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SEMINAR ON THE PRIVATISATION OF EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

May 28-29, 2012
Santiago, Chile

Initiative:



Campaña
Latinoamericana
por el Derecho
a la Educación



OPEN SOCIETY
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Privatisation
in Education
RESEARCH INITIATIVE

In alliance with:



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EDUCACIÓN DE CALIDAD
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Background

The Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE) and Open Society Foundations, in alliance with the Quality Education for All National Forum in Chile, organised a two-day international seminar in Santiago de Chile (May 28-29), in which diverse stages in the privatisation of education in Latin America and the Caribbean were discussed. The meeting brought together academicians, activists and researchers from seven in Latin American and two European countries, enabling participants to conduct in-depth discussions addressing three key seminar objectives:

- Deepen understanding on the reality of privatisation in the region;
- Identify priorities and target issues for research;
- Explore avenues for advocacy interventions that foment public education sustained with funding from public resources.

This report presents a summary and systematisation of the most important issues addressed during seminar discussions, presenting areas of consensus and disagreement. It is also meant to provide follow-on to discussions on the growing tendency towards privatisation in the region, as well as enable the development of a common perspective for activism and advocacy that combat this tendency, while seeking to value what is public in our societies.

CLADE's interest in convening this seminar was based on the idea that governments have an inexorable responsibility to guarantee all citizens with the Human Right to Education. From a human rights perspective, this means that public education systems should be developed, strengthened and made universally accessible. Current trends in privatisation distort this central role for governments, affecting their public nature and policy dimensions linked to the essence of education as a civil and political right, as well as an economic, social and cultural right. For this reason, it is extremely important that these tendencies be studied and widely discussed, generating informed debates on the diverse underlying principles and related consequences. CLADE has been researching and conducting advocacy aimed at strengthening public education. Among such initiatives is the publication of studies on privatisation in Chile and in Central America; the latter in partnership with FLAPE.

The Open Society Foundations Educational Support Programme brought forth the need to strive for a more just education and to combat existing inequalities and discrimination within education systems. The Privatisation in Education Research Initiative (PERI) is a key component of this effort, seeking to contribute to improved understanding of the

mechanisms capable of leading to more effective and equitable education systems. PERI seeks to foment debate on diverse normative, theoretical and empirical positions on privatisation within the entire spectrum of education services, with a focus on analysing the impacts of these processes on social justice. This is one of the main motives for conducting this seminar, thereby enabling an opportunity for debate among different actors from academia and institutions that produce information and knowledge on education policies, as well as civic activists advocating for specific orientations within public policies in education.

The document is divided into six parts: the first part presents a series of conceptual premises that were cross-cutting in the debates on the different facets of privatisation; the second part identifies tendencies in the privatisation of education in the region, while the third part addresses consequences that were identified based on the Human Right to Education perspective. The next part addresses the influence of different social actors in the process of privatisation, while the final two parts underline pending issues for research and focal points for advocacy that targets public policies to support the fight for strengthening public education systems and government's responsibility in guaranteeing the Human Right to Education.

We thank all the seminar participants, who dedicated themselves to this debate:

René Varas (Foro EPT Chile); Marco Kremerman (Fundación SOL, Chile); Jesús María Redondo (Universidad de Chile); Giorgio Jackson (Chilean student movement); Cristian Bellei; Salomão Ximenes (Campaña Nacional por el Derecho a la Educación, Brasil); Denise Mora (Secretaría General de la ANDE, Costa Rica/ IEAL); Juan Pablo Sandoval (Coalición Colombiana por el Derecho a la Educación); Orlando Pulido (Foro Latinoamericano de Políticas Educativas); Nelsy Lazarazo (ALER); Víctor Cristales (Colectivo de Educación para Todos y Todas de Guatemala); Theresa Adrião y Alexandra Damaso (UNICAMP, Brasil); Rodolfo Meoño (Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica); Néstor López (IPE Unesco Buenos Aires); Camilla Croso e Ilich Ortiz (CLADE); Geoffrey Walford (Oxford University, United Kingdom); Toni Verger y Xavier Bonal (Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, España); Trine Petersen, Ian Macpherson, Hugh Mclean (Open Society).

PART 1: CONCEPTUAL PREMISES

1.1) The emergence and prominence of an instrumental vision of Education.

It has been difficult to break away from the present world view driven by neo-liberalism and anchored by its intellectual, cultural, ethical and political matrix. In the field of education, this ideology has been translated into a conception of education as an instrument for the development of human capital for the labour market and the economic growth of countries.

The category of human capital was developed within an economics framework and focussed on economic growth, together with other elements, such as social capital and environmental capital, reducing the complexity of society to an analysis that is limited to its contribution to economic growth, fundamentally conceived as an increase in income, while guiding the formulation of public policies under this narrow view.

These categories have been incorporated into the discussion on endogenous growth, based on the argument that the conditions for production have changed as a result of advances in communications and information technologies, such that they now play a fundamental role in determining the production of wealth. This new context for investments in education makes it possible to achieve important gains in productivity, thereby generating economic growth. This argument has become predominant in justifying expenditures in education. Based on this logic, if developing countries make sufficient investments in this sector, they can converge technologically and economically onto the path of developed countries.

Various seminar participants denounced this instrumentalist vision as working to undercut all types of arguments that are not otherwise in line with the view that education leads to economic growth, ignoring political content within the educational process and its impact on liberty and equality in all societies. That said, some participants advocated for the possibility that arguments favouring education as a determinant for economic growth – and the rationale for public policies related to the development of human capital – can be compatible with a broader view that preserves the value of other dimensions of education as a right. This point was contested and debated, as the concept that social investments – and their corresponding public policies – must be based and designed in conjunction with a perspective for economic growth is implicit to the idea of human capital. This view also argues that such investments must be made by each individual,

linked to a positive rate of individual economic return. As such, the existence of some externalities can justify the public spending and shared financing of these investments.

The critical issue in this largely instrumentalist view of education, which reduces education to a means to generate wealth, is that it hides the political content within the educational process and undermines the value of demands for democratisation, for which diverse movements target the school system, varying from country to country, and thereby perpetuates rationales favouring inequality and segregation profoundly ingrained in Latin American societies.

This close approximation of education as a type of “capital” has been reinforced by changes in the world of work. Today’s worker must go through a permanent process of adaptation to the labour market, thereby obliging students to be responsive to the demand for workers, which is constantly changing. This situation imposes the need for greater flexibility in training programmes, which have become based on the notion of employability, introducing standardised evaluations and establishing educational competencies to define curriculum.

The vision of human capital and employability have become paradigmatic in discussions on public education policies, imposing curricular reforms, evaluation mechanisms and the establishment of teaching practices that subordinate the meaning of the educational process to economic performance. In this context, the seminar highlighted the need to approach education not just as a vector for economic growth, but rather as a fundamental human right, an end in and of itself that structures the potential for democratic and just societies, and not a commodity or merely an economic instrument.

Participants in the seminar defended a human rights perspective for education, which includes the manner in which national laws are established, given that, while important progress has been made in the right to a public, free and quality education for all is yet to be clearly established in every country. This right must be guaranteed at all levels and through the entire cycle of life, in accordance with international human rights norms.

Within the current reality, the instrumental vision of education must be transformed and redirected as a human right and as part of citizenship. This includes influencing the media, which continues to be an important focal point for civil society interventions.

Seminar participants emphasised that a joint effort must be undertaken to change and overcome this broad view and, in this sense, it is important to fight for the expansion of rights and mechanisms to make demands and ensure justiciability in guaranteeing these rights.

To this end, the political organisation and advocacy capacity of civil society coalitions in every Latin American country must be strengthened, in order to design conceptual frameworks that can become reality and build alliances that strengthen public education and are responsive to the guidelines set forth in international conventions on human rights (ICESCR, United Nations CESCR Committee's General Observations 11 and 13, San Salvador Protocol, among others).

1.2) Realisation of the Human Right to Education based on the 4 As

If education is to be viewed from a human rights perspective, as a civil, political, social, cultural and economic right, then educational achievements cannot be measured in a strictly quantitative manner and following standardised criteria. This leads to an analysis on how to conceive or discuss ensuring the right to education based on four dimensions: Accessibility, Availability, Adaptability and Acceptability.

A true citizen must be guaranteed the possibility and liberty to build his/her own identity, resources for political and social participation, resources to be a part of the world of work, as well as conditions for living in a social environment in which he/she is recognised and valued. Quality education is education that offers students the possibility of fully assimilating a holistic, broad curriculum that develops him/her into a complete citizen.

The seminar brought out the need for students to not only finish secondary education, but also to participate in an appropriate educational cycle that allows them to fully assimilate the set of practices, knowledge, resources and skills that a person needs to be able to live with dignity in society.

Discussions on privatisation are very much related to the issue of the necessary conditions for enabling the full realisation of the Human Right to Education, understood in its distinct facets of Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability and Adaptability, as well as building an educational process towards social justice and citizenship.

The dispute regarding different meanings for what is understood as educational quality is closely related to what Stephan Ball calls "endogenous privatisation", in that the meaning that oftentimes comprises the term quality education, with its package of measurable achievements, learning expectations and standardised tests, presupposes a conception of the school as a "factory" and the student as a "product", in line with the total quality concept that is based on a business logic.

In this sense, the policy option for the 4 As paradigm to ensure realisation of the Human

Right to Education, means taking a stance against the processes of (endogenous) privatisation and in favour of understanding the public sphere as a complex, diverse, pluralistic space, replete with disputes, in which human dignity is the ultimate end to which the educational process is directed.

1.3) Profiting from and through education

A concept for educational evaluation has evolved in the education field, in which the only true way to measure learning is by the use of precise scores, measured by grades. This assumes that all boys and girls learn equally in schools and that everyone in school is equally subject to a common rule, where only those at the top are valued, having learned the same quantity in the same amount of time. Further, the idea that all knowledge is generated through collective work – and not the success of a few – has been abandoned.

An analysis of the privatisation of education within educational institutions is enabled by bringing to light a hidden added value within the educational process that is assimilated by few students, based on their socio-economic or cultural particularities. This occurs even with the generalised existence of state-run public education.

This brings out the importance of linking the problem of privatisation of education to the deeper and contemporary tendencies towards the privatisation of knowledge, which occurs in various areas, such as in education, health and biology and, in more general terms, by the private appropriation of all the scientific advances and discoveries through expansion of patenting norms and regulations in countries with more advanced research systems as well as at the international level through norms on intellectual property.

The privatisation of education is inextricably linked to a process of limited access to knowledge to the elite classes, segmented and conditioned by the capacity to pay and relative wealth, both among families and across countries. As such, in a generalised process an expanding market-driven logic in all spheres of life, as well as deepening inequalities on the global level, the privatisation of education represents a critical vector undermining possibilities for establishing democratic and egalitarian political orders. This tendency on a global scale towards the privatisation of knowledge and the increasing elitist dynamic in education systems, especially in regards to higher education, becomes even more severe in our region when taking into account Latin America's historic inequalities and lagging progress in terms of the production of knowledge.

It is exactly in this manner that education has been increasingly transformed into a highly profitable commodity, including at the international level. For example, there are four

forms of exportation under the GATS (General Agreement on Trade and Services – World Trade Organisation): i) cross-border supply, in which the supplier and the consumer remain in their countries and education takes place at a distance, through on-line education and virtual universities; ii) consumption abroad, which consists of receiving foreign students and having them pay quotas as a form of capitalisation in universities and education systems; iii) commercial presence, that is to say, the university or educational service operates in the country where the consumer is located, creating university franchises and international campuses; iv) commercial presence through natural persons, in which the entire university is not locally operational, but rather individual staff members are, as is the case with researchers and teachers from one country who go to another territory to provide educational services.

The seminar showed that European countries, especially those that are English-speaking, are currently receiving the largest number of international students. The United States is also among the main exporters of education services, with almost 650,000 foreign students studying in the country.

This phenomenon has evolved less in Latin America, although it is on an upward trend. The patterns for the importation of education in terms of where international students go to study remain tied to the colonial past.

It was pointed out that there is a need to better characterise the forms for the international commercialisation of education, in that the entire flow of education services or knowledge between countries could be considered as commerce. This is especially true when such processes take place in the context of academic and/or cultural cooperation programmes, for which related public policies cannot be solely reduced to a commercial exchange phenomenon.

But it is not only under the modality for GATS that one can observe profitability in and through education. The privatisation of education, within the entire school, in the development of didactic materials, in the training of teachers or in various types of consultancies, constitutes markets that generate very significant profits. These markets are targeted by significant business lobbies. It is no coincidence that there are politicians who own “educational businesses” and who establish laws that benefit them.

Increasing profits through education services was at heart of student protests in Chile, during which an outcry for ending this situation was central to the political agenda of movements and the civic action that took to the streets.

This context as described above led seminar participants to the conclusion that the privatisation of education has many and increasingly complex facets: from the very

significance that it gives to the educational process, tending towards a strictly economic instrument, to the concrete commercialisation of educational commodities. The manners for privatising and generating private profits in education are changing quite rapidly. As such, there is a need to deepen analysis and monitoring, particularly towards providing social movements with tools to counteract these trends when they undermine public education systems and adequate conditions for the full realisation of the Human Right to Education for all.

1.4) The myth of superiority of private education

There is a prevalent myth in Latin America that private agents – businesses – are the legitimate motor for social development and progress. This is coupled with a critical view of government, focussing on its inefficiency in providing services to society. This perspective also exists in relation to education, based on the idea that education services provided or managed by private entities are necessarily better. This view is used to justify certain mechanisms that characterise and structure the educational system in Latin America.

The myth regarding the superiority of private education has been repeatedly disseminated in regards to primary and secondary education, for which standardised test scores are still used in public debates to make indiscriminate comparisons between public and private schools. No consideration is given to the diverse social and cultural conditions, or funding levels, which create the gaps that exist between public and private schools. Far from demonstrating the inefficacy of public schools, these results are more an indication of profound structural social inequalities in Latin America and the historic lack of attention and funding for public schools.

Contrary to primary and secondary schooling, this is not yet the case at the higher education level in most countries, where it is the public universities that demonstrate the highest standards in educational testing and the greatest achievements in terms of educational development and research. The fight to create a better image for at least some private universities drives capital investments in higher education institutions, many of which are now directly owned by financial capital. Oftentimes, this contributes to the dismantling of public universities, taking away from them the functions that in fact define them as public institutions and are necessary for achieving excellence in areas such as research and extension services.

However, available data has demonstrated that, to a large extent, the idea of superiority in private education is not consistent with reality, especially in regards to poorer segments

of society. Municipal schools are providing higher levels of knowledge to their students than private institutions, even if these students do not achieve the same scores as other social groups in private education due to the significant negative impact of their socio-economic reality.

Further, the seminar brought out the fact that education towards the full exercise of citizenship does not exist in the elite private schools. While private schools have a greater amount of resources and produce the best results in standardised testing, their curriculum does not generally address the structural problems faced by Latin American societies, such as segregation, violence and other issues that should be addressed so that all students are prepared to become potential agents for change. It is clear that the public education system cannot be blamed for the consequences of social stratification and inequality that exists in Latin America, where broad segments of society continue to live in poverty and exclusion, impacting their potential for participating in the education process and attaining adequate conditions for the fundamental right to education.

1.5) Types of privatisation

The various forms of privatisation can be classified into two major categories. The first is *exogenous privatisation*, which is when private universities and schools directly substitute government in its role to provide education, thus usurping its responsibility to guarantee the universal provision of public education services. The second category is *endogenous privatisation*, which operates through the marketplace in the delivery of public services, ranging from ministries to public schools.

An example of endogenous privatisation is seen in some cases where the public school system is actually delegating curriculum development to private enterprise, which is a fundamental aspect in determining what is taught and the process for developing full citizenship. Endogenous privatisation is also tied to the contracting of other private services within public schools, which in turn are managed under a dynamic for generating profits, such as in teacher training, pedagogical consultancies, curriculum development and evaluations services. To this end, private companies carry out aggressive lobbying in order to sell services to public schools, often winning very significant bids when an entire country or region decides in favour of a particular service provider.

At the same time, the present commercialisation of education leads students in the region to pay intermediation fees, paying for their education through student credits, especially in higher education. The drawback is that a large portion of private universities, especially those that are owned by companies and large financial groups, carry out less research

because this is the least profitable component of the educational process. This in turn contributes to already lagging levels of technological and scientific development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

According to the book on “new global tendencies in the privatisation of education”, written by Susan Robertson, Caren Mundi y Francis Menachi, there are two especially significant facets targeted by privatisation: on the one hand, education financing and, on the other hand, the provision of services, which is oftentimes linked to the owners of schools. There are cases where financing is governmental, but the provider is private, as in the case of vouchers, broadly used in Chile, and school checks.

It was emphasised, however, that private education is not limited only to explicitly for-profit companies, but also includes those that are in the hands of the “Third Sector” and religious institutions. The idea of corporate social responsibility also predominates, which opens avenues for major companies – many of which are transnational – to fund educational programmes. Also through this type of initiative, a universe of “public-private partnerships” has been constituted, in which some type of contractual relation is established between public and private actors and through which the private partner commits to providing a specific service at a specific price and within a specific timeframe.

Diverse financial institutions defend the position that governments should not provide education directly. Rather, within the framework of competitive private vendors, governments should be limited to financing and evaluating the results. This argument is made through the use of empirical studies indicating that the private sector can contribute to efficiency and effectiveness in education.

This approach places families at the core as clients, where the role of government no longer consists of providing services, but rather in regulating the provision of services and providing information that families need in order to choose the ‘best’ school, seeing families as rational economic actors seeking to maximise benefit.

The perspective is disseminated in which competition contributes to improving quality and efficiency in schools, such that the government is basically responsible for evaluating the quality of teaching, providing incentives to educational institutions based on their performance and creating information systems to inform families.

This model views accountability as the relation between clients (student/mother/father) and the service provider (schools), placing the family at the core as the maximising agent and replacing the notion of accountability as a citizen-government relation. In this sense, what in fact can be seen is the privatisation of public policies regarding education and its nature as a “public affair”. In the end, the privatisation of education in its various facets

means a rupture in the relation between government and society, as well as depoliticising the development of legal frameworks and education policies.

Given this situation and in lieu of the argument above, it is even more important to understand the need for governments to be directly responsible for not only the funding of education services and regulation of its supply, but also for the administration of schools per se and the provision of education services.

A consensus could not be reached in seminar discussions around this important issue, as it was pointed out that various governments in Latin America lack sufficient capacity to ensure coverage that reaches all of the peoples inhabiting their national territories. This is largely due to their inability to keep up with extensive demands, given the size of its territory and demographics determining the occupation of different geographic areas. This has historically generated a juxtaposition of different types of educational service providers (religious institutions, non-profit organisations and community-based initiatives) to cover gaps in government services in these countries' overall territory. There was also no consensus reached on whether or not these types of education services provided in areas where governments are absent should be considered as part of the trend to privatise education.

There were diverging positions on this issue. Many participants expressed the importance of advocacy interventions to demand that governments take on full responsibility for ensuring the Human Right to Education – refusing to be complacent with the shortfalls of government – and based on an understanding that changes must be made gradually. Further, governments must be responsive to the local context, engaging members of the education community in decision-making processes addressing education policies and practices.

The Human Right to Education perspective does not mean that all schools must be public or that private schools should be prohibited. On the contrary, all international norms on Human Right to Education also guarantee the right for all parents for choose the in which they want to place their children. What the human rights perspective in fact establishes is that such modalities should represent an option for families, such that they can choose whether to enrol their child in a public school, without having to depend on private schooling to make up for the government's failure to offer sufficient public schooling in the territory where they live and in the community in which they participate.

Beyond the explicit mechanism for privatisation, be it through the direct intervention of private actors in the provision of education services, the provision of goods and services within the public system, or by incorporating criteria from private enterprise in public policy parameters, what is at stake in these tendencies is the possibility to achieve an educational process that builds democracy.

PART 2: TENDENCIES IN THE PRIVATISATION OF EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

2.1) Legislation and policy environment

In analysing political conditions and realities in Latin American and Caribbean countries, some seminar participants expressed the opinion that the advances achieved to date in the region are fewer than what is needed in order to implement education policies that are coherent with a human rights perspective and take well-being into account.

Important policy advances and conquests have been touted, though one of the great strengths of neo-liberalism is not only its efficiency as a macroeconomic adjustment strategy, but especially its ideological force.

Inasmuch as advances can be seen in the legal and policy frameworks in many countries, their implementation imposes a significant challenge. In addition, some of the advances that are seen may be reflexes of the cooptation of pronouncements favouring human rights and adaptation to an instrumental vision. It is thus possible that actions favouring privatisation, commercialisation and consolidation of education as fundamentally an instrument for the production of wealth are in fact taking place behind a pro-human rights rhetoric.

Further, governments in some Latin American countries have not had sufficient capacity to ensure coverage throughout the entire physical territory. In many areas public education is yet to achieve its status as one of the fundamental expressions of governmental presence.

Colombia, for example, lacks a balance between the coverage of government services and its territory. This is not only due to recent phenomena, such as armed conflict, but is also because the government has always been fundamentally urban and thus has never been present in certain rural areas of the country. This has led to a situation where, in the absence of government, people develop autonomous and community-based strategies in order to guarantee an educational process where government is has yet to arrive.

The majority of the national territory in Guatemala has no governmental presence and 90% of education services in Haiti are private because the present government is weak and unresponsive to the need for establishing public policies in education that seek to guarantee education as a right.

Since the political background throughout the range of territories and the consolidation of government in Latin American countries are very diverse processes, care must be taken when assessing these scenarios in order to understand the tendencies towards privatisation and in designing strategies that favour the strengthening of public education systems.

In spite of these political and legislative conditions, seminar participants affirmed the importance of combating the idea that governments lack resources for public education, emphasising that it is a matter of political will, in that sustained economic growth in the region over the past years shows that it is not true to say that resources are not available to fund public policies in education and adequately meet human rights standards.

At the same time, advances are quite evident in regards to legislation for education, resulting in the repositioning of indigenous and Afro peoples in related debates. The use of human rights in a common framework has made it possible for diverse representatives – indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, government staff and other actors – in some countries to come together and meet for the purpose of advancing under a common agenda.

It has been evident, however, that not all the resistance to tendencies towards privatisation in education can be resolved in the educational sphere, as they are also determined by the national and international political contexts. Depending on the national policy frameworks, there are fewer or greater possibilities to discuss and unleash social processes that successfully question reforms that have been applied in the education sector and have intensified the dismantling of public education systems. In light of this reality, the seminar emphasised the importance of differentiating between privatisation processes underway in each country, so as to ensure clarity on the diverse public policy tendencies, as well as the manner in which social movements can and should defend public education systems.

2.2) Specific country contexts

Brazil

Public universities in Brazil that receive adequate investments from different levels of government still have the best academic performance. On the other hand, tax breaks given to families that place their children in private schools in the country are larger than the average amount that government allocates for students in public schools. As such, this endogenous form of privatisation is becoming natural; the private sector is satisfied with these modalities for the privatisation of education, with public and private counterparts, constituting a profitable model that does not require formal and long-term contracting of teachers and avoids dealing with teachers' unions.

In this manner, Brazil has established a model for a very profitable coexistence and

growing private higher education, with a public system that benefits few and is elitist.

This occurs in the country because the private sector has always been engaged in education, receiving subsidies from the public sector. The third sector in Brazil has also been engaged for some time. What is new and worrisome is the presence of the international business sector, with linkages to traditional Brazilian financial and private sectors, such as parent-owned schools, small private schools, etc. Today, these education enterprises are integrated into large corporations that operate freely on the stock exchange.

There is also a very close relation between these international corporate business groups and the third sector, through the work of institutes and foundations in the country. A sizeable number of foundations and institutes have been created over the past five years and these organisations present themselves to society as not-for-profit, but in fact are directly linked to bank institutes or are complementary components within large corporations.

Other forms of privatisation or education business in Brazil include: sales of textbooks, teacher training and curriculum development, among others.

Ecuador

It was pointed out that, if in fact the stance of the Ecuadorian government has been to promote radical change in education, the country's Ministry of Education has been working in a very traditional manner, utilising standardised indicators to measure competency and quality, along with technocratic public policy models.

That said, the government of President Rafael Correa recently closed universities that were established by companies and presented extremely poor quality. The country's mass media put a different twist on this measure in order to discredit it, characterising the measure as the simple closing of higher education facilities. The commercial media in the country had also been treating teachers as the lowest professional category, affirming that they do not fulfil their responsibilities and for this reason they are to blame for the very poor quality of public education in the country. The seminar speaker who provided this information also emphasised that teachers in Ecuador either receive support or are demoralised by the media, depending on their stances in regards to decisions made by the country's president, demonstrating a very instrumental use of the education sector on the part of mass media, which is closely linked to the opposition's political and business representatives.

Colombia

Colombia is currently one of the countries that have most faithfully applied the neo-liberal

perspective in its public policies for education. While the constitutional and legal framework recognises education as a right, public policies that have been introduced tend towards a reduction in resources made available for public education and enable private actors to provide educational services in competition with public schools, through a system of subsidies tied to demand.

As a country that is in a permanent state of armed conflict, infringement and privatisation of education have not only occurred as a result of this type of policies. Public policies and school life have been deeply impacted by those protagonists directly involved in the war.

For example, there is a strong presence of paramilitary groups in some departments in the country, such as in Córdoba in the northwest region, where they decide who will become presidents and professors in universities and schools, demonstrating not only a privatisation of the educational process through mercantile logic, but also the direct intrusion of authoritarianism through military actors engaged in the conflict.

In spite of this complex context, civil society has tried to build social mobilisation processes in favour of public education on all levels. For example, a campaign was undertaken to establish free education, considering that Colombia was the only country in South America whose constitution did not ensure the right to free primary education, which was a flagrant violation of the ICESCR and the San Salvador Protocol. As such, the Colombian coalition's mobilisation and legal demands put forth before the constitutional court led to a favourable ruling, thereby forcing the national government to introduce a broad policy for free education throughout the full primary and middle school cycle.

At the same time, some local governments have been able to move forward with alternative policies that seek to strengthen public education, in spite of the national policy framework that provides incentives for quasi-markets in education (training + modalities for the private provision of services). One interesting example is what took place in the first administration of the Polo Democrático Party in Bogotá, which proposed a right-to-education focus and refused to comply with orders from the Ministry of Education regarding teacher evaluations, thereby instituting its own test. This reinforced the notion that this is a politically sensitive issue and that if it is possible to develop alternative policies and overcome limitations linked to the prevailing mercantilist framework within education policies.

Likewise, as a result of mass mobilisations carried out in 2011 against university reform proposed by the government, such that they succeeded in getting the Parliament to reject the bill. A new law is currently being formulated, based on the minimum programme consisting of five components: 1) increased funding for public education; 2) university autonomy; 3) university well-being that enables permanency; 4) quality in terms of

teacher training, academic freedom and diversity of thought; and 5) an alternative curricular/pedagogical proposal. Another aspect addressed by university students pertains to democratic liberties and protection from criminalisation by the government and protagonists of armed conflicts involved in protests.

Chile

In Chile there has been a dramatic increase in enrolment in private institutions and a drop in the participation of public institutions' share of coverage over the past three decades. During the 1980s, adjustments to fiscal budgets and reduction in the size of government intensified in the context of the dictatorship. An educational system model was designed and implemented, driven by the assumption that the delivery of private social services are better than those provided by public institutions.

A national law was passed in 1993 permitting shared financing and the charging of fees for education services in Chile. As a result, the percentage of private education facilities began to grow very quickly. A general voucher certificate was then instituted by the government, consisting of payment for either private or public schooling, so that a child could attend a school according to his/her attendance. This educational arrangement creates difficulties, since the living conditions of poorer segments of society make them prone to getting sick more frequently and face problems in order to attend school, such that public education institutions located in these areas receive less public funding.

When the voucher is provided to these private institutions, operating as a transfer of public resources, there are no prohibitions against making profits from these public resources. This is peculiar to the Chilean education system and this profit-making potential increases the number of schools receiving these resources, while they are also authorised to establish additional charges to families.

In addition, a law on corporate responsibility allows large companies to allocate private resources to educational or complementary services. For example, the Telefónica Company in the country currently maintains foundations through which it provides general and logistic support in small communities or centres for parents that request training, resources, facilities and infrastructure to address educational themes.

In this context, the student social movement in Chile is historical and has risen up on various occasions during the 20th Century, not just to protest against profits and demand quality in education, but also to control their own education. There are also cases where teachers and workers movements in the country have fought against education imposed upon them initially by government and more recently by the market.

The Chilean student movement

The Chilean student movement most recently began as a result of certain reforms that the government was proposing in mid-2010. These reforms would pave the way for a greater level of privatisation and basically an end to what little remained from the public higher education system.

The mobilisation in 2011 cannot be understood without looking back to analyse the different social movements that have fought for public education in the country since the 1990s. The “Penguins Revolution” in 2006 was a mass movement of secondary level students who took over the public agenda, although it was unable to generate a structural transformation of the system or a satisfactory response to the demands that were raised by secondary students. This ultimate outcome generated a great deal of distrust for the political negotiation processes and was a lesson learned by the social movement. In 2011, the generation that participated in the Penguins’ Revolution was already enrolled in higher education and this allowed for a more critical analysis when confronting proposals and dialogue with the government.

In addition, the government-approved credit introduced in 2005, increasing coverage for higher education based on funding for which students have to subsequently bare the cost, was done in an extremely unregulated fashion. There was no process established for the selection of institutions and a wide open margin for profits was created, even though they were not legally permitted.

In this manner, by 2011 there were already two groups of students with the experience of having to abandon the universities they attended or had recently completed college and were unable to enter into the labour market through satisfactory employment because their degrees were not properly recognised in the labour market. When added to these frustrated expectations from access to universities, the widespread feeling of deception grew stronger.

Two other important elements related to the structure of the massive mobilisation were the level of coordination in student organisations and the fact that political power was in the hands of a rightist government clearly linked to pro-privatisation measures. The student movement was thus able to unite and grow around a common set of contradictions. This joint effort had been coordinated since 2009 through continuity in student leadership and a progressively national reach.

In this context, an opportunity was created to discuss policy reform for higher education, which had not occurred during the previous 30 years. This also gave the media potential to address the issue. Another element aiding the mobilisation was an implicit agreement between student organisations to refrain from using overly ideological language, so as to attain a greater status and acceptance by public opinion.

One of the determining factors that kept this mobilisation going was the government's inability to understand the arguments presented in the protests, as it continued to argue that the critical situation was only the result of a glitch in the market. Families and the general public became increasingly discontent with growing inequalities in the access to education and this was also very important in intensifying the mobilisation.

The massive and creative marches carried out by students also built a group identity, in addition to respect for and acceptance of the public mobilisations as legitimate and powerful means for citizens to press for change.

Social networks were used to counteract attacks from traditional media companies linked to the government, as well as to refute official data publicised through the media. In addition, television and radio were fundamental for disseminating the fight to all corners of the country, because even though published editorials lashed out against the students, the media helped uncensored voices of youth to be heard.

The fact that the government had presented its proposals in a very reactionary manner gave the movement a big opening for criticising each of these plans and they did so in a politically competent manner.

As such, a considerable degree of broad empowerment had been achieved, which led the regional media to provide intense coverage of the mobilisation, given increasing popularity gained by the manifestations. When national assemblies were held during weekends in various regions of the country, this generated local debates in neighbourhoods, regions and other centres, as well as in the country's rural areas.

Another important aspect in this process has been alliances established with other social organisations and mobilisations, such as environmental groups – especially those fighting against a mega hydroelectric project in the Patagonia region and movements of original peoples in the region, in particular the Mapuches. Other groups of activists against the current model for social, political and economic development, such as the fight for tolerance of sexual diversity, were equally engaged, such that a massive, popular and cross-cutting movement was built.

The mobilisation lasted over an eight-month period, with many tense moments. Presently, the movement is going through a delicate process in light of uncertainty over the continuity of protests at the same pace, which puts the group at risk of losing momentum. Nevertheless, new strong mobilisations are expected in the coming year in the context of the presidential and parliamentary elections to take place in the country.

Haiti

A credit of 70 Million dollars was approved less than a year ago in Haiti, more than 50% of which will be invested in the provision of subsidies to families (annual vouchers in the amount of U\$60), so they can choose the private school where they want to enrol their sons and daughters. Oftentimes, the companies receiving these government funds for the education of each boy or girl are owned by relatives.

The situation is so drastic that facilities in ruins since the earthquake are being rented. International Education is currently working in solidarity with the Haitian teachers' union, is in a very difficult situation as they have no place to hold meetings because their building simply collapsed, declared uninhabitable after the earthquake and beyond repair.

It was also emphasised that the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank are directing resources to Haiti, targeting the consolidation of a private education system. Although historically the country's government has been predominately absent, the public system must be strengthened. This situation can not be remedied in the short term without clear political will on the part of authorities.

It was brought out in the seminar that in a recent mission to Haiti, CLADE members asked Education Ministry staff if they agreed with present World Bank interventions. They responded by saying that they would prefer investments going to public education, but they did not have the capacity to negotiate a different solution to this situation.

Costa Rica

Higher education in Costa Rica went from a situation in 1980, where only 2% of university graduates concluded their coursework in private universities, to the current situation in which 64% of graduating students are enrolled in these universities.

Promiscuity also exists in the country regarding what is public vs. private, through endogenous privatisation, as the task of curriculum development for public schools has been given over to private consultancies. The formation of values is also being given to the private sector through adoption of a business model for the education field.

The country's Legislative Assembly is presently formulating legislation that will establish a trust fund for the construction of schools and high schools and includes the participation of private companies. Details of the proposal are still unknown and have been kept from the public. There is concern about adequate regulation, because more than 100 institutions expect to utilise this trust fund. This would literally hand over public funds to the private sector for the next 20 years, during which the Ministry of Public Education will pay business owners for their investments.

It is also known that the Costa Rican government is seeking to move forward with a process to create a comprehensive public-private partnership, with the idea of using vouchers on a broad scale.

There is currently a media campaign in Costa Rica blaming public sector workers for the country's fiscal crisis, creating obstacles to passing a proposal for tax reform. This effort seeks to convince the population that they should be against social movements.

There is also legislation being drafted at this time that would prohibit teachers from taking sick leave beyond a maximum of 15 days. This proposal is considered discriminatory because it questions the sick leave for teachers without taking into account the reality of teachers in classrooms, where they are more prone to suffer from specific and chronic illnesses.

The National Teachers Association (ANDE – Asociación Nacional de Educadores) in the country led a major movement against a bill for subsidising private centres, which was to be established without setting a ceiling for such funding. This mobilisation negotiated a maximum subsidy of 7%, in addition to ensuring that decisions regarding contracting, dismissal and all disciplinary issues affecting teachers would be handled by the Ministry of Public Education and not the owners of educational institutions. Parochial schools in the country are also receiving government subsidies while charging students with fees.

Further, 75 bands from public high schools and schools in San José gathered in October 2011 for what was called the Sound of Peace (Sonido de la Paz), in response to the problem of classroom violence. This march by school bands truly filled the streets and had a big impact at the national level. The initiative focussed on artistic production with parental support, who supplied the instruments and different clothing worn by students to express themselves. This activity is not funded by educational centres, but rather by the families. Other mobilisation activities have used theatre, poetry and music to mobilise public opinion around defending the right to education.

Honduras

Honduras is suffering greatly from an onslaught of privatisation policies, driven by the municipalisation process for the education sector. Intense persecution of unions is also taking place, leading to the deaths of several individuals who perished during their efforts to defend public education. Honduras currently has one of the region's lowest salary levels for teachers. To aid in addressing this situation, efforts are underway to cooperate with unions in other countries as a strategy for strengthening Honduran unions and increasing their ability to provoke change as social actors.

PART 3 – NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF THE PRIVATISATION OF EDUCATION

3.1) Promotion of an instrumental vision of education

Both public and private educational systems in the region are dominated by an instrumental vision of education, comprised of evaluations based on focalisation, efficiency, decentralisation, privatisation and an entire nomenclature that has been accepted and creates obstacles to possibilities for moving forward with anything new.

This view leads schools and universities to continue using typically neo-liberal indicators and information systems in order to keep up with the advances in education in regards to rights and quality, coverage and conclusion. Education is organised in accordance with competencies and rigid standards, which are concretely manifested in textbooks, relegating the practice and exercise of dialogue as part of the formative process and the deliberative role of teachers to a secondary realm. This closes off the space that allows for broad debate within the education process, thus limiting the possibility of building a culture that is capable of being critical and helping to understand societal problems and thereby enable citizens to broadly and deeply exercise their citizenship.

Private and public schools currently receiving government funds for their services must compete for these resources and conduct academic selection of students. This is to say that schools financed with public funding can choose which students they will accept by using practices that are typically associated with private schools, which tend to be more selective.

Competition is also fomented between teachers and institutions through rewards to teachers whose students achieve the highest performing levels and holding back those who do not perform well; or by rewarding schools with strong performance levels, thus encouraging competition between schools and people, which in turn further increases existing gaps.

Processes for university accreditation have also been incorporated, using foreign standards taken from industrialised countries, where university extension services or social action do not exist, thus limiting academic activities to the areas of teaching and research.

3.2) Increasing segmentation and intensifying inequalities

It is true that the recent increases in schooling in Latin America and the Caribbean have had a positive impact, expanding the level of training for youth. At the same time, it is certain that deficiencies remain in Latin American school systems regarding educational processes and results, related to acceptability and adaptability in education.

Only approximately half of the young people living in Latin America currently conclude their secondary education. On the average, 75% of adolescents in the region conclude their education. Classrooms in the region are now replete with many adolescents from segments of society that previously had no access to schooling. Historically, secondary education was for the middle class and the elite, while today middle schools have much higher enrolment of young people from segments of society with lower income levels.

At the same time, this process has taken place and continues to occur without sufficient means to address the enormous inequalities and social exclusion within the education system. Schools thus have great difficulty in adapting to each student's specific situation. This demonstrates one of the determining factors for the inability of education systems to keep young people in school through conclusion.

These secondary schools continue to function based on assumptions associated with middle class students. As a result, a set of daily practices are carried out assuming a level of well-being and income typical of the middle class, such that these new students from low-income families do not fit in. This even happens in public schools and also contributes to related increases in the customary costs, which can create financial difficulties for families, even in the public sector.

On the other hand, it is recognised that in some cases the public sector is undertaking an intense effort to absorb these new students who had not previously attended school and now have access to an education. Students are coming from rural areas, indigenous, Afro and poor communities and other historically excluded groups, requiring school curricula that respect their peculiarities. For this reason, the seminar also defended recognising efforts made by some governments in seeking solutions to this problem, while admitting that there are still great difficulties in realising certain achievements in education.

Competition between schools funded with public resources, leading them to choose their students through selection processes and fees, has provoked segregation in which boys and girls are distributed in distinct types of establishments: municipal establishments for the poorest students, private institutions that are subsidised by government and private institutions for those that can pay and do not need government resources.

This segregation, in addition to broadening gaps based on inequality, undermines the educational experience for boys and girls. In other words, children go through school in overly homogeneous environments, where they are not exposed to diversity and differences that are characteristic of society. Furthermore, learning and academic achievement are weaker in the schools receiving fewer resources. As such, in terms of educational policies, it is much more difficult to improve segregated schools, exactly because they contribute to exacerbating existing gaps.

An education system that segregates is unable to achieve a level of equality for its students, which should be the fundamental goal for governments. Segregation, in fact, runs contrary to the very notion of the education system, in that it is based on competition between schools and individuals. It is unacceptable that an education system does not accept a weaker school into the system and does not perceive it to be responsible for conducting self-criticism in regards to the entire education system.

3.3) Depoliticising education

Capitalism has built a society based predominantly on individualism and has broken social pacts, solidarity and the notion of what is public. In a context where all basic rights are privatised, people take on individualistic attitudes, viewing it as natural, such that efforts to go beyond the individualist and mercantile logic are kept on the margin and encounter difficulties when attempting to consolidate them. In this context, it is also certain that governments wanting to establish alternatives from within the government run the risk of eventually applying the same clearly neo-liberal formulas.

Strong attacks against the public sector, based on the reiterated opinion that it is intrinsically inefficient and worsened by the absence of voices that could potentially defend the state, have undermined the value of education as a space for building citizenship and democratic practices. This is instilling a purely instrumental and neutral vision for education as a place for the production of human capital, which profoundly depoliticises education.

Another manifestation of privatisation is the process through which schools are alienated from society, depriving participants from fully and democratically engaging in public debate. The market tendency has intensified this logic, using standardisation and parameters for competencies to select and discriminate in the entry stage and subsequent permanence throughout the educational process. The seminar thus emphasised the need to work towards a system that not only provides free and universal education, but is also free of all forms of discrimination, supported by accountability and public oversight by citizens.

A growing profit-driven logic is also being used in the contracting of consulting companies to design laws and public policies. The contracting of a sector, consultancy or group of consultants to develop laws is a key factor towards severely depoliticising and reducing the conditions necessary for making democratic citizenship possible. There is a great level of promiscuity between what is public and private, as many politicians own universities, schools and occupy public spaces in negotiating for their business interests.

Redefining public education in the present neo-liberal context means redefining an ethical project that is guided by principals of active participation, promotion of public debate, recognition of the legitimacy of dissent, recognition of differences, promotion of thinking that is critical, free and questioning, and putting into place practices for dialogue and democratic administration.

3.4) Undervaluing teachers

The work of teachers has been progressively undervalued. Teachers have been progressively suffered losses in their buying power, salary levels and recognition by society over the past 100 years. This undermines their work and their core value as key agents in the process of building knowledge and political practices that characterise education based on a human rights perspective.

There is currently a great level of tolerance in relation to social inequalities, which is based on a conception of maximising individual talent and ignores the need to redistribute wealth and opportunities. This opens the way for privatisation through an argument that is based on the optimisation of individual talents, which in turn constitutes a position that justifies the persistence of inequalities.

At the same time, a large number of private universities control core training for teachers. According to researchers participating in the seminar, many of these pedagogy students in Latin America do not study pedagogy because they are motivated by a vocation to teach, but rather because they have been unable to establish alternative careers that they would otherwise prefer. This also occurs because teaching is not considered to be an appealing profession, given that it has one of the lowest levels of remuneration and its progressive negative recognition by society.

There no direct controls over the curricula and programmes established in universities conceding diplomas to teachers, in spite of the reality of accreditation exams that subsequently disqualify many of their graduates from entering into teaching. This teacher evaluation does not have a diagnostic nature, nor is it utilised to improve teacher training

or guarantee professionalization and on-going improvements to benefit teachers. This type of evaluation is generally completely punitive, sanction-oriented and only serves to further degrade the role of our teachers in the classroom.

Another fundamental aspect is that, given insufficient levels of remuneration, teachers are not able to create stronger ties in the schools where they work. It becomes impossible to handle extra-class activities or extra work because teachers need to work double or triple complementary shifts in other institutions on a daily basis in order to make ends meet. As a result, a full day of teaching in a single institution continues to be a pipe dream in the majority of Latin America's public schools.

Working conditions for teachers tend to deteriorate in the region. For example, research conducted in Costa Rica by ANDES and the National University (Universidad Nacional) on teachers' workload, demonstrated that, on the average, primary school teachers dedicate time at home to preparing a total of 22 class lessons per week for which they are not remunerated. This situation is even worse for women, given that they must handle this work in addition to their domestic responsibilities, equivalent to not just two, but up to three or four work shifts.

From this perspective, teachers' movements have the responsibility and the duty to convey to the rest of society the conditions they face in carrying out the task of teaching that society has entrusted to them. However, the teachers' movement is usually targeted by campaigns to intimidate teachers and threaten their job security, salary levels and disciplinary actions. This posture, along with others described above, is also profoundly depoliticising, creating impediments to public debate on education and teaching.

The seminar recognised that teachers' unions should broaden their strategies to fight for and demand quality state-run public education for all. They are recognised as key actors in fomenting the strengthening of public education and the possibility of overcoming tendencies favouring privatisation that continue to undermine governmental responsibility.

PART 4: THE INFLUENCE OF DIFFERENT ACTORS IN PRIVATISATION PROCESSES

4.1) Print and broadcast media

The promiscuity observed between what is public and private in education in Latin America and the Caribbean is also reproduced in the media. Companies with interests in the education sector are very flexible when it comes to making investments in different areas and are quite capable in linking their interests to the media and communications, as well as in the editorial field, production of knowledge and research. This is to say, they permeate spaces that influence thinking and develop arguments, perspectives, stances, interpretation and understanding.

An on-going argument has been broadly propagated through the mass media in which many governmental and public sector efforts in education are demeaned, while exalting the successes of the private sector. In this way, media enterprises give coverage to educational themes linked to political intentions, depending on what is consistent with the interests of the corporate groups that own them.

The stance on education circulating in the majority of print and broadcast media is also intrinsically structured around an instrumental view of education, characterised by distinction, exclusivity and social mobility, contributing to making this a natural vision in regards to education, in detriment to a more egalitarian perspective.

It is thus necessary to heighten efforts towards a broader coverage of education-related issues in public and alternative media sources offering greater diversity and plurality to understand this reality, as opposed to mass media enterprises. The use of alternative media sources enables important and feasible efforts, where media is an important space for confrontation in light of the social demand for treating information and relevant civic issues with more seriousness, rigor and depth.

These spaces are not limited to longstanding community radio and radio stations that target broad segments of society in the region, but also include new media sources that have come about as a result of new information and communication technologies.

One example is what has occurred with Mexican youth, who carried out massive protests against large media monopolies in the country, as they reacted to lies that were published

in the media about what had happened in regards a PRI candidate arriving at their university. The students were not mobilising against a candidate or a political party, but rather against the media. It is increasingly necessary to acquire information from other voices, places and forms of presenting reality, making it necessary to break away from the monopoly on information. This comprises one of the conditions for enabling democracy and education.

It was also emphasised that large media companies normally are also owners of large service providers within education systems. There is thus an important educational task for media to put forth issues and information on what is taking place in society and contribute to building citizenship and other potential perspectives and ways of life, in order to understand and take a position in regards to critical issues, such as education.

The seminar pointed out that important linkages exist between academia, researchers and communications professionals in their efforts to analyse what is taking place within current tendencies for privatisation. There is a need to produce analyses for the common citizen that are straightforward and comprehensible.

Another problem in many countries is that the majority of the people do not read alternative print media or even traditional sources. Debates are thus generally limited to a very small scope. For this reason, efforts through public and alternative media sources are insufficient. Public education must take on the political task of stimulating critical thinking among individuals capable of analysing the informative content offered to them by mass media sources.

4.2) Academia

Initial mapping of studies regarding the privatisation of education demonstrates that academia is ambiguous when citing literature on the issue. In many cases, international actors use empirical evidence in favour of privatisation, tending to cite only those publications that support this idea. The majority of such evidence does not even come from academia, but rather from the same multilateral financial institutions that are publishing the study, using self-references. This is an instrumental use of scientific knowledge for political purposes, where evidence used to support policies was selected prior to developing the empirical proof.

Last year the OECD published a literature review on the issue of education-related markets that, in very general terms, recognises that there is a risk of increasing segregation linked to race and socioeconomic factors in educational systems fomenting privatisation. As such, the World Bank and the OECD have chosen stances that diverge significantly

from one another, even though the former tends to unanimously affirm its conclusions regarding the benefits of privatisation.

There is a strong potential for academia to influence the manner in which education is understood. It was thus agreed that there is a need for intellectuals and academicians take advantage of opportunities made available through alternative media sources and some media enterprises, in this way giving visibility to a critical and more in-depth vision in regards to the potential consequences of a continued push towards privatisation. Seminar debates also brought out the need to develop and strengthen other alternative media sources, in which public universities in Latin America could develop relevant capacities. Examples include the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), through the La Jornada newspaper, and the University of Costa Rica's University Seminar (Semanao Universidad), among others.

The academic field in Latin America also needs to develop an agenda for academia to address the issue of privatisation of education and, in particular, intensify its analysis based on a human rights perspective. Since the methodological agenda also has political significance, there is great difficulty in establishing new research methods that differ from traditional, prevalent methods. However, it is important to take into consideration the real consequences of what is to be examined through research. The process of selecting which issues and methods will be used carries with it responsibilities. These decisions must therefore be made in light of their social consequences.

This issue provoked significant debate when it came to delineating specifics for conducting research on privatisation. It was emphasised that methodological diversity is important when choosing to conduct research on privatisation, going beyond predominantly quantitative methods or a positivist viewpoint centred exclusively on what is quantifiable. As such, preference should be given to the goal of broadening the policy debate around the interpretation of quantitative data and indicators developed on the performance of education systems and distinct types of schools.

An example of this type of approach can be seen in initiatives in which CLADE has engaged various researchers, including Mr. Marco Kremenman, in order to analyse the issue of funding education from the perspective of education as a human right. This type of research enables civil society to carry out informed discussions with governments around key issues, such as funding for education. CLADE has made use of results and analytical frameworks from these research efforts to interact with international organisations, such as the Organisation of Ibero-American States and the United Nations system, as well as diverse governments. CLADE is also making an effort to submit a comprehensive report on the situation of funding for the right to education in the region to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Academia has an active role in the production and dissemination of knowledge regarding

the issue of education, debating and questioning the consequences of tendencies towards privatisation. Higher education institutions in Latin America and Europe continue to have a predilection for developing research agendas related to their own interests, creating masters and doctorates quotas for analysing these issues.

Researchers from three Latin American universities (UNICAMP, Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica and Universidad de Chile) and two European universities (Oxford University and the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona) participated directly in the seminar.

4.3) Corporate networks

Education is a strategic sector for doing business and also takes on significant value in forming opinions and managing political tensions. It is perhaps one of the greatest areas of interest for businesses, as well as for private sector actors to advance their agenda for political control. Chambers of Commerce are able to enter directly into this market without having to associate their actions with any philanthropic function, founding universities and creating opportunities within basic and secondary education.

Companies creating universities in turn acquire significant influence on the administration of the entire educational apparatus. The impact goes beyond higher education, because it is the university that trains teachers and establishes their views and stances concerning pedagogy, as well as the curricula they follow in the basic education system. Awareness of what is taking place in higher education is thus critical for analysing the privatisation of the basic education system, in order to identify linkages between these distinct levels of education. This is where entire networks of private sector actors play key roles in developing educational systems as a whole.

It was mentioned in the seminar that there is a Regional Corporate Network for Education comprised of close to 15 countries. It is supported by the IDB, which convened and financed a meeting to further consolidate this mechanism. Something similar is underway globally, involving a group of businessmen led by Gordon Brown, that is also pushing for the creation of a private fund to finance educational actions around the world. It is important to observe that in various countries in the region, businesses, corporate foundations and corporate networks for education have been able to influence the design and content of related public policies. It is worth noting that donations made by these actors are quite short-term, limiting their capacity to implement measures that are sustainable or capable of combating global inequalities. In fact, the majority of donations do not go to the poorest countries, but rather to developing countries and emerging economies, which are conducive to new market opportunities.

Social corporate responsibility targeting education is presently strongly encouraged through various international forums, such as the World Economic Forum (WEF), which has worked since 2003 to engage transnational companies as funders for education within development strategies. This is a phenomenon involving targeted philanthropy that is meant to facilitate business interests of transnational companies participating in these types of activities. In turn, they provide money, products and/or services, such as software, computers and human resources, among others. These actions targeting education are led by large transnational companies that do not typically work in coordination with local actors or governments as they promote their programmes.

Beyond the WEF, the global Education for All movement has been engaging private sector actors and civil society for the past several years at multiple decision-making levels within its structure. This demonstrates an increase in recognition and legitimacy for defining policy content at diverse levels. The United Nations General Secretary's Education First initiative to be launched in September 2012 also includes corporate representatives on its board of directors.

4.4) International Organisations

A single paradigm for the structuring of education-related public policies is currently playing a key role in multilateral agencies, especially the World Bank. This school of thought, as already pointed out, has the capacity to instil a set of messages around the idea that introducing private agents into the definition, delivery and funding of educational services brings with it great advantages, while at the same time eliminating innate inefficiencies in public services provided by governments.

GATS (General Agreements on Trade and Services) also exist through the World Trade Organisation (WTO), establishing multilateral platforms for promoting the commercialisation of educational services, viewing education as a highly profitable business. Anglo-Saxon countries are the most active participants in this practice and some of them strive to subject education systems in different countries to indiscriminate commercial practices, particularly in higher education. Beyond the GATS, however, regional and bilateral agreements must also be monitored because inasmuch as these free trade treaties are less multilateral in nature, they tend to be more disproportionate in empowering those negotiating the terms of such treaties.

The term "Innovative Forms for Providing Education" has been coined internationally as a way to cloak the traditional agenda, while in its essence still pushing for the privatisation of education. This has come about in response to the loss of legitimacy due to the negative effects of implementing this strategy in the 1990s.

In discussions on agencies within the United Nations system, it was pointed out that much heterogeneity exists across regions and even between different sectors within individual agencies. Further, there are institutes with autonomy in relation to the agency to which it is linked, as is the case of the International Institute for Educational Planning – UNESCO Buenos Aires, which has a strong stance in favour of public education, equality in educational achievements and equity and justice in education. The Institute is in fact initiating a study on the economic barriers to free compulsory education.

4.5) Mobilising citizens and using other forms of expression

Social movements mobilised around education in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially those led by students and education workers, were identified as key actors in the fight to strengthen public education, as well as in defining an agenda for debate that includes the negative impacts associated with distinct forms of privatisation.

The seminar highlighted how social movements and broad mobilisations have utilised different forms of artistic and traditional cultural manifestations to express their opinions and positions, achieving greater awareness and bringing about a broader sense of indignation and justice.

The inclusion of traditional cultural manifestations can be quite significant in reaching the grassroots and broader sectors of society, which are necessary participants in this important public debate. They stimulate sensitivities through the arts and tapping into an emotional dimension that is often overshadowed in more rational explanations about the tendencies towards privatisation.

Seminar participants agreed that knowledge must be shared and debates on the privatisation of education must be broadened in the various countries through forums, gatherings and meetings at the national and provincial levels. These and other actions are needed to enable public debate in all Latin American countries experiencing the effects of neo-liberal policies.

Seminar participants stressed the need for these social movements to express themselves through strikes, mobilisations and marches, mobilising and involving as many people as possible. These actions will enable their demands to become known and disseminated to all citizens towards forming a large critical mass of public opinion against the policies of privatisation of education and their impact on realising the right to education for all.

PART 5 – PENDING RESEARCH ISSUES

In the present context, rigorous research initiatives are needed in order to question the pro-privatisation agenda of international funding organisations, especially the World Bank and regional banks, along with other actors already mentioned in this document. Following are some of the key issues.

Frameworks for Laws, Policies, Administration and Funding:

- How much progress has been achieved in focusing on the right to education, regarding legislation and actual compliance with these laws? How are privatisation processes inhibited or stimulated in the region through the legal and policy frameworks?
- How are education budgets in different countries utilised for subsidising private education? / Who are the beneficiaries of public spending in education?
- What degree of control and accountability over private service providers exist in different countries in the region?
- How is the privatisation of education specifically manifested at each level of the educational process, from primary education to universities?

Ideological Focus and Actors in the Privatisation of Education:

- How has the argument based on human capital affected organisation of the educational process?
- How are educational policies for privatisation developed, legitimised and disseminated at the regional and global levels? This includes an in-depth analysis of the argument developed especially within multilateral finance organisations, highlighting the supposed efficiency and quality of private education. Sources and empirical comparisons should be rigorously examined.
- Who are the actors and what delivery mechanisms are involved in the processes for the privatisation of education? What instruments and strategies are being utilised?

- What relations exist between business leaders, politicians and government authorities that support privatisation? What relations exist between politicians and private education?
- What is the relation between the phenomena/processes for privatisation in Latin America and structural aspects of the geopolitical and international economic context?
- How and where are corporate networks for education operating, what is their agenda for promoting their arguments and actions, and what is their level of influence over public policies?
- What is the degree of knowledge, awareness and empowerment on these issues present in the daily lives of teachers?

Political Consequences of Privatisation:

- What is the impact of endogenous privatisation and exogenous privatisation on governance of educational systems, assuming the intrinsic need for participation and transparency, as well as on teacher training and teaching activities, educational inclusion and the fight against discrimination?
- How is school segregation related to privatisation and the commercialisation of education in educational systems throughout Latin America?
- What impacts do the trends in privatisation (endogenous and exogenous) have on educational content (for example, the emergence and absence of subjects, curricula, complete programs, variations in textbook content, etc.) and on educational practices (course methodologies, the role of teachers, learning models, among others)?
- What effects does privatisation have on equity, particularly in regards to access, free schooling and school dropout rates?

Privatisation and Profit in Education:

- What is the impact of public-private partnerships in terms of profits made through education services and how much is this type of contracting normally characterised as philanthropy?

- How are public expenditures in education and privatisation treated fiscally at the policy level in the region?
- What is the analysis of free trade treaties pertaining to services and education and how does this affect potential actions to defend public policies in education?

The Media and Privatisation:

- How does the media and communications industry treat the theme of education and in what way do they reinforce the meaning and value of the private sector in relation to the public sector?
- Who are the owners of multi-sector industries in areas associated with the power of images and symbols, such as culture, publishing and communications market?

PART 6 – FOCAL POINTS FOR ADVOCACY AGAINST THE PRIVATISATION OF EDUCATION AND FOR REINFORCING THE VALUE OF WHAT IS PUBLIC

Taking a Public Stance

- CLADE will take a Public Stance on privatisation, which should be understood as making explicit the distinct forms of privatisation underway and questioning the consequences identified in academic studies and by members of the education community. This stance should emphasise defending what is public, valuing public schooling and individuals who make up the public education system, as well as values and attitudes associated with horizontality, democratic administration, dialogue and broad participation in public debate.
- This stance will provide an important tool for networking and advocacy in conjunction with different actors in government and civil society, as well as regional and international forums.

Strengthening networks, actors and social mobilisation

- Strengthen networks of actors working to defend the right to education – labour organisations, student organisations and academia.
- Reach out to the grassroots and intensify the debate on privatisation.
- “CLADE Takes to the Streets”: Occupy public spaces for the mobilisation of networks and to promote civic debate and citizen involvement in public policies.

Research and networking for advocacy

- Foment the production of knowledge through communities or virtual networks involving diverse actors to monitor tendencies towards privatisation, supported by research in

academia, as well as actions and grassroots deliberations. Ensure the participation of actors such as Stephen Ball and other seminar participants. This network of academicians should also influence the definition of topics and issues addressed at the masters and doctorate levels, in addition to seminars.

- Carry out a case study on privatisation in Haiti, as an extreme case.
- Carry out a mapping exercise on the state of the art of privatisation in the region and different forms of privatisation underway and how they are manifested in education systems and institutions. Also map the level of coverage offered through public and private education services in the various countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Ideally, this mapping will also identify aspects of continuity and discontinuity.
- Participate and provide continuity for debates through thematic meetings, such as those conducted by UNICAMP.
- Mobilise a contingency of researchers at the regional level with support from universities – the University of Costa Rica expressed its ability to engage professors and researchers in these types of efforts through 2014.

Arts, culture and advocacy through the media

- Implement actions utilising the media to break down the commonly accepted vision favouring privatisation and the idea that what we pay as individuals offers the greatest value.
- Include strategies that are entertaining and artistic, incorporating the dissemination of politicised content on the trends for privatisation (including artistic manifestations developed in public schools as an instrument for mobilisation).
- Engage actors from the Arts and Culture field in our fight for a different vision on the issue.

NEXT STEPS

CLADE and Open Society Foundations conveyed their interest in developing future activities for follow-on to this pioneering seminar addressing trends in the privatisation of education in Latin America, seeking to continue debate, produce knowledge and conduct advocacy. Open Society will release an open call for proposals that will fund research initiatives addressing the issue in the region, while continuing its dialogue with CLADE in regards to advocacy initiatives.

CLADE will develop a strong public stance in favour of strengthening public education systems in the region, within which it will intensify fundamental points on the issue that as discussed in the seminar. CLADE will develop a virtual meeting place to foster continuity in debates on multiple trends in privatisation. This effort will seek to build a network of actors who can actively exchange information, knowledge and experiences, thereby fomenting reflection, developing opinions and sharing of knowledge on the theme. Open Society will also link these initiatives to its PERI website, seeking to foment interaction and exchanges on related content produced in Latin America, interacting with reflections from other regions around the world.

Finally, CLADE and Open Society Foundations will work together to conduct another seminar in Argentina in 2013 that will enable follow-on to this important debate. The seminar will coincide with a research meeting that will also take place during the same period, making it possible to update participants on advances taking place since the seminar in Chile, while broadening linkages and cooperation with other actors engaged in debating and producing knowledge on the issue.

The Seminar on the Privatisation of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean was an initiative carried out by the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE) and Open Society Foundations, in alliance with the Quality Education for All National Forum in Chile. This publication presents a synthesis of various presentations and debates that took place during the meeting – without not necessarily reflecting the opinions of those responsible for organising the seminar. CLADE was responsible for editing this publication, especially Fabíola Muñoz, Ilich Ortiz and Camilla Croso. The graphic design was produced by Adesign. Reproduction of this publication is permitted when done so for non-profit purposes and when reference is made as to the source.

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