



Intercambio

Education Research Bulletin of the IDEA Network

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WORKING CONDITIONS AND TEACHERS' HEALTH

Photo: Desde el balcón, miradas libres

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PRESENTATION

Privatization and the commodification of education, imposed by many governments world wide, disrupts not only the working conditions of education workers, but their whole lives. It also has a negative impact on the teaching-learning process which is why the health of teachers has become an increasingly relevant concern among unions and academics.

In this issue of *Intercambio Magazine*, we show that in spite of the very different social backgrounds of our students and the different living standards in the communities where we work, some things are pervasive. Without taking into consideration teachers' opinions or those of their organizations, governments have imposed policies that generate heavy workloads, longer work days, an excess of administrative tasks, the forced introduction of new information and communication technologies, excessive control, punitive teacher assessments, attacks on our pension funds and social security and, most importantly, the restriction of our autonomy, academic freedom and creativity inside the classroom. The first essay, by Gary Fenn, presents the findings of research done among 7,800 professors from the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSFT). The results, which paved the way to starting a dialogue with the Ontario government, were astounding: 1) most of the teachers considered that the curricular and pedagogical changes implemented were of little use and offered scarce resources; 2) 92% of the teachers did unpaid voluntary and extracurricular work; and 3) the increase in workload has increased levels of stress and sickness among teachers. The research pointed to the fact that almost all teachers felt stressed by work because of students' demands, the use of technology and the increase in initiatives from the Ministry of Education. In the second essay, Anne Hales reveals the shocking results of research carried out in 2016 among members of the British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF), also in Canada: 65% of the teachers reported high levels

of stress, and 68% felt emotionally drained during most of the working day. They agreed that working conditions are inadequate and services insufficient, wreaking havoc on their mental health and making them wish they could abandon the teaching profession. They also explained that when help is requested, they face vast obstacles, which in turn triggers a vicious cycle of stress, anxiety and depression. It is worth mentioning that the teachers believed their union adequately supports and respects them. But the largest source of stress comes from cuts and public education policies which restrict funding and do not appropriately address the needs of students and teachers.

The work of Deolidia Martinez tackles a relevant theme for all involved in education. Her research looks at a series of concepts including work, health, teachers' malaise, and psychological risks. Her contribution helps understand how they are relevant for unions and stakeholders. She makes reference to the current labour situation in Latin America, Argentina specifically, using a narrative approach to explain teachers' unrest. Her critique questions an excess of managerial and bureaucratic tasks and supervision by officials without experience of teaching or what happens in a classroom and who, under the pretext of indicators, deny reality and turn a blind eye to the teachers' working conditions and health issues. Finally, she suggests that the answers lie in defending the work and identity of teachers, rejecting the commodification of their role.

The work presented by Rosana Palacios, Elba Morales and Guillermo Estrella of the National Educators Union (UNE) of Ecuador shows how occupational health issues are closely related to current working conditions: deficient school infrastructure, insufficient salaries, longer working hours, the "multitasking" required from teachers, confrontational and imposition-based work styles, lack of recognition, authoritarian decision-making and restrictions to teachers' organizing.



The article speaks of a legislative gap that ignores the health-related hazards to teachers, especially under the current detrimental conditions. It also denounces the Rafael Correa administration for creating a sham union that is complicit in the unfavorable labour policies and conditions that affect teachers in Ecuador.

Sara Unda analyzes labour changes in Mexico from three perspectives: privatization, punitive assessment and precarization through labour flexibilization. She shows that together these trends have transformed academic work, and have turned teachers into mechanical and uncritical workers, subjected to a loss of professional autonomy, increased supervision and exorbitant labour demands. The consequent physical and mental deterioration then leads high levels of stress and an increase in work-related violence.

In his essay Fernando Alvarez, also from Mexico, describes the neoliberal policies behind precarization, proletarianization, and the undervaluing of teaching work. Said policies follow a market logic that is stripping teachers of their knowledge, and are making them mere operators. Since the 2013 educational reform, teachers are no longer state workers but have become part of a market profession. As a result, teachers are suffering burnout and labour uncertainty. To address the situation, he proposes teacher-training that promotes education for liberation.

Professor Gladys Pajuelos, from the SUTEP Union (Sindicato Único de Trabajadores de la Educación de Perú), provides elements of analysis that her union has developed by researching the impact of neoliberal policies on the health of teachers. Peru (along with Mexico) has undergone one of the most aggressive impositions of punitive evaluations which have eliminated job security in the sector and generated strong opposition as well as proposals for alternative projects.

The reader will also find an article from the National Confederation of Brazilian Education Workers (CNTE-Brazil) which delves into the topic of Public-Private Partnerships as an aggressive manifestation

of the privatization of education in Brazil. It takes stock of the counter-reforms the current government has imposed, depriving students and academic communities of their rights.

We conclude with a brief overview of an event in solidarity with the Honduras student movement organized by the Mexican Section of the Tri-National Coalition in Defense of Public Education and the Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas (IDEA Network-Red Sepa), which took place last February 14 in the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). We wish to thank all of the authors and reviewers for their contributions. Special thanks to Dr. Sara Unda of UNAM, specialist on teachers' health, for her work as co-editor of this issue of *Intercambio Magazine*.

The Editorial Committee



Stressed Out

Increasing Pressures on Education Workers to Do More

Garry Fenn*

The teachers and support staff members of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) face increasing pressures from government, parents, school administrators and the students they serve to quite simply do more. Many new initiatives and programs have been introduced by the provincial government and school boards to train educators in new trends in pedagogy, curriculum and student assessment. Student and community demands put greater pressure on teachers to supervise more extracurricular activities. Technological advances and greater calls for accountability have led to significant increases in educator workloads. The result is an increase in educator stress levels, declining health and a general malaise amongst the educators that work with our children.

OSSTF took these issues to the provincial and school board levels of government, which have responsibility for the publicly-funded education system in Ontario. Our lobbying efforts went largely unheard. It was decided that it was time to try to quantify the concerns by embarking on a research project to survey our membership on questions of workload, volunteerism and stress.

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In 2013, OSSTF hired a researcher to study these issues. The centerpiece of the researcher's work, a comprehensive voluntary survey, generated an overwhelming response with over 7,800 members participating.

Results were presented to the membership at a subsequent Annual Meeting in a document called the *Workload and Volunteerism of Educators (WAVE) Report*. This report paved the way for discussions with the government in how it deals with bringing in new initiatives and overall workload issues. The findings would also be a subject at future contract negotiations.

Ministry of Education and School Board Initiatives

Educators have felt inundated with one new initiative after another from the provincial Ministry of Education and their local school boards. Changes in curriculum, assessment and evaluation strategies, pedagogical changes, student well-being programs, and many other initiatives have been introduced haphazardly and often with little training or time for implementation, and no continuous and sustainable funding.

Members were asked if they found Ministry and/or school board directed activities and initiatives to be of any benefit to their daily classroom practices and responsibilities which support student achievement. Only 8% said that these initiatives were of any use to them in their daily work.

Further analysis showed that educators found very little positive impact for their professional practices and for their students. This is often because these new initiatives or programs came with limited support or resources, and often lacked follow-up training or professional learning. Successful implementation is rarely achieved because another new initiative quickly follows and becomes the new focus of attention, while past initiatives would simply disappear.

Volunteering for Extracurricular Activities

In Ontario, coaching sports, running clubs and other extracurricular activities is strictly voluntary. There is no requirement for a teacher or support staff member to

participate. In addition, there is no extra pay for volunteering your time for extracurricular activities. Education unions in Ontario, and in most Canadian provinces, have strongly maintained that extracurricular activities remain voluntary and without additional pay. As our research discovered, 92% of teachers reported that they volunteer their time to run and support extracurricular activities. Most school boards require that a teacher be in charge of any extracurricular activity. When our survey looked deeper into just how much personal time that our members volunteer to do these activities, we discovered that three quarters of teachers ran two more extracurricular activities, and that one in six teachers were running *five* or more of these activities.

Further investigation revealed that while many educators felt that doing *one* activity was truly voluntary, they felt pressure to supervise and run more than one activity. Certain teachers also felt obligated to run extracurricular activities in areas related to their teaching subject, such as physical education teachers coaching in sports, or arts teachers participating in art and drama clubs. There were also comments from newer and younger members expressing that they felt highly obligated to supervise extracurricular activities in order to increase their chances of either getting or maintaining their job.

Increasing Workload

For a number of years now, educators have expressed concerns that their level of responsibilities and overall workload has increased. While Ontario education unions have had great success in keeping class sizes in check, there has been a marked increase in bureaucratic and record keeping responsibilities, in addition to the increasing number of new programs and initiatives mentioned earlier. The result has been higher levels of stress and levels of illness among members.

Seventy-one percent of our members polled said that their overall workload has increased over the past five years. When asked which job responsibilities had increased, three areas stood out. Requirements for computer work, computer learning or computer and internet postings



was identified as the most significant workload increase. Administrative requests for information, forms, data and student attendance, as well as time and effort required to assess and report on student progress were the next two areas of workload increase identified.

Most educator workload increases involve bureaucratic functions and have had very little to do with teaching or supporting student learning. With increasing calls for greater government accountability, the result has been that educators have had to spend more of their personal time to complete these tasks, increasing levels of stress and illness.

Over half of our members reported spending at least 5 or more hours of extra time per week at *school* outside of their regular classroom duties to complete job requirements, and another 5 or more hours of extra time per week at *home*. These numbers did not include the time that educators spend volunteering for extracurricular activities as those are not seen as requirements of the job.

Job-Related Stress

Our research and survey looked into whether members were feeling more stressed as a result of the pressures generated by the increasing number of Ministry and local school board initiatives, the pressure to participate in extracurricular activities and the general increases in workload. Almost every member reported feeling

stressed at work at least half of the time, with almost half reporting being stress most or all of the time.

Members reported that the top three aspects of their jobs that contributed the most to their rising stress levels were increased problems with students and/or demands from students, increased demands to use technology, and increased requirements from the Ministry of Education.

Pushing for Change

As a result of this research and member survey, OSSTF has focused its government lobbying efforts and negotiations strategies to address these concerns. Armed with hard data and listening to the concerns of members regarding their workloads and stress, OSSTF has seen some success at both the bargaining table and in changes to government policies.

In a recent round of bargaining, OSSTF was able to win a one year moratorium on any new Ministry of Education or local school board initiatives or programs. In addition, the union was able to establish collective agreement language that recognized both the professional judgement of educators and the requirement to have greater professional collaboration between the union, the Ministry of Education and local school boards, giving the union a voice when it comes to new initiatives and programs. However, implementation and compliance of the professional collaboration language has proved

to be challenging as the government and school boards have been reluctant to involve the union in discussions about new initiatives.

The stresses that members have felt around meeting the increasing needs of students has led to calls for more training and support for educators in our schools. Public opinion has also shown that there is a greater demand for more help in the classroom. With an Ontario provincial election coming in June 2018, addressing this call may very well become an election issue.

Lessons Learned

Undertaking a significant research project regarding educators' workloads and resulting stress level increases has been an eye opening experience. Not only did members report that they appreciated being asked about their views on workload and volunteerism, we were also able to approach the government and school boards with strong data to support our push for changes. This translated in some initial gains at the bargaining table and drew more attention to further issues of concern to bring to the government and lobby successfully for change. However, the victories have been few and we have a long way to go. Armed with member data and solidarity, our union has great confidence in making further gains so that our members can feel healthy at work and do the best job that they can to support our students in reaching their learning goals.



Critical conditions: Safeguarding teachers' mental health and wellbeing

Anne Hales*

In times of human crisis, as witnessed recently in the aftermath of Puerto Rico's hurricane, Canada's wildfires, and New Zealand's earthquakes (O'Toole & Friesen, 2016), public school teachers often act both as 'first responders' and post-crisis caregivers for children and youth in their communities. Their particular professional role and pedagogical relationships compel them to attend to their students' immediate and long term physical, emotional and educational needs alongside—and often at the expense of—their own.

Less dramatically, and more insidiously, deteriorating working and learning conditions, couched within neoliberal governance cultures, have taken a deep and pervasive toll on public school teachers globally. Fiscal austerity has left a legacy of systemic fatigue evident not just in crumbling physical infrastructure or shuttered school buildings, but also in chronic burnout and psychological weariness amongst a significant number of teachers. Teachers' mental health and wellbeing has emerged as an increasingly important international advocacy focus for teachers' unions in recent years. A 2016 survey conducted by the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), for example, indicates that 86% of UK teachers expe-

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rienced increased workplace stress in the previous year (NASUWT, 2017). The NASUWT mainly attributes the crisis in workers' mental health to the impact of long term economic austerity measures directed at UK's public education system (NASUWT, 2016). The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) 2014 work-life balance study similarly indicates respondents' stress was associated mainly with student and administrative services cuts, resulting in workload increases and diminished sense of practitioner effectiveness (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2014). Such findings suggest that safeguarding teacher mental health and wellness is deeply connected to advocating for manageable working conditions. In May 2017, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) conducted a province-wide survey of its 38,000 members inquiring into the state of teachers' mental health and wellbeing. The baseline survey occurred at a fortuitous historical moment, just as the BC Liberals—a regime with a strong record of austerity funding and anti-union legislative tactics (Hales, 2015; Poole, 2007)—ended their sixteen-year run as the Province's governing party. In its first months, the newly elected New Democratic Party (NDP) government has signalled its intention to restore public education services, facilities and staffing to adequate levels. The BCTF's baseline survey, therefore, provided a timely opportunity to consider what, if any, relationship exists between past neoliberal education policies and teachers' current states of mental health and wellbeing.

A preliminary analysis indicates that approximately two-thirds of BC teachers report feeling stressed (65%) and emotionally exhausted (68%) all or most of the time.¹ When asked to characterize main factors influencing their mental health, responses coalesced around three major themes:

- 1) **a culture of disrespect** (from government (92%), public media (72%) and district level administration (50%))
- 2) **inadequate working conditions and professional support** (planning and preparation time (69%), workload (68%), access to resources and professional learning support (63%), and opportunities for collaboration with colleagues (53%)).
- 3) **insufficient student services and learning conditions** (student services (89%), classroom composition (85%), behavioural challenges (82%))

The long-term effects of increasing workload and deteriorating student services—coinciding with major curriculum reform initiatives—has left a significant number of BC teachers burned out and questioning their future in the profession. Four in ten respondents indicated they had seriously considered moving from their current position—or leaving teaching entirely—in the past twelve months. These results echo similar findings in Saskatchewan, where just over 50% of teachers indicated they would consider leaving teaching for another career (Martin, Dolmage, & Sharpe, 2012). As Loeb, Darling-Hammond, L. and Luczak (2005) outline, continual teacher movement and attrition have serious consequences on “school stability, curriculum coherence, instructional quality and efficient use of resources” (p. 45). With BC already facing a serious teacher shortage, addressing their mental health concerns seems, if nothing else, a prudent human resources retention strategy.

When teachers do seek support, however, they face **additional barriers**. Just half of those requiring mental

¹ BCTF Teachers' Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey (May 2017, unpublished). Margin of sampling error +/- 3.75 percentage points with 95% confidence level.

health services indicated they accessed them. The main obstacles? Time and money. Intensification of teacher work, coupled with lagging salaries, means vital counselling and therapy services often go untapped. The very systemic conditions that contribute to exacerbating teacher stress, anxiety and depression (respondents' top three mental health concerns) appear to be the same temporal and financial barriers that prevent them from acquiring the supports they need.

The BCTF's survey also suggests that, despite a prolonged period of political antagonism and diminishing funding, most BC teachers still find teaching an engaging and rewarding endeavour. They find sustenance in their collegial connections (88%) and engagement in their daily classroom work (90%). They feel respected by their union (86%) and their students' families (85%). Moreover, teachers thrive when they feel empowered and able to carry out work they deeply value: building strong pedagogical relationships and communication with their students.

Nonetheless, these vital wellsprings of resiliency can only sustain teachers to a limited extent when their teaching environment remains fundamentally unmanageable. The long-term preservation of teachers' wellbeing requires a restorative combination of progressive public education policies, adequately funded schools and student services, and improved professional work and learning conditions that safeguard public education as a democratic institution, and teachers as professionals. As the CTF concludes, "teacher work conditions are student learning conditions" (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2014). Ultimately, governments' 'first response' to addressing the current crisis in teachers' mental health should be maintaining properly funded and serviced public school systems—not relying on teachers to exhaust their final reserves.

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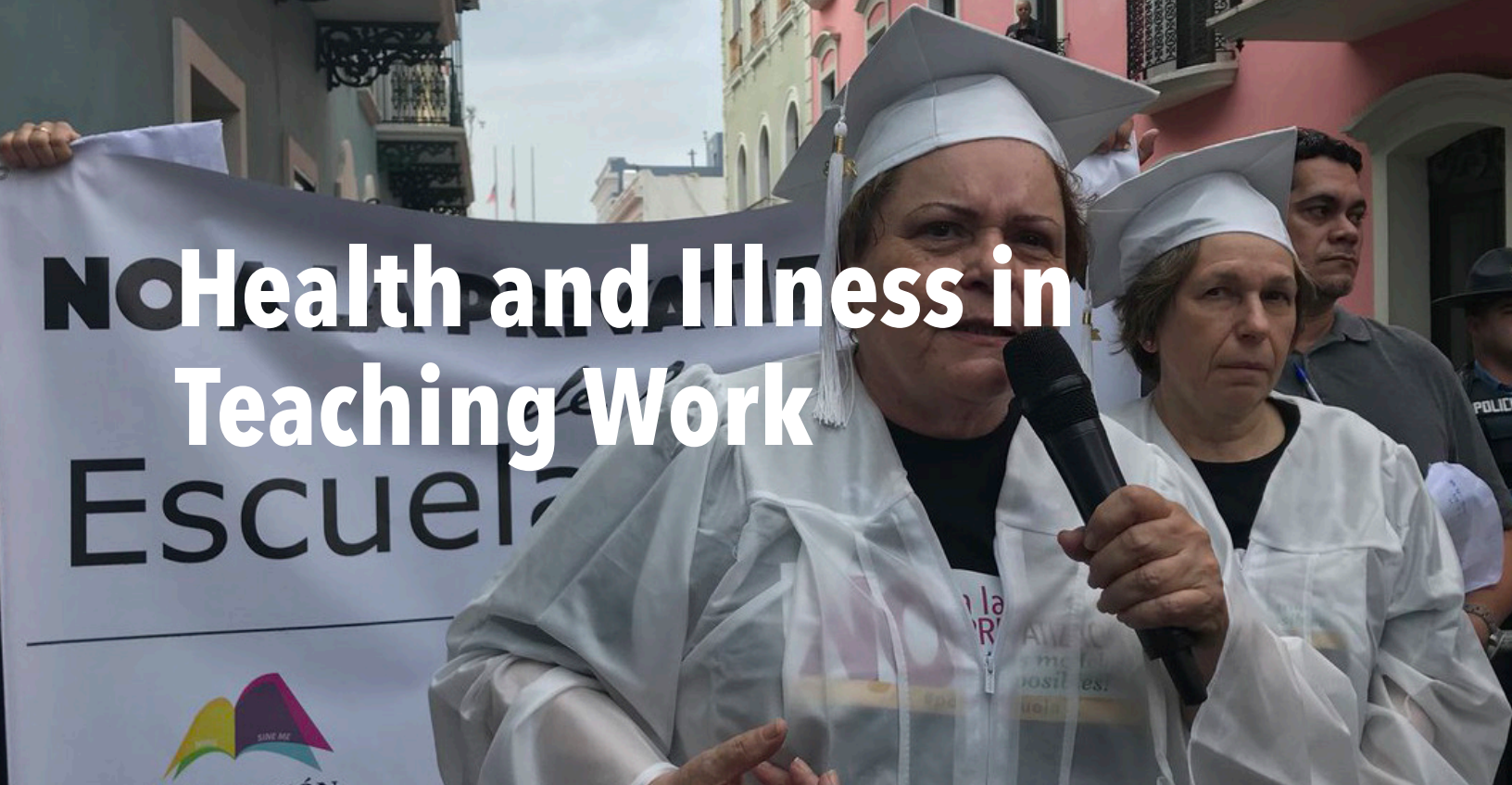
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Health and Illness in Teaching Work

Deolidia Martínez*

Summary: Reflections on the experience of the professional work of teachers in Argentina, within a union framework. Characteristics of the current situation of teaching work in Latin America, with specific reference to psychological risk and teacher burnout.

Key words: teaching work-suffering-teacher burnout-desire-psychological risk-pupil-students-authorities-value.

WORK ON TRIAL

How do I avoid going crazy at school?

Let us interrogate work, turning subject into protagonist.

We are on a political battlefield. Suffering is at the centre of the everyday life of a teacher. For almost a century, we have been asking why we have to work within an administrative structure that is removed from the school, our natural environment. Norms and rules that order our time and movement are conceived from a place that is oriented towards neither education nor teaching.

* Deolidia Martínez is a Labour Psychologist and a member of the ESTRADO Network of Argentina.

We say that the topic is political because it has to do with the exercise of bureaucratic power, far from everyday life: classroom-students-games-learning. Power accumulated in offices, documents, desks and government meetings.

Conceived and carried out from “above and far away,”-determining schedules, programs, and results for others, not for us, the teachers, students, families, communities .

But we carry out a job, real and concrete work for which we receive a salary. It has value, it's the only thing that specifically links what we do with what is ordered from above.

Ah...value...how valuable is what we do! Where it is measured? In the students? In the grades? In the graduates? Yes. But ... outside of ourselves as protagonists.

What do we do? We learn, we change relations: life and people, life and work, current and future ... but nothing counts it has no value. Ours is a genuinely untransmittable knowledge, remaining in the collective consciousness. The educational system waits for grades—averages—attendance records—certificates.

An authority of the system says: that is “very subjective.”

Thus, subjects don't count. What we carry out is for others, not for us.

Teacher Burnout

That “introduction” is a synthesis of my more than 50 years of experience as a labour psychologist, spent in various countries, schools, teachers’ unions, struggles and protests.

I have listened attentively to the suffering of teachers whom I’ve known from training courses, at job actions and strikes and on research projects carried out to discover, identify and serve. “Teacher burnout” today has me alert to developments that—always from outside of

the schools—impose pre-decided changes, from an entity distant from the everyday life of the teacher, a sector with authority over them that influences their life and worth. to improve results or to carry out “policies of results” for the marketplace ... different from what we produce today.

The issue of teacher burnout reminds me of research into occupational health in the 1970s in various countries in Europe and the United States. We were surprised by the unexpected results on the reasons for teachers’ sick leave - the largest percentage was for psychiatric reasons! A Spanish investigator, Jose Manuel Esteve (3), paid attention to these results and investigated the teaching profession and those who undertake it. He found a suffering hidden from social life and from the very individual who experienced it.

Obviously teachers with that problem had recourse to psychiatric attention and the health statistics detected them. Many years passed and one could confirm that that burnout had no cure in those spaces It is not a classic illness. The symptoms for which the teachers sought psychiatric help (insomnia, anguish, mental fatigue and memory loss) originate in a failure of the way work is organized, from outside the individual and a strong expectation of results on the part of bureaucratic organizations that bring about sanctions and negative assessments—often arbitrary and based more on policies or demands of the day than any objective evaluation--of teachers who don’t fulfil what a government expects in order to deliver a policy “on time and correctly.”

Change (to relieve the problem of burnout) must take place in the critical sphere of regulations, sanctions, norms and working conditions, not with sleeping pills. The work of a teacher is carried out in a collective fashion with teachers and colleagues. It is not a solitary activity valued only by oneself. Over time, evaluations were shaped pedagogically to have an emphasis more on collective effort. However, the authoritarian and nega-

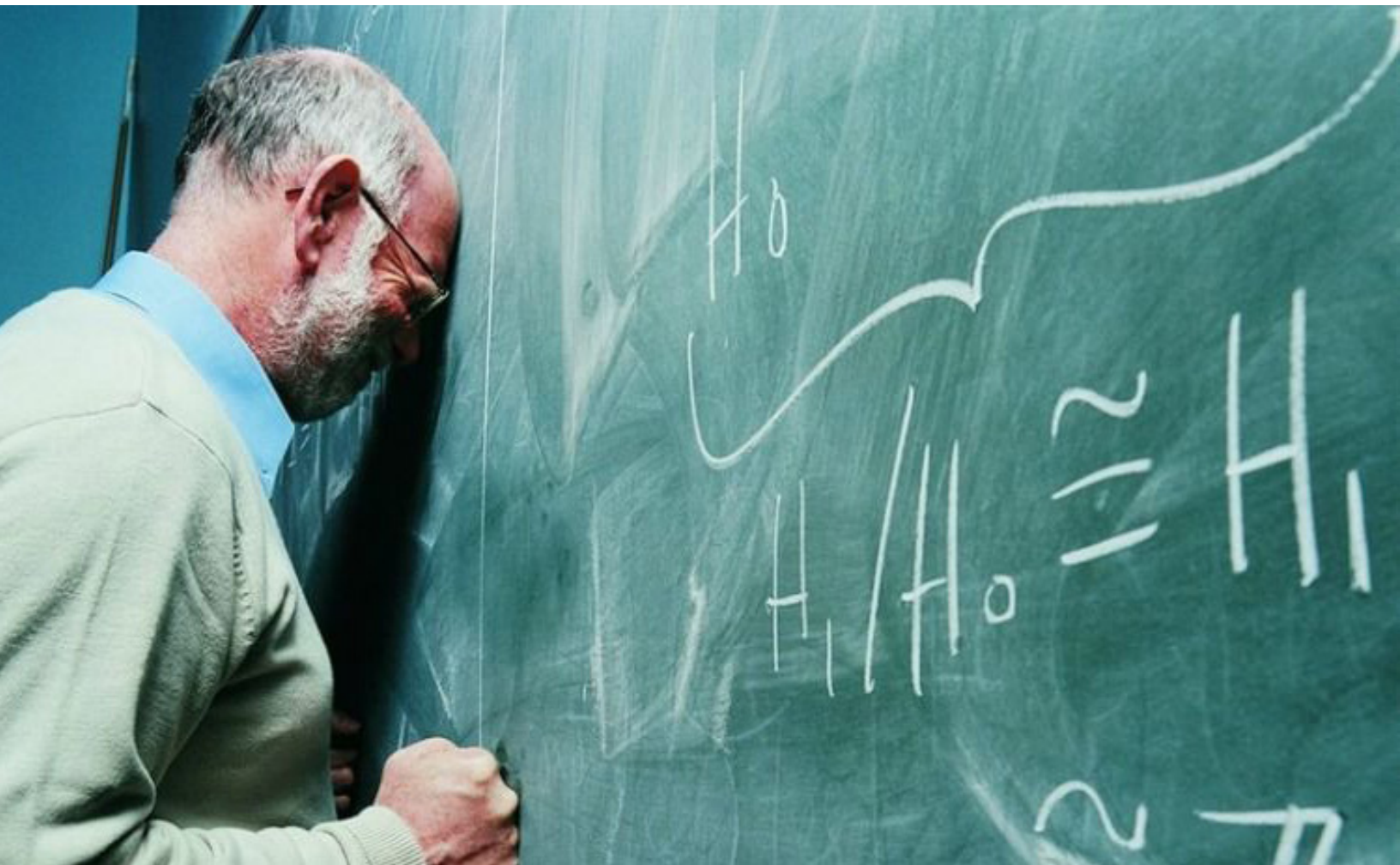
tive increase in neoliberal political and administrative policies demands business-oriented results adjusted to the individual from a cost-benefit factor, with threats of sanctions regarding salary and work stability.

In Brazil teacher burnout has been called “desistencia” (withdrawal). Teachers stop hoping for results. They no longer have any desire to produce, to create, to hope for something from what they create in school. They suffer in silence, continuing on with their routine and the need for a salary to live on. Nothing excites them, they value nothing as their own. Desidia invades them. This research project (the largest in the world—52,000 teachers in 1997-8 [1]) “discovered” that the central factor in teaching work is affection (*cariño*) between teacher and student. The core is emotional. Teachers feel “burned out”, like a motor, with no energy left to love another.

New categories of analysis.

We are currently developing research on “workplace risks in schools” (2). A key topic in labour studies accidents and work-related sickness. The category of risk was not easy to deal with, especially because the psychological aspect, for us as researchers, was central. The physical and environmental risks shared specific aspects with other workplaces -public buildings, furniture, bathrooms, patios, classrooms, etc. They had no secrets to keep. However, the form and content of teaching work were different and little studied in their specificity of personal-group relations with students and colleagues, those in authority. Thus we come to the definition of psychological risk in teaching work. Similarly, the category of suffering needed more exploration. The Argentinean teacher’s union (CTERA)¹ facilitated access to interviews, observations and discussions with individuals exposed to psychological risk and ready to identify it in themselves and in others. The link to work was the basis of analysis:

¹ Confederation of Education Workers of the Argentine Republic.



work with others, of equal standing or those in authority, with students, parents, neighbours and workers in the school setting.

Among various areas of analysis, we identified harassment as a central psychological risk for teachers, whether as victim or perpetrator, between colleagues and/or superiors. It is difficult to analyze, isolate in context and resolve collectively. (This is an area worthy of further research.)

The next risk, in order of importance or prevalence, is that which derives from the civil liability of working teachers when dealing with minors. Parents' jealousy regarding the conduct of the teacher caring for their child in their absence is as old as the profession and is one of the risks of this work. In the case of any accident or accusation of mistreatment, "the teacher is innocent until proven guilty," although this attitude seldom prevails. Prejudice is the risk in this case.

The collective character of teaching work

It is essential to consider that this work is done by individuals acting together. The work process is collective. The student-teacher relationship, like the doctor-patient relationship, is an important part of work, both in education and in health. On the other hand, education is a collective field, where the interactions of teachers-students-community are essential in evaluating socio-educational processes in the cultural history of peoples.

The political protagonism of students is increasingly important and visible. In Chile the student "penguins" (as they are called because of their school uniforms) demanded free, public and democratic education in the years 2005/2006 and took to the streets of Santiago, Concepción and Valparaíso before the demonstrations by secondary and university teachers which soon followed. The "disappeared" students of Ayotzinapa are proud representatives of the historic and heroic *Normales Rurales* (rural teachers' colleges) in Mexico. We cannot think of teaching work without those students

"The next risk, in order of importance or prevalence, is that which derives from the civil liability of working teachers when dealing with minors. Parents' jealousy regarding the conduct of the teacher caring for their child in their absence is as old as the profession and is one of the risks of this work".

and education workers who have advanced the struggle with a decisiveness and courage that has surprised the world (which had already been surprised in May 1968 by the Paris rebellion against authority).

Of course we speak out in agreement with student movements. And what of the teachers' strikes! This is a labour right that we exercise with all our force and with intense internal discussion in the workers' collectives. It is not easy to overcome the archaic resistance to disrupting "public service" that still lives on in teachers. The identity of "worker" is not totally constructed yet. There is still an idealized "teacher" without time or needs.

The issue of salary tends to take precedence over working conditions and the necessary participation of teachers in educational decisions and in the political direction of



a country and its culture.

Today we are going through long struggles and collective efforts along with peoples and their demands Mexico, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Brazil They have histories of difficult strikes and little negotiation with government. The debate over the value of teacher's work is still unresolved. Within what parameters is there adjustment? Cost of living and work time for the employers, we never work enough ... time is compared to factory shifts and commercial or bureaucratic workdays. The content of the collective work of teaching and learning—as a product—is never on the desks of public administrators.

Conclusion.

In recent years, with the advance of a savage form of capitalism, the demand for results from commercial and financial projects with no pedagogical justification has intensified.

We have “human capital” in our hands... and it seems that we won't give it the destiny expected in global finance not even the country counts. This is not so. Especially because of the critical autonomy which young people have developed. A good number of students are ready to defend their destinies in life. The labour market is a reality that they are aware of and which they are prepared to confront.

Today (Sept.18, 2017) in Buenos Aires more than 30

secondary schools are occupied by students—for 15 days now—in protest against a unilateral reform—in part tied to their work futures—that the Ministry of Education seeks to impose.²

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Tensions inside and outside the classroom: **Overworked, sick and stressed-out teachers**

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Summary: Over the last few years, the Ecuadorian state and government of Rafael Correa –known as the “citizen revolution”- have accumulated, reproduced and distributed power in order to strengthen and modernize the capitalist system and support economic accumulation by transnational companies. Increased control over the educational system, implemented through repressive, authoritarian and hegemonic measures, has resulted in a situation that has severe health consequences for Ecuadorian teachers.

An unfair and illegal system

The education system in Ecuador faces a series of problems that prevent it from providing children and youth with the necessary quality of education to ensure their integration into the workforce and their individual wellbeing and that of their families and society as a whole. Ecuadorian teachers are at severe risk of developing

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“Unfortunately severe neglect, by government and educational authorities, of institutional facilities and school infrastructure, have meant the workplace has become the source of physical and emotional illness”.

job-related health problems due to deficient school infrastructure, the implementation of an 8-hour work day in inadequate buildings, the pressure exerted on teachers, both inside and outside of the classroom, as well as infringements of the Constitution, and breaches of international agreements and labour laws by the Ministry of Education.

Teachers’ organizations have carried out several research projects to identify the core problems that affect their health and professional endeavors. Based on those findings, proposals have been made to remedy the situation and to defend education workers, demanding that governments adhere to the legal framework and create new policies that protect teachers, raising their quality of life, and reflect critically about the best ways to evaluate the education of children and youth.

Recently the Women’s Secretariat of the National Union of Ecuadorian Educators (UNE), in collaboration with the University of Cuenca, carried out research on the health of teachers. This was done under the assumption that a fight for health is a fight for better working and living conditions and for better education.

In the same spirit of inquiry, we present the following article on the results of the research and the current situation.

Deficient school infrastructure

If work is considered to be a source of health, and of spiritual, material and social satisfaction¹, the environment where teachers perform should be suitable for such important activities, as this is one of the main elements for the construction of work-related health. Unfortunately severe neglect, by government and educational authorities, of institutional facilities and school infrastructure, have meant the workplace has become the source of physical and emotional illness. For UNE and the Women’s Secretariat, aside from being a human right, health is the most important capital that educational workers have, and it is directly related to working conditions. These should be safeguarded by the Ministry of Education with a living wage that corresponds to workload, hours of work, and the many functions of teachers. Teachers must be provided with the physical spaces, materials and tools necessary for their professional, social and cultural growth. Employers’ fulfillment of these obligations should be monitored by the Ministry of Labour.

In the professional lives of teachers, there are conflicts and impositions. There is little or no acknowledgement of a job well done and decision-making rarely includes the participation of teachers and their organizations.

1. Basic concepts of Work-related health by Manuel Parra, WHO and ILO. Labor health, the cause-effect relationship between labor ergonomics and the health of workers.



Common illnesses among teachers

In terms of health concerns, there has been an increase in the percentage of work-related sickness among teachers. For instance: 57.41% suffer from stress, 55.78% have throat problems; 51.67% gastritis; 38.62% colds and flu; and 30.55% suffer from high cholesterol. Gastrointestinal disorders are present in 24.12% of all teachers; varicose veins affect 22.82%; 21.26% have high blood pressure; 17.94% report nervousness, 17.36% have insomnia and 15.60% endure migraines.

Agreements and laws flouted by the authorities

Ecuador has signed international conventions with the International Labor Organization (ILO)² that are legally binding; and the Labor Code has adopted the standards established by the ILO³ as well. Chapter IV specifies the conditions that facilities should comply with. It also makes it mandatory for employers to provide safety equipment and tools for risk prevention. The Code defines the role of the Ecuadorian Social Security Institute (IESS) on affiliation and health controls. If medical records are not kept, the employer is to be sanctioned. The IESS makes it compulsory to have a medicine cabinet, and in institutions with more than 25 workers, the employer must provide a nurse and supplies. If there are more than 100 workers, a doctor with preventive workplace medicine background should be present, to look after accidents and diseases.

² Conventions 161- 121 of the ILO guide for the development of public labor policies.

³ Ecuadorian labour Code 2005, Chapter IV, The obligations of employers.

As far as workplace hazards are concerned, it is established that “injuries to workers due to work performed include acute or chronic diseases caused by work activity and accidents that generate a slow and gradual deterioration of health until a condition of disability is reached.”

Ecuadorian legislation and work-related illness among teachers

Few diseases have been declared as workplace illnesses, and these are limited to the ones recognized by the IESS up to 2003. Overall, the illnesses suffered by Ecuadorian teachers are treated as ordinary problems rather than being acknowledged as work-related.

The ILO acknowledges teachers as being the professional category most at risk of developing voice problems, since it is their main work tool.

For public employees, there are no specific regulations that speak about their job-related health problems. However, the Ecuadorian Constitution, in several chapters and articles, acknowledges this right for all Ecuadorians in articles 35, 36, 42, 47, 57, 62, stated by the civil rights in article 23, number 3, 20.

Characteristics of teaching work:

Lack of job security since thousands of teachers, especially younger ones, work under contract and thus are subject to the pressures of authorities and the government.



Low wages when compared to the cost of the basic food basket (\$658.53), increased work hours (compulsory attendance at the school of 8 hours) and the multitasking teachers are required to do.

Lack of attention to the large-scale problems school facilities present. Teachers and parents are expected to be responsible for school maintenance and repairs. Organizations rights are limited by measures that suppress the freedom of speech and the creativity of teachers' activities⁴.

A parallel organization to the National Educators Union UNE⁵ has been created (breach of the freedom to unionize) that opposes the one legally and socially acknowledged as the Ecuadorian teachers union. Its main purpose is to support the government and to undermine respect for educators as role-models in the defense of human rights.

The Ministry of Education (its authorities), in an open political retaliation, have withdrawn the health staff who worked at the organization's health clinics, which were created decades ago due to IESS's inefficiency to

4 Breaches against Convention 087 of the ILO on Freedom to Unionize :“Art. 2.º.—Workers and employers, with no distinction or previous approval, have the right to create the organizations they deem convenient, as well as the right to affiliate to said organizations, and the only condition is that they adhere to its regulations. Art. 4.º.—The organizations of workers and employers are not subjected to a managerial dissolution or suspension. Breach of Convention 098) ILO Article 2 “2. Acts of interference according to this article are mainly measures that seek to promote the creation of workers' organizations that are controlled by an employer or an organization of employers; or to economically support or contribute to workers' organizations with the purpose of having those organizations be under the control of an employer or employers' organization.

look after the health of the affiliates in a timely and diligent manner.

Lack of adherence to ergonomic factors in school centers, the absence of specific legislation for the health of teachers, the increase of hours in a work day, the poor facilities, all have a negative effect on health.

Teachers have no access to preventive medicine plans and programs, so their physical and mental health are deteriorating at an accelerated rate due to the working conditions.

The measures adopted by the government and Ministry of Education, as of 2007, have exacerbated sickness amongst teachers.

The labour health of teachers

Education transmits and maintains the ideology of the ruling classes. Neoliberalism has made education into a market service. Thus, their educational policies are steered at creating a docile collective of teachers.

The media is used to slander the reputation of the teachers' sector. Attacks are made against their professionalism, working hours and outcomes according to business standards and against social needs. Teachers are accused of being the cause of the global educational, energy, food and economic crisis, and of the slow development of nations. Teachers are blamed for all sorts of social problems. Labour flexibilization is imposed using the following strategies:

Job insecurity and precarization in the through contracting, along with a gradual elimination of positions

which ensured job security.

Wage reduction due to the increase in unpaid working hours. Multitasking of teachers and unemployment in areas that are not deemed as important for the market, such as physical education, arts, etc.

Establishment of misleading standards that allow the state to abandon its obligations and which are forcing teachers to train themselves, exploit themselves, and be individualistic in such a way as to be regarded as being the right kind of teacher

The government is demanding a community response to maintain school infrastructure at certain school levels. Elementary and high schools are being privatized. There is nothing to stop this from happening at other levels. Encouragement of educational businesses which promote competency-based learning, meritocracy, standardized assessment and sectorization.





WORK AND HEALTH CONDITIONS, A PENDING MATTER IN THE DEFENSE OF THE RIGHTS OF MEXICAN TEACHERS

Sara Unda Rojas*

Summary: We present a reflection on the impact of neoliberal policies through the precariousness of work, privatization policies in education and punitive evaluation, as well as on Mexican teachers' working conditions and their impact on health.

Key Words: Working conditions, Teacher health, Precariousness, Privatization of education, Punitive evaluation

Mexican teachers today face attacks of neoliberal policies against public education. One of the most concrete manifestations of this is the gradual change in working conditions and its consequences on teacher health. In Mexico the poorly named constitutional education amendment launched by President Enrique Peña Nieto's administration in 2012 threatens the labour stability of the country's teachers. The "reforms" contemplated in the amendment make educators' work more precarious in all aspects, and strips them of their most basic labour and human rights.

It is not coincidental that in different parts of the world it is considered truly dangerous to be a teacher in Mexico, since defending your right to work can cost

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you your health, freedom and, on many occasions, your life.

Characteristics of teachers' working conditions

Current working conditions and their health impact on teachers can only be understood through examining public education privatization policies and teachers' performance evaluations, together with the precariousness¹ and flexibilization of their work.

Privatization manifests itself through a series of criteria and regulations imposed throughout the past three decades. These are accompanied by cuts to the education budget, offloading to teachers and parents responsibility for paying for the maintenance of school infrastructure, and competition between schools to obtain resources through criteria of competitiveness, quality, efficiency and effectiveness.

The situation is accompanied by a systemic campaign of discrediting teachers at all education levels, carried out by influential groups such as the business lobby "Mexicans First" (with a special focus on elementary school teachers, whose voices have been critical of the regime and the education reform).

In universities, privatization is even clearer, through the international ranking standards, commercialization of education that promotes the sale of services, forums, conferences, and financing through the management of resources. It is also seen through the university-business partnerships to patent knowledge, technological development services and entry into the international knowledge market, in which having a journal with "prestige," or publishing an article in one (indexed or one that has an impact factor) is big business, since many of these journals charge for publishing articles. The drive towards precariousness and flexibilization of academic work includes low salaries, salary differentiation through performance evaluations (undermining collective bargaining), extension and intensification of the workday, work hours and the loss of labour rights. New teachers are required to take an standardized evaluation and according to the officials' criteria, if

¹ Unstable and/or temporary employment



they pass, they are offered a temporary contract to be renewed with each evaluation, the negotiation of their permanence in the system depends on imposed criteria. Collective bargaining of working conditions is abandoned. Those who have been teaching for years face similar conditions, with their workloads arbitrarily changed or being fired with impunity, if they don't accept the conditions of the evaluation.

The transformation of teacher's work is manifest:

In the mechanisms of supervision through punitive evaluation and piecework that suppresses individual creativity and instead converts labour into something mechanic and acritical.

The changes in working materials, such as new curricular proposals, educational models, and study programs, by being imposed in a vertical manner, promote alienation and bureaucracy, which leads to a loss of autonomy and decision making in their work. In the conditions of current performance measurement, the relationships between parents, colleagues, directors, and supervisors are mixed together with the drive for individualism and competition, excessive supervision and the contempt for collective work, as well as a campaign to discredit teachers that undermines communities' trust in their teachers, converting parents in the new supervisors, instead of supporting joint work and awareness raising.

In the extensive and diversified products now expected from teachers work, the expectation is not only certain learning outcomes for students, but also that

the obtain resources for the maintenance of school buildings, the furniture and carry out promotional activities.

In the social determinants that influence their work, such as students' and families' poverty, domestic violence, violence in the local environment as a result of gangs or organized crime, alcoholism, drug addiction and increase in workplace violence manifested by aggressions, threats, and harassment that puts at risk teachers' physical and psychological integrity. As well, the teacher is implicitly held responsible for social deterioration and decomposition, and the lack of student development and progress, as though it were their responsibility to solve poverty, inequality and the lack of school opportunities in the future. All of this has a psychosocial impact on teachers' job satisfaction and mental health.

In the workdays that are increasingly longer and more intense, and on occasion with breaks of only 5-7 minutes daily. They are extended by the need to attend to parents, work team meetings and administrative demands, which takes time from their private life on Sundays, holidays and vacations. It is widely accepted that part of a teacher's work is carried out outside of work hours, such as planning, the creation of teaching materials, evaluation, management, and attendance at professional development courses (Parra, 2005). In the quest to amass required "empirical evidence" form evaluations teachers lose the essence of their work, with a significant decrease of their creativity and innovation, a reduction of critical and reflexive practice and, above all, a new generations with a commitment to contribute to social transformation with collective benefit.

Impacts on health

There are impacts on health in disorders that are both physical and psychological. Although no official data exists, some studies indicate that the most common work-related illnesses for teachers are neurovisual disorders, psychosomatic disorders, digestive issues,



cardio-circulatory issues, headaches, migraines, lower back pain, and in general musculoskeletal issues. In relation to mental disorders, these studies point out the increase in stress, irritability, anxiety, depression, sleep disorder, chronic fatigue, teacher malaise and syndromes like *Burnout*².

The pathological profile of the teacher points to the presence of varicose veins, illnesses of the spine, dysphonia, lumbago, seasonal illness like colds, respiratory illnesses and mental disorders like anxiety, insomnia, difficulty in concentration, taking pharmaceuticals in order to sleep, and depression (Parra, 2005).

Rivero and Cruz (2008) point to dysphonia, dysphagia, varicose veins, rheumatic disorders, in the 90s; at the beginning of the new century the profile included mental health issues: fatigue, sleep disorders, irritability, depression, anxiety; together with additional physical ailments such as: haemorrhoids, migraines, peptic ulcer disease, lumbalgias, dorsalgia, heart failure, stinging of eyes, headache, gastritis, edema, astigmatism, myasthenia, and psycho-dermatologic disorder. Martínez and Sánchez (2014) in a study carried out with university teachers reported three central ailments

² Burnout also known as the Syndrome of Burning Out due to work or teacher malaise, results from being exposed to chronic stress and is manifested through three characteristic symptoms, Psychiatric Fatigue, Depersonalization and Disillusion which generates a dysfunctional process in teacher performance and in serious situations, this also causes an exacerbation of chronic diseases, cardiovascular diseases, mental disorders and in some situations, abandonment of work.



associated with performance incentive programs³: stress (38%), sleep disorders (35%) and anxiety (34%).

Conclusions

The teachers' working conditions highlighted above contribute to the dismantling of the defense of work since under no condition does it seek to improve education, nor to increase quality. On the contrary, it brings about disastrous consequences, increases competition between schoolmates, individualism, and increases workplace violence and harassment. It also aims to undermine social support for teacher's work, and tears the social fabric of teachers as a collective.

This results in the creation of a new Ethos, with a commercial ideology, the banishment and alienation of their work manifested in mechanized, depersonalized and indifferent attitudes, producing a distancing from social commitment, and the loss of values of solidarity and justice with their communities and with their colleagues.

This identification of a change of epidemiological profile or increase in both physical and mental harms exacerbated by labour instability and pressures due

³ The incentive for performance or scholarships, consist of an additional amount of salary according productivity levels. This means being evaluated and meeting the performance standards set out by the institution. The former extends and intensifies the workday.

to standardized evaluation leads us to demand better work conditions, and to defend teachers' health in an urgent manner.

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NEOLIBERALISM, PRECARIZATION OF TEACHING WORK AND EDUCATION REFORM IN MÉXICO



CNTE demonstration in Mexico City. Source: Radio Zapatista (<https://goo.gl/KwWUB0>)

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Summary: Teachers lives today are affected by a complex process of precarization. The purpose of this article is to identify the origins of this impoverishment, which is clouding their future, including neoliberalism, ideological proletarianization, and the deskilling that results from rapacious capitalism. The struggle for dignity is a valid one, but it should be accompanied by training opportunities.

Key words: *neoliberalism, precarization for teachers, educational reform, proletarianization.*

The current global economic and geopolitical configurations perpetuate a tension within the internal relationships of education and its goals. Neoliberalism, as the greedy ideology of capitalism, batters education with the pounding of the market's logic - profit rates must increase. Even though public school teachers have resisted the attacks of capitalism before, today's onslaught is particularly gory since the bolted horse of

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the bourgeoisie has gotten stronger thanks to its keeper, a corrupt state that denies all possibilities for a utopia. Neoliberalism barges in under the assumption that society is a collection of selfish individuals who seek to quench their needs as free beings. For this purpose, the market is the only mediation that would allow for perfect wellbeing (Gomez, 2014). How could educational alternatives be left up to the state or the autonomy of teachers if humanity is individually selfish? Valenzuela Feijoo (1997) explains that the neoliberal ideology attempts to establish a classist foundation for those at the ruling as well as the subordinate levels. Thus, the aspirations of the oligarchy to perpetuate itself in time and space lie in education, as well as the means to counteract the trend towards a lower profit rate.

Because of such assumptions, Laval (2004) suggests that schools are being robbed of the public goods society possesses through the corporate slogan of granting equal opportunities. In reality, opportunities are blocked for those who cannot afford the “quality”. This market terminology gives education an eminently economic value, while ignoring the value for promoting change that it possesses, according to Perez Rocha (2015).

To gain the preference of “consumers”, the neoliberal school has to offer something more than just public education. Thus the fetish of quality, the biggest nuisance for teachers, requires schools compete to avoid similar offers. Mercantile innovation lies in the profiles students will have when they graduate, what will make them different from their competitors. In Mexico, it is all about “gaining” a little bit more of the 300 billion pesos allocated for educational expenses. Thus, franchises are created to expand capitalist horizons through a brand and a flagship, with differentiated costs and the possibility of defining a social status based on its “quality” (Calderon Alzati, 2016). In other words, it is a privatization that does not look like the sale or purchase of public schools, which is unlikely, but that is transforming teachers into mediators of the acquisition of capital.

Rather than acquiring the actual property, such as



facilities, teachers and managerial staff as labor, the purpose is to take over knowledge, specialized or general, and to sell it and earn a profit. According to Rockwell (2015), this is the at heart of the privatization reforms of education: its commodification. Vega Cantor (2015) states that the plundering of wisdom is the stealthy way that Big Capital attempts to transform all workers into mere operators.

If we acknowledge work as the objectification of life, because “it can only exist as a *live subject* (...), as a faculty, as a possibility and thus as a *worker*” (Marx, 2007:213), teaching would then be one of the most worthy types of work, because it objectifies life in a living being, the student, and the work teachers carry out would be invaluable, because there would be no way to pay for the life it objectifies.

However, teachers today are experiencing with their own living bodies a precarization of their proletarian situation. Educators perform under worsening conditions and increasing degradation of their lives (Vega Cantor, 2015). In Latin America, and more specifically Mexico, the social condition of pauperization finds its origin in the co-determination of neoliberalism, the theory of dependency (Osorio, 2016), and ideological proletarianization. Since dependency (theory) has not been overcome, impoverishment takes place because of the transference of value from peripheral capital to the central ones, by means of capitalistic competition, and by elucidating that real wages will stay low as long as desired. In this way, peripheral capital and teaching as a public profession will not be able to make equal economic demands.

In addition, there is a double-proletarianization process going on: ideological change and deskilling. The former (Vega Cantor 2015) is when teachers are subsumed in their actions by alien ideologies that prevent them from acting in a meaningful way and glimpsing a possible utopia. In other words, we are losing the aim of education since the purpose of the pedagogical act is unknown, and it is dominated and reduced to the role of a reproducer who shapes cognitive commodities only for the innovation of the organic composition of capital (technology), so that the employers do not perish during competition.

As far as deskilling is concerned (Lavac, 2004), teachers are threatened by the international economic organizations with losing their teaching degrees and subjected to imposed efficiency mechanisms like the assessment and social participation councils in Mexico. Thus, competition is transformed into surveillance and teaching limited to the strict domain of work, according to neoliberal reasoning.

All of the previously mentioned aspects converged in the 2013 Mexican education reform. The expectations of teachers disappeared as well as their position in society, as a public service profession was transformed into a market career (Aboites, 2011), resulting in a loss of identity and a lack of social and political commitment. All efforts are devoted to passing the evaluation that leads to a permanent job. The teacher training schools, with their highly respected pedagogy, have abandoned the *ethos* of teachers and it is reconfigured to devote all the available time to the exams. Professional literature and academic promotions are solely based on an assessment of knowledge, its evidence and argumentative planning. This is fetishizing the assessment, since the only absolutely valid knowledge is the one on the test, evidence is only sought after according to the assessment with no true investigative intention, and planning is not based on the pedagogical wonder of learning, since it's better to focus only on the elaboration. It is no longer pedagogical, but rather rhetorical.



Surveillance of the teachers' assessment. Source: A Tiempo Noticias (<https://goo.gl/4CKbq5>)

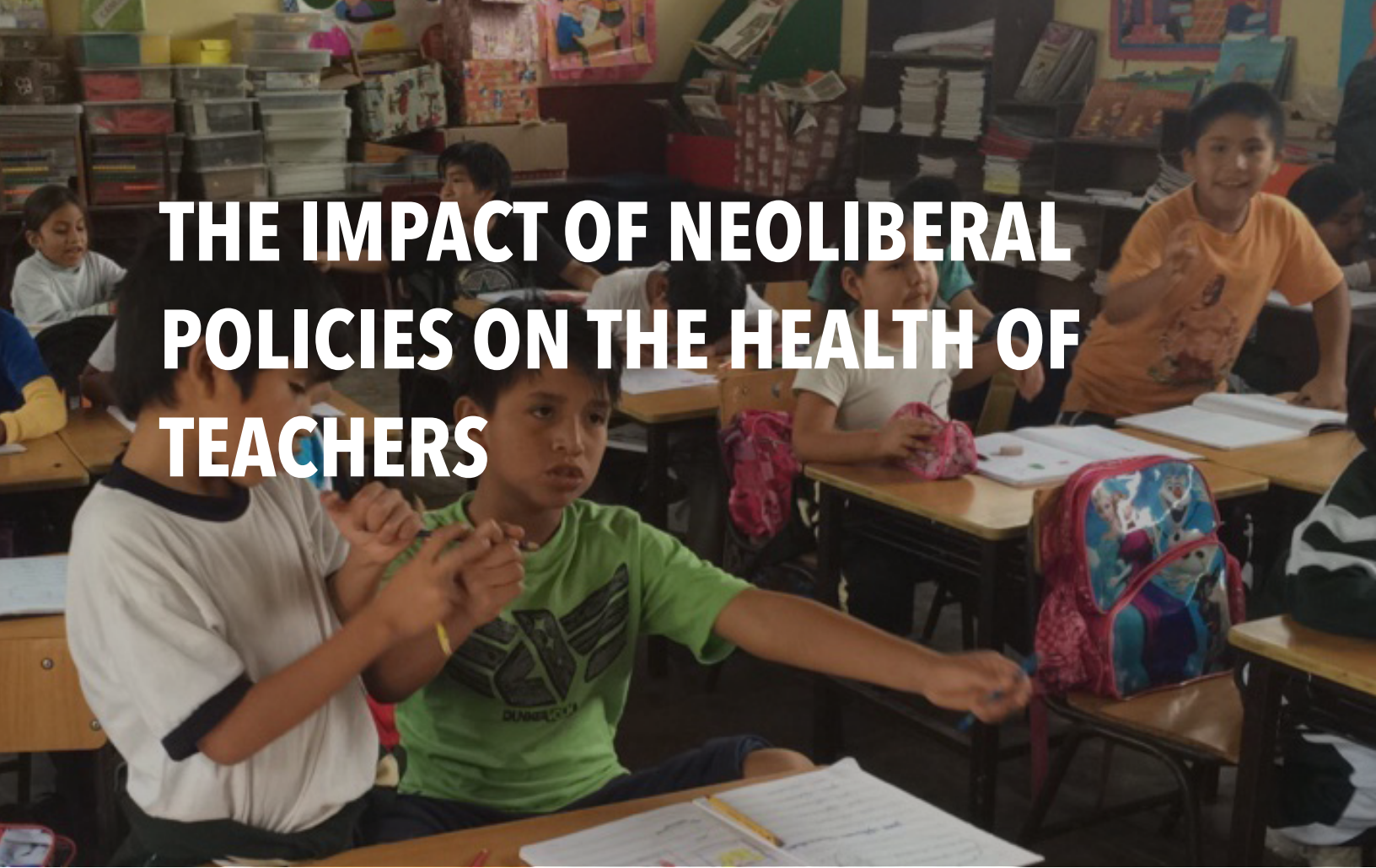
And thus teachers suffer *burnout* as they grapple with heavy overloads and red-tape that are only heightened by the evaluation. From their first contract, the job uncertainty begins and early on turns into a health problem.

Precarization and its effects on the body are diverse, but as we have said, the origin lies in ideological proletarianization. The Mexican reform possesses the joint features of (Sotelo Valencia, 2017): a) promoting free trade; b) political and cultural control; c) exploitation and unpaid labor; d) pension fund deterioration; e) labor despotism; and f) preparing for privatization. Several chronicles have highlighted the madness and terror of the teacher evaluation, because of the ridiculous number of policemen who were called in (Imaz, 2015); the retaliation against the families of people who refused to take it (Hernandez Navarro, 2016); the physical and ideological aggravations (Rivera, 2016); and the unconstitutional treatment unionized teachers receive (Ramos, 2016).

The precarization of teachers' lives and its clinical expression are contributing to the dismantling of education. It starts with a disquiet that undoubtedly has to be identified as a loss of meaning, as the ideological proletarianization that stems from job uncertainty, since subjects are robbed of their aspirations in life. The fight to dignify the lives of educational workers is of the essence. It has to be accompanied by arduous training processes: study circles, assemblies, workshops or the courses organized by the popular educator of the National Education Workers Coordination (Cordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación); so that their proletarian precarization can be unmasked. The *other* teachers that Capital loathes are indispensable. Their contribution to liberating schools is hopeful. Another education and another world await us.

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THE IMPACT OF NEOLIBERAL POLICIES ON THE HEALTH OF TEACHERS

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Summary: The implementation of neoliberal policies in education, as an alleged alternative to improve the quality of education, has instead deepened the crisis. The privatizing policies and the lessened participation of the State have transformed public education into a commodity to trade and thus, the role of teachers in the social development of our country has been devalued. Public education is being measured and assessed under strictly commercial criteria, which leads to a transformation of the school and labor arenas, and gravely impacts the health of teachers.

Key words: Neoliberal education policies, teachers' health, assessment, unions, legal standards.

Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right that the State is obliged to guarantee for all Peruvians, where teachers (a) constitute the most important subject in the change and improvement of its "quality". Thus, the State is bound to their professional development and to providing them with favorable working conditions

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for their performance in the classroom. That in turn will determine the quality of the students' learning. The participation of teachers is a necessary condition for "quality" to the extent in which, in its name, we are valid spokespeople of citizens, since there is a social acknowledgement of the individual and collective voices.

Peruvian Legislation

Education General Law 28044 and its Bylaws 011-2012, article 121, state that "because of the nature of its role, teachers ought to count with professional appropriateness, moral solvency, and mental/emotional health to carry out their duties..."

Peruvian Magisterial Law 29944, article 40, and letter D, includes as one of their obligations: "teachers shall subject themselves to medical and psychological evaluations when the authorities so demand it, according to the procedures of the ordinance". In other words, it highlights the relevance of health, something that is not duly translated in their rights.

The health of teachers is an important factor, since if they are ill, they will not be able to perform adequately. This is particularly true if health detriments are caused by their working conditions, or if professors are not regarded as human beings but as pieces of a gearbox in a machine.

The definition of occupational illness by the World Health Organization (WHO) is the following: "job-related diseases, disorders that in spite of not having originated exclusively from work, they are influenced by labor conditions in an important way..."

The International Labor Organization (ILO) defines working conditions as: "a set of variables that define the execution of a task, the environment in which it will be performed, and its influence on the worker, be it physical, mental and social..."

The application of neoliberal policies

During the last few decades, Peru has been pursuing neoliberal education policies that have not improved the quality of education but on the contrary, have



thrown education in the middle of a crisis. Education has become a lucrative business. We have one of the lowest public budgets for education in Latin America, where teachers receive starvation wages, not at all in accordance to the professional service they render. Their assessment has become a political instrument to disparage the profession, the guild and SUTEP, but it is not meant to improve the quality of education (ECE and PISA assessments).

The Students Census Assessment (ECE for its acronym in Spanish) is given to second and fourth grade students yearly, as well as at a secondary level (second year as of recently) to promote not collective work; but rather the individualization of a teacher's job. It is meant to validate or discredit teachers in charge of a class, socially and professionally. But the assessment has lost all objectivity, since the government uses it to hand out bonuses (economic incentives) to the teachers of the classrooms that rank first and thus, it has transformed schools into a competition stadium, turning teachers against teachers, students against students and schools against schools. In the frenzy to get the first place bonus, the integrity of different areas is put aside, since the sole focus is to pay attention to what will be assessed; not to mention the tense working environment it has created. Performance assessment has to do with job permanence, and the fact that it is compulsory creates a state of permanent emotional destabilization amongst teachers. The

assessment is overly focused on evaluating theoretical knowledge and basic curricular skills, but it leaves out the essence of all pedagogical strategies: hard work and effort. Even though that would be difficult to measure, it is essential for the core of teaching.

Educational programs such as *Pela*, *Semáforo*, *SISEVE*, *Soporte Pedagógico*, etc. follow a harassing and/or punitive approach. They are implemented with a results-based budgeting, focusing on throughput and preparation for standardized test; but they let other key factors go unsolved: nutrition, high poverty rates, and social/family disintegration and their effects in the integral shaping of students and teachers in the public school environment. To make things worse, the school curriculum does not respond to the change needs of our country, but rather it deepens and replicates de lagging and dependency models.

Labor conditions and health

It is not uncommon to go to any school and find teachers speaking about how work has become a permanent martyrdom, that the paperwork to file is enormous and that the workload/intensity of the job forces them to take part of it home after classes, that there are no more breaks (between classes, recesses, union meetings), that the supervision feels biased as a threat to labor stability, that students are uncontrollable in the name of their rights and with unacceptable behaviors, that parents are constantly interfering with their role, etc. For all of the previously mentioned reasons, the work environment is tense, teachers are burnt-out and emotionally exhausted, and absenteeism is on the rise (permissions, unpaid leaves, leaves of absence due to diseases and others). Likewise, professors express having to take on bank credits to pay for their basic needs; and that the low wages demoralize them and force them to have a second or third job.

Those are the conditions faced in the classroom, a situation that is causing a severe damage not only on their physical health but emotionally, since there is also a high prevalence of mental disorders. Therefore, it is paramount to become aware of the real status of

their health, from our union and political standpoints. In order to achieve an effective understanding, it is necessary to do research to get to know the diverse characteristics of what working conditions are like, including educational policies. Peru is a country of vast territorial and cultural differences, since we have shorelines, mountain ranges and jungles that are markedly different from one another in terms of economic development, public health, etc.

For this reason, the union has started a research project called “The Impact of Neoliberal Educational Policies on the Health of Teachers.” Based on that, we will be able to have an objective diagnosis after more than 25 years of their implementation. It will also enable us to create and put forward a proposal for a Program of Prevention and Health Care. The State will be forced to compensate for the health damages, caused by the deleterious policies, by appealing to what national and international labor standards establish as necessities that are ignored and neglected in Peru.

Conclusions

The application of neoliberal policies in education as an alternative to improve the quality of education did not achieve the alleged aim, but rather it has deepened the crisis. Privatizing policies and the withdrawal of the State have transformed public education into yet another market commodity, devaluing the role of a teacher in our country’s social development. Public education is being measured and assessed under solely commercial criteria, the assessments are being used as political instruments to slander educators and unions; and weaken the labor stability that had been achieved after years of union fight by the *Sindicato Unitario de Trabajadores de la Educación del Perú (SUTEP)* to grant the rights of teachers in public schools.

It is also worth remembering that our union is not only fighting for better wages, which is important, but it is also placing the health of teachers center stage; especially now since due to neoliberal policies, teachers have been seriously damaged. It is our responsibility as a guild to discuss and put the spotlight on this issue and come

up with a proposal of a Teachers Health Program of Prevention and Care, since health is another inalienable and fundamental human right.

It is imperative: To promote and work on a proposal of alternative educational policies vis a vis the neoliberal proposal, to work on a program of health prevention and care for teachers, to revise programs PELA, accompaniment, pedagogical support and others; and to say no to pedagogical and labor harassment, as well as to include a compensation and immediate health care platform to the fight of teachers.

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Picture from workshop "The Impact of Neoliberal Education Policies on the Health of Teachers", 2017



PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS IN BRAZILIAN EDUCATION: RESPONDING TO THE PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CNTE Brasil*

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) arose in the context of the neoliberal reforms of the Brazilian state undertaken in the 1990s when various laws were gradually approved, establishing a regulatory basis for their implementation.¹

In education, PPPs have as their objective the reshaping of school financing, management and systems of teaching, creating competition for public resources based particularly on students' results on national tests. Furthermore, methods of business management are introduced into the schools through these tests with the goal of standardizing student learning by means of curricular competencies.

*National Confederation of Education Workers

¹ One of the principal legal bases regarding the issue refers to Federal Law no. 8.987 of 1995, which provides the system of permission for the loan of public services as provided for in Article 175 of the Federal Constitution. To this regulation is added Law no. 9.074/05 which establishes norms to grant and extend concessions and permissions of public services; Law no. 9.637/98, which within other purposes provides for the assessment of entities such as Social Organizations (OS); Law no. 9.790/00, which deals with assessment of privately owned non-profit entities, such as Civil Society Organizations of Public Interest (OSCIP); and law No. 11.070/04, which instituted general norms for the bidding and hiring of public-private partnerships in the sphere of public administration.

With this model, we see a displacement of state responsibility onto private enterprise. Public education comes to be understood as a non-exclusive service of the state, a “natural” process of transformation of public goods into commodities. And the result is that social rights are subjected to the logic of the market, and democracy is no longer a community of citizens and bearers of rights, but a society of consumers.

The “democratic” order of neoliberalism really seeks to legitimize the ideology of the market, superimposing the economic power of corporations over the innumerable activities of the state—even education—by means of the supposed superiority of business management in the face of “conservative,” “bureaucratic,” “corrupt” and “inefficient” public administrations. Such myths, nevertheless, hide the failings of private management that are responsible for the global economic crisis of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as well as systematic social breakdown, given that the objectives of “business management” are not to form citizens with rights and opportunities, but only workers committed to productivity and the preservation of their jobs.

The experiences of PPPs in Brazilian education show that their objectives are, on the part of companies, to create a new and lucrative niche of global business and, on the part of governments, to use external evaluations to promote and give incentives to educational policies of a managerial, meritocratic and punitive character. Evaluations demand aptitudes and skills focused on productive restructuring, so that the state moves from an executive role to one that is exclusively evaluative and controlling of policies and public services.

Thus, the responsibility of the state to guarantee quality public education is transferred to private entities, without any discussion of harm to educational policy. “Affiliate companies” end up managing education and defining the pedagogical line, the training of teachers and even evaluating results from a business point of



view, dissociated from opinions of the educational community - parents, students, education workers and society in general. Thus the constitutional right to Democratic Management (Article 206, VI of the Constitution) is also weakened or lost.

Among the various forms of PPPs, there are two that are especially widespread in Brazil: meritocratic management of teaching and schools by hiring the services of private enterprise within the public sector, for example management programs, texts (notes) and training courses for teachers), and direct transfer of school responsibilities and public resources to the non-state sector (private, community, religious and philanthropic). This last is especially common in early childhood education (daycares and preschools) and in special education (APAE/Pestalozzi), in technical-professional teaching (Pronatec) and in higher education (Prouni).

In terms of the management of systems and schools, that type of PPP is not constitutionally restricted, as a result of which they have become common in many public education networks, especially since the passa-



ge of laws 9.394/96 (Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education) and 9.394/96, which cover most of the neoliberal reforms to Brazilian basic education.

A number of studies carried out since 1997² reveal many implications of PPPs for democratic school management, above all in relation to the lack of teaching autonomy. The research shows that teachers began to work with classes prepared and planned by teams from institutes such as Ayrton Aenna and Alfa e Beto, where the teachers are in charge only of transferring, or passing, students—suppressing the Pedagogic Political Project and social participation in the school, guarantees of Article 14 of the LBD.

Furthermore, according to the same research, education professionals said they had to submit to authoritarian inspections under the supervision of the Secretariats of Education which made them feel coerced. They also

2 “Analysis of the consequences of agreements to provide education between Brazilian municipalities and the Ayrton Senna Foundation” coordinated by Professors Vera Peroni and Theresa Andriao—State Report of Rio Grande del Sur (PERONI, 2010), National Report (ADRIAO, PERONI, 2010).

said they had received awards in accordance with the performance of their students. For these professionals, “education came to be understood as a product and verified only by the result, without considering the pedagogic process of teaching-learning.”

They also reported that “everything new in the school came through the private institutions, even funds received in the process of financial autonomy.” And out of fear of losing those school funds, no teacher went against the process imposed, often in spite of their complete disagreement with it. To sum up, schools were run through fear and repression, rapidly eliminating the autonomy of teachers, of school councils or boards and of parent-teacher associations, who received “orientations” by management Institutes about what should be acquired with funds received by the schools.

Public-Private Partnerships in education seriously interfere in the process of democratic management of schools, since they promote conflict among stakeholders, underestimate and undervalue educational realities, impose authoritarian measures and standardize material that should be worked on with students. These serious concerns reinforce the position of the National Confederation of Education Workers in Brazil (CNTE) that the state must assume responsibility for the funding and management of public schools, not transfer their social commitments to private enterprise, whether through non-governmental organizations (NGOs), social organizations, the military police (through the phenomenon of militarization of schools) or by any other form of public-private partnership.

Privatization of education in the context of the institutional coup in Brazil.

The political/juridical/media coup in Brazil in 2016 was aimed at reordering the country according to

neoliberal policies (small government) in support of the national elite's goal of handing over the riches of the nation to international capital and appropriating public resources for itself, supporting the country's historic patrimonialism which today comes in the form of intense privatization of public services.

Education, like health, public security and other social areas, has suffered systematic privatization over the decades, which has worsened with the measures implemented by the putschist government (of Temer) and others working with entrepreneurs and national and international financiers (the true owners of the corrupt political system in our country).

Those who will suffer most with the changes that are being implemented during this exceptional period in our democracy will undoubtedly be the people, especially the least favoured sectors of our society who need public policies in order to survive and to have any opportunities in a system that only deepens social inequality.

The principal method used by the illegitimate government, which deepens social and educational inequalities and exclusion, is related to the passing of Constitutional Amendment (EC) No. 95 which freezes primary and social expenditures in the country for twenty years and suspends for an equal period the constitutional guarantee of taxes for education and health. That is enough time to literally annihilate the current and next ten-year plan for education.

In the field of education, EC 95 has already caused considerable damage. The funding cuts to universities and Federal Institutes of Education, Science and Technology already threaten over 30% of the budget of those institutions. Besides holding back expansion of new spaces for students, the federal system of higher education will have to cut enrolment, established in the last decade, derailing the National Education Plan

"They also reported that "everything new in the school came through the private institutions, even funds received in the process of financial autonomy." And out of fear of losing those school funds, no teacher went against the process imposed, often in spite of their complete disagreement with it."

(PNE) goal of reaching 33% of secondary graduates aged 18 to 24 years.

EC 95 and other measures already passed by the coup, for example the reform of high school teaching, in the Law of Outsourcing and of Reform of Work, if not revoked in the short term (and the limit must be the elections of 2018) will throw a wrench into all the goals of the National Plan of Education. On the other hand, those goals that presumed the universalizing of enrollment in preschool, primary and secondary education are already endangered, because they are supposed to have been carried out in 2016. Because of this, even today, we have more than 2.5 million children and adolescents between 4 and 17 years who are out of school.

Increasing public enrolment in basic and higher education and improving the quality of higher education both depend on more funds to construct, reform and equip schools, to form and assess teachers and admi-

nistrators and even to finance policies that guarantee access, permanence and learning for students. And ED 95, along with the record cuts to the Ministry of Education (MEC) budget in 2017 (more than 10% of the total) and other cuts to public funds, drastically reduce the ambitious potential of the PNE approved in 2014 by the government of Dilma Rousseff.

The principal goal of the PNE is an increase in the Brazilian education budget at the baseline of 10% of the GDP until 2024. And EC 95 prevents this from occurring, given that the federal budget for education (health, security, administration etc.) will not be able to grow above inflation. This is the cruel reality behind the lying propaganda of the coup-backed government regarding the restriction of public expenditures. What is being done in Brazil is to take rights away from current and future generations to benefit shareholders of the public debt and the businesspersons who outsource public services.

The reform of high schools, contrary to what is being propagated by the government, will reduce the content offered to students and will not guarantee access to all specialized areas. Nothing is said regarding the more than 3000 municipalities that barely have a functioning high school and who will not be able to offer all the fields of specific knowledge announced by the counterreform. As a result, either the student accepts taking the only field offered by the public school in the city, or tries to move to another city that has the field of their preference, or will have to accept courses provided by private enterprise.

The objective of this reform of high schools is to impoverish the curriculum of the public school, focusing on the formation of students strictly for the interests of the market, privileging private schools and privatizing parts of the of the public school curriculum.

The path to indiscriminate privatization of education is



now open through the measures brought in through the coup. First, the Federal Supreme Tribunal authorized that public schools be managed by social organizations, removing the exclusivity of public power in administering them. Second, the Law of Outsourcing and other measures of the Workers Reform—such as that of Intermittent Work—authorize social organizations to contract professionals without public competition. That is, in addition to being outsourced to business, the “public school” will be a nest of nepotism and of political hirings that the Federal Constitution of 1988 had managed to stop. A backward move without parallel! And, in the third place, the “reform” tends to create market reserves for education businesses specialized in technical-professional education, given that more than half of the curriculum of secondary schools must be destined for fields of specific training, with a greater focus on technical education for students of the popular/working classes.

The focus on technical-professional education in secondary schools reveals another crime of this go-

vernment, which is to remove—by providing training that doesn't qualify them to pass entrance exams on graduation—the possibility of those less well off (students in public schools) being able to access universities, especially public ones.

In relation to education professionals - an essential part of a quality teaching-learning process -in addition to contracting out, this illegitimate government seeks to reduce the right to social security (as it has proposed with rural workers), devalue teaching work and salaries and flexibilize the work of educators. The secondary-level reform authorizes the hiring of any professional with “expertise” to give classes in technical-professional education, as well as permitting the hiring of anyone with a high-school diploma who takes a minimal training upgrade to perform at any stage and form of basic education with equal qualification to teachers with degrees.

In sum, the coup has reversed policies that extended the right to education as well as popular participation in decision-making regarding policies in the field. Between 2003 and 2015, 18 new universities were constructed, 115 new university campuses, and 422 Federal Institutes of Education, Science and Technology. In this same period, the MEC invested 350 billion *reais*³ --more than the minimum required (Article 212, CF, now suspended by EC 95). Now there is talk of closing universities, as in the case of the Universidad de Triple Frontera (UNILA).

Since 2008, the country has been involved in an innovative process to encourage social participation in the debate on education, which led to the passing of important proposals for the PNE. Nevertheless, recently the MEC dismissed a significant part of the National Education Forum and cancelled the CONAE 2018, forcing progressive educational groups to orga-

nize within the Popular National Education Forum, which has as its primary task to promote the Popular National Education Conference (CONAPE, 2018), carrying out municipal, regional, state and district activities before the national conference.

Popular resistance is the only path to reverse the coup in our country, and the union of various social players—unions, rural organizations, women, *quilombos*⁴, blacks, among others—must intensify to denounce the barbarities committed by those who took power by assault and who practice innumerable crimes of treason against the Brazilian people, in addition to crimes of corruption which our corrupt media print daily, and which urgently need to be regulated for the good of our democracy.

³ The Brazilian unit of currency (translator).

⁴ Quilombos in Brazil are settlements of Brazilians of African origin, founded historically by escaped slaves before slavery was abolished in Brazil in 1888. The 1988 Constitution of Brazil granted the remaining quilombos the collective ownership of the lands they have occupied.

CHALLENGES FOR THE CONTINENTAL STUDENT MOVEMENT



Rodolfo Bautista*

The “Challenges for the Continental Student Movement in a Time of Social Crisis” forum took place February 14, 2018 in the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). It was organized by student groups, as an act of solidarity with the Honduran student movement, with the support of the Mexican Section of the Tri-National Coalition in Defense of Public Education and the Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas (IDEA Network/Red SEPA). Since their creation, these networks of international action and solidarity have promoted spaces for social convergence where parent, student and academic organizations and unions have participated to defend public education as a social right. The forum had the objective of learning how the struggles against attacks on higher education in Honduras, Canada and Mexico have unfolded, and to reflect on the broader fight across the hemisphere. Participants included Coty Zachariah, national chairperson of the Canadian Students Federation; Fernando

* Political Science student, member of the students caucus of the Tri-National Coalition in Defense of Public Education.

"The *compañeras y compañeros* of the Mexican Section of the Tri National Coalition described their struggle and the organizing they've been doing at UNAM: for example, the transit agreement on the Cuautitlan campus to allow students to safely get to the metro station after school hours, and the operation of a cafeteria that grants food coupons to the community".

Ramírez and Moisés Cáceres, members of the University Students Movement (MEU) of the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH) as well as Arisbeth Reséndiz and Carlos Cario, from UNAM and members of the Mexican Section of the Tri-National Coalition in Defense of Public Education.

We learned how Honduran students have organized and mobilized to democratize the university which is the battle they are fighting against the 2013 reforms to UNAH's Organic Law. This reform granted the authorities the power to choose the leaders of the student council, robbing university students of their right to select their representatives and infringing upon the legitimacy of the university government (which is made up of three parties: administration, faculty and students) since it shifts the balance of the of UNAH university council, giving the majority of votes to the administration, and denies students the right to elect their representatives to governing bodies.

In response to the mobilization of students, there has been a systematic violation of their right to demonstrate, thus criminalizing their protests and stigmatizing them as criminals for the mere fact of demanding that their

rights be respected. Twenty-three UNAH students have been accused of usurpation and a judicial process has been started against them. In the meantime, the university's autonomy has been violated since the police have been allowed inside UNAH's facilities.

During his presentation, Coty Zachariah spoke of the fight for recognition of indigenous students within the Canadian Students Federation. They have succeeded in increasing indigenous representation, to the extent to there is currently an indigenous chairperson leading the Federation, something that was achieved through the fight for increased representation.

This is an important achievement for the indigenous communities of our countries who have historically been discriminated against and excluded from society. Thus, it is important to reaffirm the indigenous identity of students so that their presence increases in the educational system.

He also pointed out that although repression of students in Canada is not at the level of Mexico and Honduras, one of the challenges Canadian students face is the fight against student loans and debt, which enslave youth and their futures to the banks. Meanwhile, the role of the state has been reduced because even though the universities are public, they charge high tuition fees. The cost of education and university attendance is a burden for the families who send their children to college. This creates more barriers, condemning families who cannot afford it to perpetual poverty. Therefore, in Canada, the fight for universal access to education is a necessity.

The *compañeras y compañeros* of the Mexican Section of the Tri National Coalition described their struggle and the organizing they've been doing at UNAM: for example, the transit agreement on the Cuautitlan campus to allow students to safely get to the metro station after school hours, and the operation of a cafeteria that grants food coupons to the community.

They also shared three pending challenges for the Mexican student movement: 1) demanding more access to university, because the popular/low-income classes are more and more marginalized; 2) defending educational



content in terms of teaching/learning methods and the *meaning* of education; and 3) demanding increased funding for public education.

Based on the comments that were shared, it was concluded that there are similar trends in the three countries in terms of policies that threaten the right to education: privatization, public debt and the precarization of conditions that allow students to remain in the educational system. This has been what governments in the region have delivered to the popular classes over the last few years.

Participants highlighted the need to continue sharing information on educational policies that infringe upon the right to education as well as to establish solidarity actions between our countries to defend public education.



What is 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, which we see 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: the Education Researcher network and the Indigenous Educators' network

The researcher network involves researchers working with educator, student and community 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)
- Steve Stewart. Technical Secretary

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The IDEA Network makes available to teachers, students and the academic community of our continent the electronic portal of the Intercambio magazine, where they will find various studies on public education and its defense, as well as calls to publish in future issues.

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