine these cases and they concluded that there is a situation of political persecution going on that requires international solidarity. This persecution began during a teachers strike that won important victories for labour (Isch López, 2010) and prevented the attempt to create the new teachers organization which the President had called for. Recently the government has resumed its efforts by trying to organize temporary contract teachers into a union without autonomy and without social recognition.

It is important to note that these anti-union measures were taken after the government had announced an end to its relations with most of the popular organizations and a change in its policies. This in spite of the fact that in many forums Rafael Correa continues to use a leftist discourse. In others, however, he openly expresses that he is neither anti-capitalist nor anti-imperialist (he said so on the occasion of Hillary Clinton's visit to Ecuador), or he says that in terms of the accu-

1. Similarly, the teachers on contract are made to sign a “confidentiality” clause which prohibits them from making any institutional information public, even though, according to the Constitution, this information is by definition public as it relates to a public institution.



No to school closures. The National Union of Ecuadorian Educators.

mulation of wealth, the government continues being the same as before but better, or that he doesn't want to affect the rich (El Telégrafo, 2012).

Lessons from the Ecuadorian experience

The experience of the National Teachers Union highlights the strength that can be achieved through democratic ways of organizing, as well as the importance of union autonomy in the face of political and economic power. The most recent elections to choose the new national leadership of UNE, in December 2013, in which more than 70% of public education teachers participated, demonstrated the active life of the union and the support it receives from the membership all over the country.

The Ecuadorian government's actions against popular organizations, more specifically against UNE, temporarily weakened the ability to mobilize, but it has not been able to reach its goal of destroying the independent unions. This can be seen in the large marches that the unions have recently organized against labour reforms that eliminate rights as well as those organized by many other social organizations demanding their rights, as in the case of the indigenous movement.

This experience demonstrates the need for a teachers union that can defend labour and human rights, but can also develop the capacity to advocate and have an impact on government education policies and put the brakes on the neoliberal sectors. UNE is committed to its "Education for Emancipation" proposal, which means struggling for social and national emancipation as well. That's why they are opposing policies of development and extraction that reinforce the international dependence of the country and keep the accumulation of social wealth in the hands of the few.

It is clear that there is still a long way to go in the struggle for rights. Especially with a government that wants capitalist modernization and aims to imitate the so-called "successful" countries. Reformism is deceptive and it even presents itself as the "new left," but this is nothing more than a new way of feeding the accumulation of capital into the hands of the powerful.

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Public education, social movements and recovery of popular education in Brasil

Roberto Leher*

In Brazil, the bourgeois revolution was prematurely interrupted, favoring the coexistence of the archaic, modern and ultra-modern. The power of backwardness is nourished by a dependent capitalist economy, by the brutal expropriations and by labor degradation.

Brazil is in the 8th place according to the world GDP however, in the absence of universal republican reforms, even basic education (12 years, comprising 9 elementary school and 3 secondary schools) was universalized in the XXI century. The percentage of children who attend elementary school is 97.3% (IBGE-PNAD, 2012), but differences in schooling by class, race, ethnicity, rural and city are abysmal. Absenteeism in basic education across the country is 24.3% and only 67% of 16 year olds conclude this level. The total average years of studies by Brail's population is 7.4 years, one of the three lowest in South America. In high school, only 53% conclude this level up to 17 years¹. Less than half the population reaches high school and the modality reserved for young workers at this level of education is, increasingly, professional education. In the 2012 School Census the path of the expansion of enrollments in vocational education was confirmed, that in 2007 was of 780,162 and reached, in 2012, until 1,362,200 registrations - 74.6% of growth in the period (INEP / MEC, 2012).

The percentage of young people of 18 to 24 years enrolled in some form of higher education (classroom, distance, short courses) is a mere 15.4% (2012) and the gross enrollment rate is 30.2%: of the 7.3 million who attend higher education (2013), approximately 1.2 million are enrolled in distance courses and 1 million in short courses (2 to 3 years). Meanwhile, the numbers are not only low, since 77% of enrollments are concentrated in large corporations controlled by investment funds (private equity) that diversify their investment portfolio in various sectors, aiming only to profits. And the growth trend in enrollments in the private sector is rapidly expanding, whereas the percentage of new public enrollments in relation to the new private is paltry 13.1%, according to the PNAD / IBGE (2012).

By understanding that local bourgeois factions would not carry forward social reforms as part of their class project, Florestan Fernandes², defended the need for a "new starting point" for the struggles in benefit of public education. In his assessment, the educational agenda could no longer be guided by citizens (not feasible in the pattern of accumulation of capital that was established in Brazil, especially after the

dictatorship, reality that was not altered by neoliberal policies which began in the 90s), but rather by an education for (and in) socialism. Educational struggles were staged by educators and students, without reaching a social force capable of altering the educational apartheid between classes, difference that is expressed most dramatically when black, indigenous and peasant people are considered. In order to reverse that educational portrait, struggles would have to count with the presence of the entire working class so that the dominant sectors could be confronted with their particularistic goals.

In the early years of the 1960s, popular education in Brazil dialogued with farmers, but, at that time, without a systematic participation of trade unions and peasant movements. When the pedagogy of Paulo Freire was incorporated by these movements, the corporate-military dictatorship in 1964 interrupted those experiences, imposing a technicist pedagogy, referenced in the so called human capital theory of the Chicago School, especially Schultz and Friedman. Since then, the split between the movements of workers and the struggle of educators was not overcome, in spite of the efforts in that direction and, therefore, the technocrats continued to gain strength, especially since 2000, when the dominant sectors united in a powerful business coalition to define the guidelines of public education, called All for Education (2007)³.

In the final period of the dictatorship, in 1983, the Unified Workers' Central (CUT) was created, conceived as an autonomous and classist central. The public sector workers could only form unions after the Constitution of 1988 and, quickly, joined the new Central. In the early 90s, unions representing workers of education advocated to create a joint space of educational struggles within the national CUT, the National Department of Education Workers (DNTE): a horizontal structure to organize a united struggle in benefit of public education, breaking segmentations of "basic"/"technological"/"superior"; teachers/technical and administrative, and public and private sector workers, consisted of a base representation, rejecting the verticalization of representation in the form of Federations and Confederations foreseen in the union structure established by the State since the dictatorship of the New State (1935).

Meanwhile, the defense of horizontal organization structures was a defeated thesis in the CUT, since the mid-90s, hindering the national organization of struggles and, above all, the rooting of educational struggles by the entire working class.

Therefore, workers of education remained organized in Brazil as follows: labor unions of workers of basic educa-

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1. Brasil has the lowest average years of study in South America, according to the UNDP, G-1, 14/03/2013 <http://g1.globo.com/educacao/noticia/2013/03/brasil-tem>

2. Florestan Fernandes, O desafio educacional. SP: Cortez: Autores Associados, 1989.

tion at municipal or state level constituted the National Confederation of Education Workers (CNTE); unions of teachers of private institutions created the National Confederation of Workers in Education Institutions (CONTEE); teachers in higher education institutions, organized in trade union branches at the universities formed the National Union of Teachers of Higher Education Institutions (ANDES-SN); teachers, technical and administrative workers of the institutions of federal technological education became organized in the National Union of Federal Basic and Professional Education Workers (SINASEFE), and unions of technical and administrative workers of Federal Institutions of Higher Education, organized by universities, formed the Federation of Unions of Workers of Brazilian Universities (FASUBRA).

Faced with the fragmentation of the representations, the main space of unity of action was consolidated in the National Forum in Defense of Public School (FNDEP) that congregated academic institutions, trade unions, civil society organizations. The Forum was a key player in the constituent process of 1987-1988, obtaining partial victories (without cost, State's duty to guarantee the right to education, university autonomy, etc.) and the draft Bill on Guidelines and Bases for National Education which was defeated by another project supported by the then President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC).

Despite its positivism and, certainly, from his prominent place in the history of Brazilian education in the post-dictatorship period, the Forum had concrete limits. Being a space of unity of action through consensus, on many occasions academic institutions, for example, were reluctant to direct struggles against neoliberal policies that accumulated in the Cardoso period, restricting unity to specifically education issues. When, in 1996, a call for a National Education Congress (CONED) was proposed with broad participation of grassroots organizations, schools and universities, a leading academic institution refused to participate in the Congress, arguing that the education issue would be too politicized. Despite the difficulties, the CONEDs were performed with great success, approving a National Education Plan proposal: Proposal of the Brazilian Society in which educators and students presented Congress and society with an alternative to the neoliberal agenda of FHC. Although defeated in 2001, the project expressed the disagreement of workers with the direction of education in Brazil.

On the ideological level, CUT redefined its position on public education since the mid-90s. The metallurgists defended the thesis of technological unemployment, as if the closure of jobs was determined by professional qualification (as advocated, for example, by Francis Fukuyama). CUT proceeded to support vocational training projects from the business system (S system) and the same CUT ist unions proceeded to sponsor professional qualification courses of short duration. The human capital theory met a new period of splendor. Cleverly,

FHC ensured generous transfers of resources from the Workers' Support Fund (FAT) for the (now) cutist citizen union. Instead of defending the unitary public school, the CUT moved on to sponsor training courses, including courses run by the fat man via S System (Senai, Senac...). In summary, since the first decade of 2000, there were organizational regressions, expressed in the abandonment of DNTE, ideological, when cutist unions assimilated the agenda of corporate professional training and the FNDEP failed to extend the struggles in benefit of public education apart from institutional conflicts in the National Congress.

The opposite happened with the dominant sectors. In the 1990s, capital coalitions, such as the Latin America Educational Reform Program (PREAL), directed by USAID, corporations, World Bank, CEPAL found its way to contest the guidelines of public education, focusing its intervention on the issue of "quality" of public education. Business entities concluded that the main problem was the reluctance of teachers to reforms (neoliberal) and, therefore, it would be essential to break the monopoly of teaching knowledge, which was effectively carried out by a systematic expropriation of work, guided by evaluation of results, goals, remuneration by performance and through deconstructing the image of teachers, presenting them as ill-prepared professionals, uncommitted to education of the "poor", assessment resistant and corporatist.

Strengthened by the business support and organizational difficulties of education workers, FHC was able to approve the Master Plan for the State Reform that conceives education as a competitive service and not exclusive of the State, paving the way for large public-private societies.

Throughout Latin America, the resistance to neoliberal policies increased, leading to the removal of more than a dozen presidents. In Brazil, the impact of CONEDs and the World Social Forums, which counted with broad participation of the trade unions and grassroots student movement, was significant; they nurtured the hope that it would be possible to build national struggle fronts. The national strike of teachers, technicians and administrators from universities and federal technological education centers of 2001, massive and with a broad presence, stalled at least temporarily, part of the neoliberal agenda. The blockades to convert universities into businesses under private law and to the hiring of teachers outside the public service were positive balances of these struggles.

In January of 2005, by virtue of the differences between the unions around the CONED's agenda, that rejected the transfer of public funds for education companies, the plenary of the FNDEP did not reach new consensus, as part of the Forum sustained governmental programs that transferred public funds to private institutions and, ever since, the Forum ceased to gather all entities which, in practice, led to its dissolution. From the crisis of the Forum, the conditions for the dominant sectors to advance were the best possible. The financial sector - organized as a party, in the gramscian sense - undertook a wide appeal and expanded a business coalition to dispute education, creating the Commitment All for Education Movement (TPE). The TPE assumes that educational reform is part of their national project. That ambition quickly proved feasi-

3. Olinda Evangelista e Roberto Leher. Todos pela educação e o episódio Costin no MEC: a Pedagogia do capital em ação na política educacional brasileira, In: Trabalho Necessário, Ano 10, n.15, 2012, disponível em: <http://www.uff.br/trabalhonecessario/images/TN1519%20Artigo%20Roberto%20Leher%20e%20Olinda%20Evangelista.pdf>

ble, when the Lula government while presenting its core educational proposal, the Development of Education Plan (PDE), claimed, without haste, that the goal of the Plan was to implement TPE's agenda, naming it Commitment All for Education.

In basic education, TPE adapts and recontextualizes the educational agenda of George W. Bush government's "No Child Left Behind". Schools and teachers must meet the targets of the Development Index of Basic Education (IDEB), without resources being reduced and the remuneration of the servers stop counting with "performance bonuses". In public higher education, Lula government launched the Restructuring of Federal Universities (REUNI), a project that combines neoliberal precepts of the Bologna Process and USAID's guidelines on the relevance of the model community colleges in Brazil. At the same time, although more discreetly, the global assessment (PISA in basic education/world ranking of universities) stepped forward, and the Tunning Project of unification of the competencies desired by the capital in all the educational institutions of the dependent capitalist countries.

In the private sector, is underway the biggest concentration of capital in the educational area in Brazilian history. Investment funds went shopping and are forming giant education monopolies, all without any state regulation. It is an offensive that deepens cultural heteronomy and coloniality of knowledge. Between 2008 and 2014, the concentration of higher education was extraordinary, becoming controlled by a small number of corporations, for example Kroton-Anhanguera, the largest educational company in the world. It is necessary to explain that a large part of the new "customers" are paid for with public funds, especially from the Student Financing Fund (FIES) and a great program of tax exemptions called University for All Program (ProUni).

The MEC (Ministry of Education) embraced business policies turning them into State policies, such as the law 13.005/2014, which foresees the National Education Plan, all driven by the agenda of business coalitions, organized by the TPE and the National Confederation of Industry (in the case of vocational training, all of it under the S system), as well as financial sectors that control private higher education and the production of teaching materials, corporations that need permanent subsidy from the State.

Resistance and struggles: National Education Encounter

Between 2010 and 2012, the (federal, state and municipal) servants staged most of the Brazilian strikes. Although servers represent only 22% of employed workers, they carried out 52.5% of the strikes in 2010, 53.4% in 2011 and 47% in 2012, corresponding in this year, to 75% of the hours stopped (SAG / DIEESE). In 2011, workers of basic education were highlighted carrying out strikes radicalized in 19 states overcoming economic and corporate boundaries (criticizing meritocracy, ranking, evaluation, goals). In 2012, Andes-SN, Fasu-bra and Sinasefe undertook the biggest strike of the Federal Institutions in the last 10 years, qualitatively altering mobilization and strength of institutions. The MST (Movement of

Rural Workers Without Land) launched a campaign against the closure of 38,000 rural schools and contributed with the critique to the control of public education by capital.

The analysis of the struggles of the past decade, however, confirm that the struggles, also intense in basic education, have been fragmented, directed against municipal and state governments, and against the federal government, in the case of higher education, but with different models for teachers, technicians and administrative staff. In order to revert the fragmentation, various unions, public education movements and student movements called for a National Education Conference in 2014, successfully performed in August, bringing together more than 2,300 members, a promising starting point for massive struggles in benefit of public education. Organizational challenges remain, such as extending the participation of unions of basic education, academic institutions and, above all, social movements like the MST that have shared struggles and assessments on the significance of the corporate offensive and on the closure of thousands of rural schools.

The initial objective of the Encounter was to unify the struggle to remove public education from the hands of capital, claiming that the 10% of GDP for public education should be applied immediately and exclusively for public education, extinguishing public-private partnerships that have been eroding the sense of public education. The expenditure per student in Brazil is dramatically below the OCDE countries, much less than 1/3 of those countries. Teachers and other education workers do not have a dignified career, the basic wage, shameful, is not even fully guaranteed by states and municipalities.

The struggles cannot stop influencing on the historical claim of the unitary school, rejecting the distinction between those who think and those who execute, seeking to ensure a general culture for children, youth and adults, at all levels, so that the public education is a place capable of encouraging inventive imagination: workers must agree on a new agenda for public school, rescuing the tradition of popular education, of the unitary and polytechnic school, in the sense of a historical-critical pedagogy updated by the pulsing social struggles throughout the country - a condition for the brutal and destructive order of capital to be faced massively, by the social struggles of the XXI century.

(Endnotes)

- 1 Florestan Fernandes, O desafio educacional. SP: Cortez: Autores Associados, 1989.
- 2 Florestan Fernandes, O desafio educacional. SP: Cortez: Autores Associados, 1989.
- 3 Olinda Evangelista e Roberto Leher. Todos pela educação e o episódio Costin no MEC: a Pedagogia do capital em ação na política educacional brasileira, In: Trabalho Necessário, Ano 10, n.15, 2012, disponível em: <http://www.uff.br/trabalhonecessario/images/TN1519%20Artigo%20Roberto%20Leher%20e%20Olinda%20Evangelista.pdf>

José Ramos Bosmediano

A tireless struggle for an education for the people, and by the people



December 24 2014 marked the second anniversary of the loss of a great teacher, friend and social activist. The same year, the IDEA Network that José Ramos played a key role in creating celebrated its 15th anniversary. In the defense of public education, what united us across borders was the need to protect our rights and build an education project that would transform our countries, in order to make this a better world for everyone.

On the second anniversary of his death, social organizations, youth and teachers belonging to SUTEP (the Peruvian Education Workers' Union) carried out an homage to José, remembering his contributions to public education in Peru and his role as General Secretary of SUTEP on two occasions (1989 - 1992; 1995-1997). They also remembered his commitment to a national project for his beloved homeland aimed at combatting injustice and inequality in Peru.

As part of the ceremony, a small sculpture of José was unveiled and placed in the courtyard at SUTEP's national headquarters. Among the multiple cultural expressions that took place at the ceremony, we share with you a poem dedicated to José Ramos Bosmediano.

Child of the People

By Cliver Sotelo

Chewing on the hunger he carries within,
savouring the bitterness of being poor.
Without even a diaper to hide his poverty,
without any fanfare, the child of the people is born.

Who is his mother? Who is his father?
Great men ignore his existence.
They wish this poor child had never been born-
the child of the people.

No registration, not even a name,
this beautiful, fragile and tender child.
Some will say he's the child of no one,
and many will answer he's the child of the people.

The child of the people is growing,
chewing on the hunger he carries within.
Tasting the bitterness of a child with no name,
he makes his own way on rough roads.

Those on high look down on him with disdain.

They see how the child grows and struggles with his people.

They even wish he'd never been born,
And if they could, they'd put a sword through him.

The child of the people raises his voice
against those who deny the rights of life.
Some hurt him, others kill him,
And every day he is born again.

December 24, 2014

The fight of Chicago teachers to defend their rights and public education¹

Norine Gutekanst*



Teacher protests in Chicago. Photo: Chicago CBS local.

Across the US, workers face the same landscape: efforts to weaken our rights, lower our standard of living, and if possible, destroy our unions.

Across the US, the right of workers to bargain collectively is under attack. Our pension funds are being drained and defunded. Civil rights, human rights, women's rights, workers rights, immigrant rights-- all are under a constant barrage of attacks from local and national politicians and multi-national corporations.

As of 2013, only 11.3% of workers belong to unions, this is down from a high of 35% during the mid-1950s. Public-sector workers have a union membership rate (35.3 percent) more than five times higher than that of private-sector workers (6.7 percent). Yet there are great benefits to being in a union—the average weekly earnings of union members are \$950/week compared to \$750/week among nonunion workers.

Since the 2008 meltdown of the economy, workers--and especially public sector workers-- have been blamed for the weakness of the US economy. Our retirement income —our

pensions— are being targeted for defunding. Politicians say that our pensions are the primary reason why states face public sector budget crises—and not fact that taxes on the wealthy and corporations have been sharply reduced, shrinking the revenues of our states and municipalities.

The attack on public sector workers comes from both Republicans and Democrats. These politicians are funded by big business groups who also have developed their own anti-worker legislative agenda.

Formations such as ALEC, the American Legislative Exchange Council, writes legislation behind closed doors to weaken our rights across the US, such as "Right to Work" legislation, which weakens unions by allowing employees in a union workplace to refuse to pay union dues, and which depresses our wages and benefits wherever it exists.

Teachers are a special target in the US.

Since the late 1990s, there has been a strong anti-teacher agenda which wants to replace traditional public schools with charter schools and make it easier to dismiss teachers in the public schools that still exist. Legislation across the country weakens our right to job security and ties our evaluations, and our right to a job, to student test scores. Standardized testing intensifies the top-down control of curriculum and the lack of professional autonomy of all educators. As I said, this is a

1. Presentation at the international seminar "The Subordination of México to the USA, an evaluation of 20 years of NAFTA," organized by the Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas de la UNAM, Mexico City.

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bipartisan agenda. In 1994 Democrat Bill Clinton tied testing to funding for low income students. Then in 2001 the Republican George Bush administration ramped up testing through No Child Left Behind, and then in 2008 the Democratic Obama administration forced through more closings, testing and privatization, as well as the Common Core, with its Race to the Top program.

How Chicago reflects the fight to destroy unions and privatize education.

In Chicago we faced these attacks deeply. Starting in the early 2000s we lost over 100 schools to privatization and closures. Veteran Black educators in particular lost their jobs through these closures. The percentage of Black teachers in Chicago schools has fallen from 45% of the teaching force to under 29% in approximately 10 years.

Every day Chicago educators felt the pressures of the efforts to both break our union and to destroy public education. Thousands of our members were laid off and students across the south and west sides of the city were shuffled from school to school as their neighborhood schools were closed. Families in communities felt the racism of the closures because the overwhelming majority of the closures occurred in African American neighborhoods, as well as several Latino neighborhoods. Some community groups began to rise in protest and to organize against these racist school closures – which were an attempt to push out the poor people of color and replace them with a more middle-class population – this is known as gentrification.

How we fought back

But in the 2000's our union leadership had no vision to combat this anti-teacher, anti-community agenda. So some of us teachers inside Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) began to organize with communities. We started by speaking out against the school closings. Soon we brought together a small group in 2008 and formed CORE, the Caucus of Rank and File Educators. Our goal was to push our union to fight the privatization of our schools and the attack on our rights and on the rights of our students.

We started meeting to hold discussions, debates and strategy meetings for the first few years of our existence. Early on we realized that the only way we could win the fight for the soul of public education and to revive the power of our union was to engage and activate our rank and file members.

We knew the real power of our union was located within our schools. Our members, though they didn't feel it, were respected by parents across the city. CORE stood alongside parent and community groups. They saw that the members of the Chicago Teachers Union were fighting for the same things that they were—great neighborhood schools for all of our children.

We were inspired by the workers in Wisconsin who, in February of 2011, occupied their state capitol to defeat the agenda of the right wing Governor Scott Walker, who wanted to destroy public sector unions in Wisconsin.

We were inspired by the workers in British Columbia,

who had led a two week illegal strike to defend their rights, and who came to Chicago and talked to us about how they organized themselves at the same time as they connected with parents and community members.

We were inspired by the fighting teachers in Oaxaca, elsewhere in Mexico, and in Honduras, who fought so courageously against brutality and repression.

We decided to run for union office and we won our leadership election in June of 2010. We began that day to turn our union into a fighting member-led union.

We set up new departments inside the union – an organizing department, a research department, and we turned our communications department around to inspire our members and give hope to Chicago's parents and students.

We visited each and every school in Chicago multiple times. At the time there were over 600 schools. We talked to our members in schools about what the mayor was trying to do to us—weaken our union, weaken our members' rights to a job, and erode the quality education that we all believed in. We brought forward members who knew how to win contract fights in their buildings. We had these leaders help to train other members to build a strong union inside each school. We ran summer programs where we visited the homes of our members and talked to them about why we had to unite and fight as a union. Through this work, we have been able to create a new layer of leaders in our union.

We published a document called "The Schools Chicago Students Deserve" which outlined our vision for schools in which every child, poor and rich, could get an equal, high quality education and have a bright future.

We continued to organize alongside parents and community groups who were fighting back. We marched, we testified, we petitioned. We got arrested inside City Hall with Black parents who were demanding that school closures stop.

The politicians tried to stop us from striking by establishing a 75% threshold for strike authorization. So we organized our members to vote YES to strike – and got 90% of our members to vote in favor of a strike.

We led a 7 day strike in September of 2012 that had tremendous public support-- the polls showed that 67% of the parents of our students were supporting us. Parents & community supported us because they saw us fighting to improve education for their children.

The members of the Chicago Teachers Union truly believe that *they* are the union, and that we are a fighting union. Reviving our rank and file is the number one reason for our success in our strike. They-- our rank and file leaders--led marches and rallies throughout the streets of Chicago for a week straight and garnered the support of parents, other teachers, and unions from across the city and the country.

Then to punish us, and the communities that supported us, Mayor Rahm Emanuel turned around and said he would close up to 200 of our schools the following year, in 2013. We fought that too, and this time we had many more people fighting with us. We got arrested in the streets with 130 union members from several unions and we demanded that they not shut down our schools. We mobilized across the city to stop



Students participate in CTU demonstrations. Photo: Chicago Teachers' Union

these closings. We estimate that over 20,000 parents came out to defend their schools in public forums. We led a 3-day march from the Black south side to the center, and from the Black west side to the center, to stop the closures. But the mayor closed 50 schools anyway.

Part of the anti-teacher agenda is to establish non-union charter schools. We now have about 115 charter schools in Chicago. We have a dual strategy – we fight to stop the charters from being established and we fight to unionize the charter schools—and we now represent over 26% of the teachers and staff in Chicago's charter schools. We continue to fight against the expansion of charter schools, and we are seeing more and more parents come out against new charters. They demand that their neighborhood school be given the resources the children deserve.

What our fight represents and what is ahead

- We said we were fighting for the soul of public education. Our fight has given hope and energy to workers across the United States and in particular to teachers. We have seen reform caucuses win union election in Los Angeles, in Newark NJ, and in Washington, DC. We have met with members from across the country who want their unions to be fighting unions.

In the last 2 years we saw testing boycotts in Seattle, Washington, and then in Chicago and in New York state. They were not punished, because we built so much support for the teachers' right to teach. Across the nation we can see more and more teachers and parents begin to stand up to standardized testing, which steals time from our students' educations.

So now where are we going? We continue to demand that the corporations and the wealthy pay more in taxes, that corporate welfare must end, and they must fund the programs that our students and families deserve.

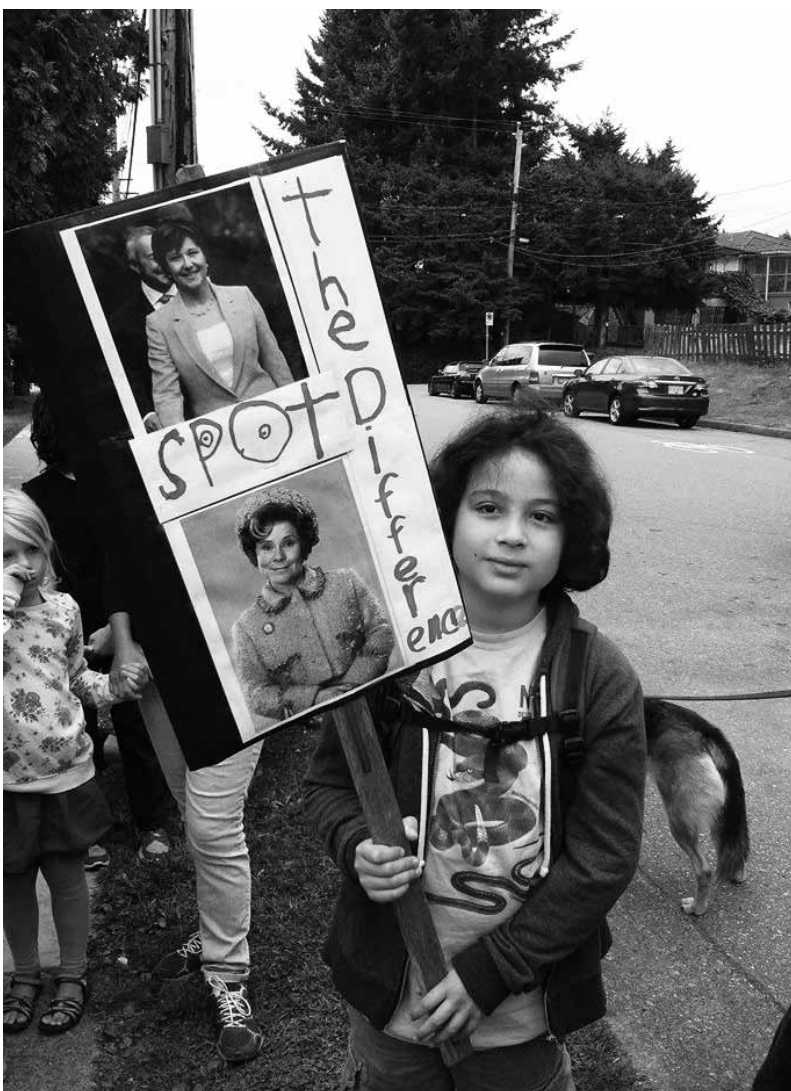
Our President Karen Lewis is talking about running for mayor of the city of Chicago – and she is finding supporters all over Chicago and the country – especially in the African American community-- that feels so disrespected and violated. If Karen runs for mayor, we will be able to ask: why is this city run in the interest of the wealthy? Why can't we have a city that is designed to meet the peoples' needs? She will demand that workers get a \$15 per hour minimum wage, that we have a school board that is elected—not appointed, and that early childhood care and education should be greatly expanded so that all our students have a strong educational foundation.

People are outraged at what is happening and are once again standing up and fighting for themselves. From the teachers in Wisconsin to the Occupiers in big cities and small towns across the country, to the Moral Monday protestors in North Carolina and the surge of women's rights activists in Texas, to the masses across the country that are outraged about Travon's murder, the repeal of the Voting Rights Act, stop and frisk in New York, the Fight for 15 and the Wal-Mart workers' strikes, the workers at McDonalds, the youth fighting police brutality in Ferguson, Missouri, and across the nation, regular people are saying "No more. We're not going to sit back and watch you do this to us."

We in the CTU want to be part of the fight back. And we look to our brothers and sisters in Mexico and Canada to help show us new ways to fight.

British Columbia teachers strike for five weeks to reach a contract

Larry Kuehn*



Young student compares Premier Christie Clark of British Columbia with the evil headmistress of Hogwarts. Photo: Steve Stewart

The longest provincial teacher strike in Canadian history shut down the schools in British Columbia for five weeks in mid-2014. The strike was about much more than just teacher salaries. It was also about improving the learning conditions for students and protecting the professional autonomy of teachers.

When it finally ended in late September, the result did not achieve as much as teachers desired or deserved. However, the teachers' representatives said the proposed collective agreement was the best possible given the circumstances. When the new contract was put to a vote of the membership, it was ratified by 86%.

Public school teachers in British Columbia (BC) are all members of the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF). In all

Canadian provinces, a public school teacher must belong to their union in order to teach. This provides a stable base for the union, both for bargaining purposes and for financing the many programs that engage members as activists in the union.

The BCTF has long seen its role as more than just looking after the salaries and benefits of teachers, although these continue to be an important part of the union's work. The BCTF also bargains for improvements in student learning conditions, offers professional development for teachers, trains union activists, has programs aimed at improving social justice, and supports international solidarity, particularly with teacher unions in Latin America.

Collective bargaining is an essential part of the union's work. The union bargains with the employer, who for these negotiations was the provincial government. The previous collective agreement had expired in June of 2012, but most of its provisions stayed in effect until there a new agreement was reached. Negotiations dragged on for more than a year before teachers voted to go on strike to pressure the government to agree to a new contract.

Teachers sought improvements in salaries, which are among the lowest in Canada. Even more, though, the members told negotiators to aim for smaller classes and more support for students with special needs, who are integrated into our classrooms with the other students.

Teachers generally support integrating students with special needs into regular classes--this includes students with learning disabilities, physical handicaps, autism, and students whose behavior can be disruptive. However, teachers need more support to balance the needs of these students with those of the full class. This support can be through smaller classes, specialist teachers to give support, as well as time to prepare for the different needs of students with a wide range of abilities.

Improvement in classroom conditions is a top priority of teachers in collective bargaining in BC. Unfortunately, these improvements do not appear to have been achieved in this contract, despite claims by government that a special fund would offer more supports.

The government objectives were aimed at austerity--at keeping the cost of education in BC well below the Canadian average. They also wanted to reduce the autonomy of teachers, making them subject to more administrative control.

The new contract includes small increases in salary over the next five years--but BC teachers will still have salaries lower than teachers in most other Canadian provinces. Small improvements in benefits and in preparation time were also achieved.

While the federation was unable to make significant advances in recovering many of the rights stripped from them by

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Parents and students support striking member of the BC Teachers Federation, September 2014.

the neoliberal government in the past decade, teachers were able to halt government efforts to further erode teaching/learning conditions. The government was forced to drop changes they proposed that would have put new limits on the autonomy of teachers as they interpret and carry out teaching the curriculum, subjecting them to more centralized control and standardization.

Probably the most interesting question related to the strike is not what was achieved, but how teachers maintained solidarity for such a long period when they were not getting any salary or strike pay. Two of the key elements were communications and solidarity.

Communications during the strike were essential to reaching an agreement

Social media. Teachers dominated Facebook, Twitter and online comments on websites throughout the strike. This was possible because many teachers had the tools and the time, since they weren't teaching. The public doesn't know a lot about what happens in schools and teachers wanted to reach out to the public so they would understand what was really at issue in the strike.

Teachers used social media to tell their story--what it was like teaching with the diversity of students and the demands made on the classroom teacher. This also built solidarity as teachers separated by hundreds of kilometers were able to share their experiences with colleagues.

Teachers were so effective in using social media that the government spent \$300,000 on social media to try and counter the teachers.

Daily email updates. The BCTF has nearly 40,000 email addresses of members. During the strike an email was sent every day with information about negotiations (when there

were any), information about activities being organized and research that supported the teacher position.

A section of the BCTF website is open only to members and requires the member to register and use their unique member number to get access. Information could be provided to members without being directly available to the media, although it is never possible to maintain privacy when more than 30,000 have access, including some members who may disagree with the direction of the union.

Livestream. Throughout the strike, all media conferences by the president and chief negotiator, Jim Iker, were livestreamed. This meant that anyone with a computer or smart phone could watch the event live or could watch it from the BCTF livestream channel any time after the conference. In addition, many of the media conferences were livestreamed on the websites of two news channels. More than 30,000 people watched many of the media conferences from the BCTF channel alone, giving members a chance to hear the message directly, rather than filtered through corporate news media.

Mainstream media. The strike had a very high level of reporting in the mainstream media. Radio, TV and print media all provided ongoing coverage of the labour action, including the ethnic media that have a wide reach in BC's diverse population. At the end of the year, the BCTF strike was identified as the most followed media story of 2014.

Picketing and demonstrations. Physical presence is a key type of communication. It is a statement to those outside that there is support for the union. It is also a time for sharing with colleagues--many teachers say picketing is the best form of professional development because they have time to get to know colleagues they know only superficially when everyone is fully engaged in their teaching.

Voting. Holding a vote of members is a key communication opportunity. The formal strike vote was the beginning of



Social support for the BCTF Teachers' Federation Strike in 2014.
Photo: BCTF Gallery

getting authorization for a strike. At each stage of escalation, though, another vote was taken and focused attention on the rationale for the move. Local officers were briefed through conference calls with the provincial table officers so they could provide information to local members. On the voting day, each local phoned in results and they were released that same evening to members and the public through a livestream media conference.

Solidarity played a vital role

Teacher solidarity. The most important solidarity is that among members. A range of views are held by teachers about objectives, strategy, and possible results. Solidarity depends on being able to debate, but also for everyone to agree that when the decision is made, that it will be uniformly supported. Despite the length and personal cost of the strike, very few members broke solidarity to cross picket lines.

Parent solidarity. Obviously parents were inconvenienced by such a long strike, but a significant number of them showed their solidarity with teachers. For some, it was going to the picket line with donuts and coffee, or just to talk with the teachers. Some organized parent demonstrations in support of teachers. A group of parents created a website and raised more than \$60,000 in parent donations for the union hardship fund. In the final week of the strike school-based demonstrations by parents increased significantly, increasing pressure on the government to achieve an agreement with the union.

Union solidarity. The BC Federation of Labour and regional labour councils organized union demonstrations that drew together teachers, other union members and supportive

public, including parents. Teacher unions in Ontario contributed about \$2 million and many unions in BC provided money for the hardship fund. BC unions arranged an emergency loan of several million dollars should the BCTF need it, sending a clear message to the government that they couldn't depend on the Federation running out of funds to force teachers back to work (in Canada, striking workers do not get paid, and depend on a small stipend from their union to sustain themselves during labour actions).

International solidarity. Over 100 organizations from outside Canada sent messages of support to the BCTF or made calls to the Premier of the BC, calling for the government to deal fairly with the BCTF and reach an agreement. Organizations that are part of the IDEA and of Education International Latin America were particularly active in solidarity. Demonstrations or communications to the Canadian embassies took place in several countries in Latin America.

Conclusion

In the current conditions of neo-liberal policies and austerity, it is difficult for unions to achieve any gains. Sometimes it is a victory when union action can simply defend the gains won over many years and stop the attempts to impose more control over the work of teachers. Small gains, in this context, may be the most that are achieved. Even those can require a tremendous effort and cost.

However, the struggle is worthwhile because the domination of global neo-liberal policies can only be successfully challenged if the struggle takes place in many places and builds a global movement of opposition to neo-liberalism.

A slice of honduran reality: voices of organized women teachers²

(Siguatepeque, January, 2015)¹

María Trejos Montero *

Interviews conducted by María Trejos Montero* with Honduran Teacher Activists

What has been the impact on women teachers, students and educational community following the coup?

Repression, coercion and loss of rights

Measures against public education

Luz: The biggest problem in my country is the violation of human rights and lack of security. We live under a state of defenselessness that generates violence and fear, leaving women the most vulnerable. Each day ends with over 10 women murdered, and the majority of these crimes go unpunished.

Leda: Honduras is currently one of the countries with the highest rates of femicide and underage pregnancy in the world. The rapid loss of all our rights and sovereignty is also quite serious. The system strikes the backbone of social struggles: the teachers' union, who have maintained a strong movement. One of the big problems we have is how to confront the system; they have tried to immobilize us through repression.

Ema: With the creation of special military security corps, the submission of judicial power to the interests of current president Juan Orlando Sánchez, and the displacement of national police the mechanisms of repression have increased. Furthermore, the right to protest of all social groups in the country has been criminalized.

Leo: The teachers' union has suffered a great snub. The impact of smear campaigns, of the discrediting and devaluation of teachers is very strong and tends to delegitimize the teaching profession and our valid struggles; it has even led to blaming us for the situation of violence or problems with migration and other issues; trying to throw our noble work out the window and provoke the failure of our struggle.

The National Party is responsible for approving the Fundamental Law for Education and taking away the National Teachers Social Security Institute –INPREMA–: They raised our contribution fees and lowered or eliminated all benefits to retire with dignity; these attacks are outrageous. These reforms are also geared towards disappearing the teachers' organizations as by law all their assets go to INPREMA. The president has said "the teachers' colleges only have one year left to live"¹. They want to eliminate them so they may have 100% control and do with us as they please, without anyone to defend us.

* Primary Education Teacher, Costa Rica; member of IDEA Network's Education Researchers' Network and Editorial Committee for Intercambio Magazine.

Professor Daysi Ramos Márquez, Coordinator of gender issues of the Secondary Teachers' College –COPEMH, secondary teacher, BA in Biology and Chemistry, Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

Carmen: The reforms to the INPREMA law jeopardize our lives as women teachers, since they have increased the age for retirement from 50 to 56 years. Now we are more vulnerable because our life expectancy is lower than that of men. At the same time our salary is taxed with 8.5% until the thirteenth and fourteenth month; it has been over 5 years since we received a salary increase.

Leo: This year there are no more opportunities to compete for a teaching position, in elementary or secondary. This is due to the political interference in appointments. The president names his political activists, even though they don't fulfill the legal requisites. This way they continue to replace many teachers in their workplace.

I have been affected directly. In the school where I work I was docked pay for the days I attended assemblies or protests organized by the teacher leadership to defend our rights. This because the local ministry authorities belong to the National Party, better known as "cachurecos" (ruling-party agents).

Also, in the schools they have created the Committees for the National Organization of Education –CONDES²– with the goal to influence and control public education and mitigate any resistance by teachers' organizations and as a way of "ensuring" that we comply with orders arising from the municipal authorities and the Education Ministry.

The Ministry of Education has also implemented an extended workweek, with the same wages; we are now working from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm Monday to Saturday. Those of us who have two positions³ have had problems in filling the hours of our second job and many have had to quit.

Leo: We only have a right to doctor's appointment at the social security. If we go to a private clinic, the work-day is deducted.

Leo: In many public schools they have eliminated night school, arguing there are not enough students, violating the right to education but we know that the purpose of this is to reduce the number of teachers and reduce salaries to decrease the education budget.

In some provinces, there are many villages without nearby schools, forcing parents to register their children in private

1. This article is a collective work, as it expresses the perceptions and experiences of unionized teacher members of COPEMH, and of COPEMH's Women's Network, coordinated by Daysi Márquez. The names have been altered to protect interview participants' identity amidst the context of repression the Honduran people are currently experiencing.

2. Run by the municipal mayors who receive the funds directly from the education ministry, supposedly to transfer to the schools under their jurisdiction. The new law even plans to allow the CONDES to hire teachers.

3. Due to the low salaries of Honduran teachers, it is not uncommon for a teacher to work a morning shift at a public school and an afternoon shift at a private one.

schools where education traffickers are the owners; another mechanism to increase their profits.

Ema: They continue to freeze positions and salary increases, to fill vacancies with precarious “contract” teaching positions, and to illegally dismiss teachers and principals in schools.

Carmen: Threats against public education and employment stability. The push to standardize education is increasing, both in teacher and student evaluation.

Leo: For the past 2 years ago there hasn’t been any open competitions for teaching positions. The construction of education facilities has stopped, there are no education materials for schools; parents contribute financially to cover costs for maintenance workers, security and infrastructure.

The basic food basket has gone up 100%, as well as fuel and road tolls.

Between social struggle and the classroom:

We are turning the classroom into a trench of resistance

Leda: If we want a real social change, the struggle is in the classroom, at the grassroots. We are making the classroom into our trench; from there we are fighting as organized teachers. .

Clara: To be a teacher is difficult, but here in Honduras, after the coup it is even harder. Because those of us who have assumed the task of transforming and changing society are the teachers. And COPEMH (Secondary School Teachers’ College of Honduras) is a well known institution because it has always been present in labour struggles, reflecting the feelings and thoughts of the teachers and not of any particular leader. It has its errors and problems, but in the end, COPEMH is always in the struggle because more than an executive committee, we are a union of people willing to fight, convinced of what we are doing. We must achieve greater unity of criteria among teachers’ organizations.

In the streets, teachers are also teaching

Clara: In general, the struggle of the teachers’ organizations has been in the street. Our responsibility in the classroom is to help the children understand that when we are in the street fighting alongside our people, we are building a fairer society with gender equity, different than today where the majority live in poverty. This lesson transcends the classroom, without forgetting that the role we play in the classrooms as teachers is also fundamental and cannot be replaced with anything or anyone.

I have many satisfactions as a teacher who fights. When I arrive at school, my students will say: “I saw you in the march.” I explain I have motives to do so; from that moment on I am teaching a lesson. Or they say: “why were you dressed up in a chained costume?” And I explain: because they are like the chains of slavery we are living under. This gives me the opportunity to open up a debate where different points of view are respected. And students, no matter what they study, are

always part of our people. If out of 40 students I can help one become aware, then my life is satisfying.

Teachers alongside students in one movement

Luz: The health system lacks gender-based attention and young women suffer greater discrimination in health care.

Ema: Youth’s freedom of expression and protest is constrained. Youth are murdered, and in doing so they murder the hope of a people who aspire to live better. Recently, 7 university students were expelled and suspended for defending their rights.

Carmen: Student activists have been killed. During the government of Porfirio Lobo (de facto president of Honduras, 2010-2014), the student leader who conducted the victorious movement to stop the approval of the Community Engagement (reduction of the state) Legislation was killed.

Clara: It is an honour to strengthen solidarity with students. One day I entered the classroom and they said, “We heard you on the radio!” It is very positive to know that they sat down and listened to me on a political radio program, about the resistance, and not just because they have to listen in class. Or when my son says: “A school mate says hello even though he doesn’t know you. He congratulated me for the type of mom I have.” Also, when I walk in the streets with my head high and people greet me and respect me.

Beyond the four walls

Clara: To teach means to make constant changes. I don’t need to have a chair, a marker or a blackboard to be able to teach. We could have a class on the floor or down the hall of a building, I start by asking: “How many chairs do we have?” 20. “How many students are we?” 45. “Do you believe it’s fair to have only 20 students sit and the rest stand?” They answer in a chorus: “Nooo!” So I say: “Then let’s go down the hall where we will all sit on the floor and we will have our class there.” It reminds me of when I was a little girl and we only had 2 meals a day.

Despite “modernity”, teachers cannot be replaced

Education and the teachers’ movement in the face of technology

Clara: One day some students came up to me and said: “A classmate died and we would like to be with his family, but there is no one who can speak for us with the principal!” I said, “Let’s go together!” That is something that a computer will never do. If I don’t want to be replaced by a computer I need to become more involved with the youth so they understand the need to have teachers always beside them.

Because it’s “easy” to buy a computer for every student; maybe they want to know something about math or social studies and just turn on a computer. But when they want to learn something about life, on how to strengthen their feelings of solidarity, they need to look to a teacher.

And in this adverse context...

How do organized women grow and organize ourselves?

Take part in a great teacher's union

Leda: To belong to COPEMH, is a commitment to struggle and to defend all teacher's rights. This college offers us professional development from the beginning of our career through training and advice.

Because of the coup, COPEMH's commitment grows, as so does training to defend our Honduran identity. As women who are active in the struggle, there are more spaces to strengthen ourselves politically, helping with the leadership. And, currently with our trench in the classroom, women are the leading actors.

I have always been a fighter. My parents taught me how.

Clara: Before, in the face of the injustice and domination that oppressed me, I stayed silent. This silence was harmful and after the coup, I learned I could no longer stay quiet. I learned that walls could also speak when the media keeps silent. Before I used to ask permission to enter and now I just knock and walk in, even though sometimes they respond: "I haven't given you permission to enter".

Clarity and courage in the face of workplace harassment

Leo: I suffered harassment from a provincial director since my high-school position was assigned to me in another province. I placed a complaint with the attorney so they would reinstall me here in San Pedro Sula; and when I was about to take my complaint to "La Prensa" newspaper, the director gave in.

I also ran the risk of losing my position due to the changes imposed by the Ministry of Education, but they could not do anything as I resorted to legal support. I learned to fight with the law on our side and we can win this battle. We have to stand up and fight.

Creativity in the struggle

Leo: Faced with so much repression, since 2014 we have tried to be active on odd hours and weekends so that government has no excuse to discount the time not worked.

United as women of the teachers' movement, together with other social movements, we were able to stop the efforts of president Juan Orlando Hernandez to change the constitution to create the military police in order to have absolute command, and to be able to reelect himself as president⁴ and remain like a dictator. This was also thanks to the congressional representatives we have from the National Front of Popular Resistance and others that opposed these maneuvers.

What are our main challenges?

Leda: To create the foundations for social change. To stop being submissive and turn ourselves into warriors. To reach the spaces of power and break patterns, to make changes in our



homes, work and any place we where we are.

To defend the right to live: There are over 900 *femicides*⁵ a year. To defend the right to maternity and maternity leave; the right to control our sexual life. We are even being coerced out of pension benefits when our husbands die, conditioning us not to have an active sexual life.

Leo: To make use of legal bodies and place complaints regarding workplace harassment, salary retentions and threats for participating in protests. To recover our National Pension Institute (INPREMA) and the rights we have acquired. The National Pedagogical University should implement initiatives to facilitate greater employment for teachers.

Ema: To struggle against impunity, injustice and social inequality; to fight so women are respected and the violence inflicted on them is reduced.

Carmen: To defend public education, to create new pedagogical strategies to build awareness and rescue our achievements. To create spaces for participation that strengthens our presence in the teachers' organizations.

What is the strength that allows us to continue moving forward?

Leda: The determination to stay together, united and ready to fight; to begin to make profound changes. .

Ema: I continue to grow in the struggle. When I fill with inner strength, then the desire to defend the teachers' movement awakens, to build more solidarity and stay informed, to prepare myself as a teacher and academically to understand and question the reality of what is happening.

Leo: Those from the government and/or oligarchy know the strengths and weaknesses of our teachers' movement. What they don't know is the depth of our feelings to continue and counterattack the power of the oligarchy, which keeps us from moving forward.

4. In Honduras, the constitution allows presidents to serve only one term. Indeed, supporters of the June 2009 coup, attempted to justify it by arguing that President Mel Zelaya threatened the constitution by proposing the election of a constituent assembly that, in revising the constitution, might possibly change it to permit re-election.

5. The murder of women for being women.

The evils of standardized assessment and how to overcome them (The Chilean experience)

Jorge Inzunza H.*



The Stop SIMCE campaign. Photo: Radiovillafrancia.cl
Photo: Alejandro Pardo

On January 14 2015, Professor Gary Anderson of New York University published a provocative paper entitled “Lessons from Chile: Annual Testing in Schools.” In this article, Anderson states that since Chile was the first neoliberal experiment, it was the first to create an assessment system so that parents and policy makers would have data to be effective consumers in the education market. He also acknowledges that the movement of students and teachers in Chile is carrying out a strong fight against high-impact standardization. Why is it relevant to analyze the Chilean experience in the context of current struggles against neoliberal policies in other regions of the world? We will try to explore some answers in the following paragraphs. We will start by offering some background information regarding the National System for Measuring Education Quality in Chile (SIMCE), then we will describe how the organized resistance against it emerged through the *Stop SIMCE* campaign. Finally, we will look into the conservative response to the campaign and explain why there is a need to create a global resistance against high-impact standardized assessment.

Background:

SIMCE officially started in 1998, but its appearance was no accident in Chilean educational history. It was the result of a series of ideological fights within the civilian/military dictatorship (1973-1990) that ended up adopting neoliberalism as its main political framework.

Between 1973 and 1980, repression was the social and

psychological conditioning instrument the dictatorship used to establish its reforms and dismantle the main features of the former Chilean state.

From 1976 on, the neoliberal influence became hegemonic. The new education system took essential elements from the neoliberal model, and incorporated Catholic precepts such as a hyper-protection of parental freedom of choice and teaching freedom and blended them with authoritarian features such as meritocracy, ranking and order. **Those elements were chosen to create an education system designed to destroy public education.**

At the beginning of the 1980s, Chile began a deep transformation. The predominantly public education system became decentralized. The struggles of the teachers union were fragmented and it was suppressed and replaced by an organization controlled by the dictatorship.

According to neoliberal ideology, the education system was simply a group of suppliers selling a product (education) to a market of customers (families). The role of the state was reduced to merely ensuring the necessary conditions for a self-regulating market to operate. This market needs information to function, which is the political/theoretical reasoning behind the creation of high-impact assessment instruments. In 1984, the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile developed a new measurement instrument, the PER Performance Assessment. This was the first step in the creation of one of the first standardized assessment tests in Latin America. The test was born in a context where the public system was being deprived of financing and the constitution privileged educational entrepreneurship by private parties. Standardized tests were meant as a compass for parents to exercise their right to decide which school to choose for their children.

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PER was only used until 1986 when the same university created SIMCE. It was first applied in 1988 and ever since, it has had a growing influence in the Chilean educational system, until it has finally become its core element.

Democracy arrived in 1990. SIMCE was accepted by the new government and was incorporated into their plans for improvement with the help of the World Bank (which was beginning its strategic projects of the 1990s) and UNESCO. Since international organizations legitimized SIMCE, its authoritarian past was forgotten and it was regarded as something neutral. However, the consequences of its use were disastrous, since Chilean families kept choosing the private schools that grew exponentially, in spite of the renewed investment in public schools and the implementation of recovery policies. SIMCE supported those trends by demonstrating -through dubious analysis- that private schools yielded better results than the public ones in a ranking they started publishing in 1995. Ever since, SIMCE has continued growing and has acquired a strategic role. SIMCE is the main creator of diagnostic tests, progress reports, and assessment for every level in the education system.

Since the 1990s, the role of SIMCE's technical teams has been fundamental in the development of all assessment systems in Latin America. The World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and UNESCO have promoted the concept in countless missions, courses and study tours meant to replicate the Chilean experience. The Latin American Laboratory for Education Quality Assessment OREALC-UNESCO (LLECE) was created due to the consultancy services provided by officials from Chilean SIMCE.

In 1998, only one level was being measured, but by 2014 that had expanded to six. More than 6 million dollars are spent every year, and an unknown amount is paid for incentives and private assistance in every school around the country. Nowadays fewer than 40% of Chilean students attend public schools and the destruction of public services has the standardized assessment to blame.

The resistance

It took a while for resistance against standardized assessment to appear. Although the teachers union publicly denounced the inadmissibility of SIMCE in several annual reports, their opposition seemed to be limited to rejecting a link between test results and their performance. It was not until 2006 -when the high-school students' revolution rose up against the national curricula because of an exaggerated emphasis on language (Spanish) and math- that the problem truly became visible. Students claimed that excessive attention to those subjects hurt other fundamental ones, such as arts, physical education or social and cultural studies. A small boycott against SIMCE started in the beginning of the 2010s, but it was not very widespread.

In 2011, national student mobilizations once again presented claims against SIMCE, but since the movement was led by college students, the protest centered mainly on admission exams.

Later in 2013, several graduate students in education living outside of Chile, along with student teachers and teachers themselves started to organize a campaign to challenge the commonly accepted idea that SIMCE -a core element of market education- was not inherited from the dictatorship. In September that year, the "Manifesto to Overcome Educational Standardization in Chile" (Inzunza et al, 2013) was launched, and the *Stop SIMCE* campaign began.

We will now summarize the main stages the movement has gone through after a year and a half:

Raising awareness: the first stage had as its objective to bring SIMCE into the public debate as a harmful instrument for the education system. The objective was to question SIMCE's neutrality.

Organization of the actors: the Chilean student movement has proven that getting the different actors organized and mobilized is essential if the objective is to impact education policies. Student organizations, high-school student teachers, teachers, parents and academics were invited to participate. Two groups were created: one involved graduate students abroad who created an IT platform where articles were published and social media and networking efforts were launched. The other group was located in Santiago and included most of the organizations that focused on SIMCE.

PR: contact with the media has played a paramount role. We have used the legitimacy of technical discourse by academic institutions and academics themselves, and the political side has been covered by the organizations that represent those on the front lines of education.

Creation of proposals: in 2014 a new stage of *Stop SIMCE* started. Educational proposals were created based on the know-how of the people that belonged to round-tables and commissions which included specialists on economics, engineering, sociology and psychology. Since the Chilean education system still excludes grass-roots actors 24 years after the return to democracy, the campaign has been careful to reposition the pedagogical approach as the front line in policy creation. In the document "Discussion for a New Assessment System" (2014), the following is stated: "*Creating a new School Assessment System that can handle the systemic complexity most definitely requires a long-term process with much discussion among the stakeholders from different levels and among the researchers who provide input into education policy, but most importantly, among the education workers who work day in and day out in the field to materialize the learning experience and directly impact the lives of individuals.*" (p 7) The big challenge in 2014 was to create spaces for debate on the criteria to guide the creation of a new assessment system.

Technical work: the campaign was very visible in the media, challenging those who defend the importance of SIMCE in the education system, and as a result, the government organized work groups to study SIMCE and the campaign was called to present its arguments.

Political advocacy: it has been very difficult to explain the problems of standardized assessment to political decision-makers. Over the last 25 years, the National Congress has been very conservative with regards to changing education,

so an important breakthrough was the signing of a letter by six senators and eleven representatives demanding an end to the publication of SIMCE results, the suspension of the exam for three years and the elimination of all of its sanctions and incentives. The letter ends by expressing the need to create a new assessment system in a democratic way.

The new assessment system proposed by the *Stop SIMCE* campaign was defined as a systematic, contextualized and ongoing process. The system must promote collaboration and support between the different school levels rather than competition, as is the case with the current SIMCE and its rankings. Assessment has different objectives, depending on the region. The 2014 document identifies three levels:

National: the data obtained every three or five years seeks to orient public education policies, monitor the fulfillment of the right to education, and observe the social, economic and labor conditions within the system.

Intermediate: the objective of the information produced at this level is to learn about the context and regional characteristics as well as creating collaborative networks. On the other hand, social and cultural integration within and between schools is fostered.

School: teachers are responsible for carrying out assessments that recognize the differences among schools, from the classrooms to the teacher councils. The objectives of this evaluation are to provide feedback for teaching/learning practices, to make decisions regarding the development of students, groups, courses and school community and to compare performance against the intermediate and national context benchmarks.

None of those levels requires high-impact standardized assessment and according to the campaign, even if those tests are used, the results should not be disclosed.

The achievements of the *Stop SIMCE* campaign are impressive. After only one and a half years, the debate has entered the media as never before to question the relationship between standardized assessment and the supposed benefits for schools.

Conservative strategies

The public response to the campaign has allowed us to identify what has maintained this standardized test as a fundamental policy of the market system that rules education in Chile. A group of academics and policy makers (both in the right-wing government of Sebastian Piñera as well as in the current socialist one of Michelle Bachelet) have taken actions to respond to the critique against standardized assessment.

The conservative sectors have tried to isolate the instrument from the ideology that supports it. According to them, SIMCE is a valuable instrument for managing public policy and protecting the freedom of parents to choose schools. SIMCE is not linked to the creation or deepening of the phenomenon of social and cultural segregation. They insist that the test does not affect reality, it only reflects it. Schools need to be assessed to decide managerial practices. They claim incentives and sanctions are valid instruments to exert pressure on



the pedagogical management of schools.

Following Istvan Meszaros's analysis (2007) of educational reforms, we can say that the purpose behind standardized assessment is to order, classify and govern school production. Thus, schools compete with one another, following the logic of capitalist mass production. Schools are just companies and as such, they are only a commodity, as the former president once said.

The need for global resistance

Questioning high-impact standardization today means to go against the currently accepted consensus that started in the 1990s when international organizations such as the World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF and UNDP promoted educational policies that followed market priorities. Massive data production was meant to optimize the scope of the reforms. This meant that all school sectors were robbed of a say in educational policies. Standardized assessment was a perfect control instrument, which has acted as a diversion to avoid the need to really discuss the general guidelines of educational policies. The growing pressure to have teachers and students scoring high in performance has individualized the spaces in which education takes place. This individual stress and malaise has been accompanied by policies that threaten to close schools, withdraw public financing and destroy the identities of local schools. It is important to explore the lesson learned from the Chilean resistance against SIMCE to find clues to create counter-hegemonic strategies at local and global levels to confront the neoliberal trends that rule our educational systems.

The example of SIMCE is very illustrative. The context is one of US conservatives experimenting in a land outside their borders. Therefore, pilot projects such as school vouchers, education expenditure allocation, and the introduction of performance incentives, teacher assessment and other policies



The Stop SIMCE campaign. Photo: Radiovillafrancia.cl

ought to be reviewed under the critical eye of groups doing political analysis. Ideally, these core groups should be made up of school actors—teacher and student organizations, and education researchers. The experiments promoted by international organizations are used as pilots that are later applied in other regions to provide solutions to local problems. The work of critical core groups should be to create and share critical information regarding the assessment experience. Then, these fundamental alliances should be inserted into a network that combines analysis and action.

One of the virtues of the *Stop SIMCE* campaign has been to act as a catalyst to bring forward the voices of different actors. Standardized assessment is a strategic element with which to reflect on the goals of education. These tests have affected the cultural dynamics within schools, have diminished the value and independence of teachers, have introduced curricula that pose a high risk of teaching out-of-context materials and have punished the poorer schools. But also, systems with great social segregation, such as the Chilean, have promoted privatizing the “best” of the system. For all of these reasons, opposition against standardized tests is greatly supported by school communities because, in a nutshell, it depicts everything that is wrong about the “technification” of education.

There must be multiple strategies. New actions have to be added to our traditional mobilizations. The objective of these different approaches is to undermine or dislodge the commonly accepted idea that standardized assessment as harmless. Working with the media is fundamental to create debate, look for new supporters and strike alliances. Finding and securing openings in alternative media is an important strategy to overcome the barriers of those who are not open to critical reflection.

The Gary Anderson paper we mentioned at the beginning of this paper shows the need to learn from what other countries have done to face high-impact standardized assessment policies. The lessons learned could be taken advantage of by creating international collaboration networks among the resistance groups working against neoliberal policies. The IDEA

network has been promoting network collaboration against standardization, as with the Seminar “Testing...testing...testing” that took place in February 2009 in Mexico City where researchers and union leaders from more than nine countries got together. The challenge for the resistance is to know how to keep a strong connection at the local, national and global levels.

But the global scene is presenting us with a challenge we cannot refuse. Standardized assessment is a given, regardless of the nature of the ruling party. Of course each case is different, but standardization and its relationship to privatization and big capital is far-reaching. Analysts and activists ought to initiate the questioning and to do this, global cooperation between world regions is of paramount importance. Those who have more experience can teach and advise others regarding possible actions to take. Our objectives must guide us to create a global network of critical hubs in order to establish more favorable scenarios for the fight against the reigning global standardization.

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Teachers' struggles in Argentina led by CTERA

From organized resistance to advocacy work for creating public policies*

María Dolores Abal, Miguel Duhalde y María Sormanni

I am absolutely certain of something: we deserve this new era we gave birth to and we will help to raise it...

Stella Maldonado

During the last two decades, teachers' struggles in Argentina have been outlined by a socio-historic context of significant political changes in most of Latin American countries. Today we have a regional scenario that is characterized by its heterogeneity and complexity. On the one hand, there are State policies that promote social inclusion -with an emphasis on social and human rights- and on the other; there are Neoliberal and Neoconservative economic projects that are causing more educational exclusion and inequality.

In this context, Latin American teacher unions -including the Confederation of Education Workers of Argentina (CTERA)- are taking on the challenge for regional integration to defend public education and consolidate the creation of a Latin American Pedagogical Movement. The goal is to increase our joint capacity for action and influence the change processes within the educational systems, the labor conditions of teachers and union rights.

Under those conditions, CTERA is changing its strategy from being an organized resistance against privatization policies to play a more aggressive and proactive advocacy role. The inflection point was reached during the White Tent (Carpas Blancas) protest occupation in front of the National Congress, where dozens of teachers went on a hunger strike that lasted 1003 days (April 2, 1997 - December 30, 1999). Among the main achievements was the fact that the State had to reclaim its role of financing education. The White Tent became an icon for a new type of struggle, political and social action to confront Neoliberalism; it also paved the way for all education workers across the country to adopt the cause.¹

As of 2000, in the post-White Tent scenario, CTERA and its grass-roots unions have been the pillars of a discussion to improve labor conditions and to defend public education. They provided continuity in the resistance against privatization and market-based policies that still remained.

In 2001, within the Argentine Workers' Central Union (CTA), the National Front Against Poverty (FRENAPO) was created to promote Employment Insurance and Training for Unemployed Heads of Household to eradicate poverty and social exclusion in our country. During that year, CTERA went on

a National Strike and carried out the Flags March (Marcha de las Banderas) demonstration at the Plaza de Mayo to demand cancellation of freezing the budget, payment of teacher incentive, and to reject labor flexibility.

But social conflicts ran high during that period. There were looting, repression and the government declared a state of siege. Soon after, President De la Rúa resigned and left behind a tragic and severe social, political and economic crisis.

In 2003, in the midst of a social complex environment, presidential elections were held and Nestor Kirchner was elected. CTERA immediately met with the new public officials and a notable event took place, one that would mark a clear sign of the new era: the President, along with other national authorities led by CTERA, visited Entre Ríos and San Juan and paid the debt they had with educational workers. The resolution of that conflict was a historical victory of the AGMER (Entre Ríos Teachers' Association) and UDAP (San Juan Provincial Teachers' Association) teacher resistance marking a reference point.

Once the social and educational re-composition had begun, and rights-generating actions were carried out, the adoption of an Educational Funding Act was achieved in 2005 that forces the National Government to invest in education once again, and commit to increase the percentage of GDP devoted to education, to create a compensation fund regarding wage inequalities and to create a framework for joint discussions with union representatives.

CTERA's Third National Education Congress took place that same year under the name "Rights, Knowledge and Public Education: Tools to struggle for social justice", counting with broad participation and able to summarize a decade of debates and elaborate alternative proposals, and reach agreements on the urgent need to annul the Federal Law of Education, which at the time was a clear expression of neoliberal ideology in the education field. The long-awaited derogation occurred the following year through the National Education Act (LEN N° 26.206) that expresses many of the claims defended by education workers. These include education without cost as a public good and a social right that must be separa-

* Article written by the CTERA's Education Secretariat, with the collaboration, data systematization, writing and proofreading of María Dolores Abal Medina, Miguel Duhalde and María Sormanni.

1. For further information, see: "1003 días de lucha: 2 de abril de 1997 y 30 de

diciembre de 1999", en *Memoria CTERA: 1999 - 2000*, Ed. CTERA-CTA, Bs. As., p. 47.

2. Para más detalles véase, "1003 días de lucha: 2 de abril de 1997 y 30 de diciembre de 1999", en *Memoria CTERA: 1999 - 2000*, Ed. CTERA-CTA, Bs. As., p. 47.



ted from any trade agreement or other type of commodification; the role of the State as the main provider and financier of education; the coordination of different State agencies to promote policies for equal opportunities; teachers' rights to continuous education provided and guaranteed by the State; the right to collective bargaining at the provincial and national level; and the participation of education workers through union representation in different areas.

Then, 2007 was engraved in our memory as the year when a teacher was murdered while defending public education. On April 4 after five weeks of strike, ATEN (Neuquen Education Workers' Association) set up a road block. The governor commanded the police to prevent the road block and professor Carlos Fuentalba was killed. CTERA has been campaigning for the prosecution and punishment of the material and intellectual persons responsible ever since.

Another significant breakthrough for our Union occurred in 2008 with the implementation of a new collective bargaining framework where salaries, union rights, labor conditions, career path, work day, social and prevention rights and the continuous training of active teachers are discussed.

In 2010, the government established the Universal Allowance per Child (AUH), a subsidy partly due to the historical struggles advocated by FRENAPO. Although the subsidy does not have the pretended universal character yet, it offers coverage to a great part of the unemployed and precarious workers to create better conditions so their children may continue to grow in their educational experiences, and also to integrate those sectors of the population who up until then were deprived from their social right to education.

On the same year, CTERA lobbied for a Law on Education Financing to have a new legal framework to effectively guarantee the social right to education for every inhabitant in our country, and allow us to face the new financial challenges, such as mandatory high school education, extended school hours, and universalization of early education, among the principle demands.

Furthermore, CTERA is also contributing to create national regulations that generate more opportunities and accompaniment for elementary students and to recover the peda-

gogical unit of the first and second grades at primary level (Resolution 174/12 del of the Federal Education Council).

Another great achievement was recovering the right to continuous education for permanent and in-training teachers in 2013. This is an area where our trade union has systematically confronted the ideas of commercialization of education. Our resistance to the "models of economic training" is acknowledged in the recently endorsed joint agreement that opens the possibility to print another meaning to the training processes, understanding them as an essential dimension of the work of teachers, and as a collective possibility to raise the quality of the education system, where knowledge is understood as solidarity and not a commodity. From this position, our Union believes that training contents must be a result of a collective process of problematization of reality and not a simple arbitrary definition taken by some specialists or public officials. Likewise, we believe assessment must be dialectically integrated to permanent training and not as mere technical instruments to measure and control.

In 2014, with 41 years of life for CTERA, we can visualize and recognize a long and intense trajectory of struggle for public education and for the improvement of conditions where educators, children, youth and adults teach and learn, who day to day build knowledge from all schools across the country.

Nevertheless, this particular year will be sadly remembered due to the passing of our beloved colleague and leader, Stella Maldonado. Grief which can only be overcome by assuming that the best way to pay homage to her memory, is to continue with her legacy and example, and continue moving forward in the struggle to raise even higher the flags of public, popular and emancipatory education.

In the current context, we have outstanding challenges for our union organizations, which, will undoubtedly, require us to keep on learning and building new strategies to struggle for improving public education in our country, in the region, in the world. To that end, we declare ourselves part of the Latin American Pedagogical Movement from where collectively we will continue to contribute as education workers who feel like social subjects protagonists of the processes to produce critical and emancipating knowledge from our daily practices.

What is the IDEA?

The Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas (IDEA) Network is a flexible network that brings together organizations in the Americas that share a commitment to protecting and improving public education, seen as essential to democratic development and the protection of human rights.

The network works with other civil society organizations concerned about the impact of "free" trade agreements and other transnational neoliberal policies on social rights. While the idea for a hemispheric network emerged from a meeting of teachers and students in Mexico City in November, 1998, IDEA's structure was broadened and formalized at the Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas conference held in October 1999 in Quito, Ecuador.

What does IDEA do?

The IDEA Network carries out research, sets up communication networks, publishes documents and organizes conferences and seminars related to neoliberalism, trade agreements and the defense and democratic transformation of public education. It also organizes hemispheric campaigns to defend public education and the defenders of public education. The objective of these activities is to lay the groundwork for an understanding of the impact of neoliberal policies on education in the Americas and to develop alternatives to ensure inclusive, democratic and quality public education.

IDEA also has two hemispheric subnetworks: an education researchers' network and an Indigenous Educators' network

The researchers' network involves researchers working with educator, student and parent organizations in collaborative work that enables us to produce studies that analyze and compare similar situations and policies in a range of American countries.

The indigenous educators' network enables First Nations educators to communicate with their counterparts in other countries of the Americas and to share strategies and ideas related to defending culture and autonomy within a publicly funded education system.

Coordinating Committee

The work of IDEA is directed by a Hemispheric Coordinating Committee made up of representatives of the following organizations:

- National Union of Educators (UNE/Ecuador)
- Confederation of Education Workers of the Argentine Republic (CTERA)
- Federation of Central American Teachers' Organizations (FOMCA)
- National Confederation of Education Workers (CNTE/Brasil)
- Caribbean Union of Teachers (CUT)
- British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF/Canada)
- Latin American and Caribbean Students' Organization (OCLAE)
- Hemispheric Education Researchers' Network (RIE)
- Hemispheric Indigenous Educators' Network (REI)



Intercambio

**They were taken alive.
We want them back alive!**
For the disappeared student-teachers of Ayotzinapa!

