



## 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***