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## **Education in Peru: ¿Builder of democracy or reproducer of inequalities?**

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### **The myth of education as a central part of the myth of progress.**

Since its beginnings, writing and Spanish have been linked to school education as tools used to integrate to national society, in the fight against ancient gamonalism.

There is a convergence between the school ideology – which defends the progress and the equality of human beings – and the struggle of an indigenous peasant population, and later of a migrant urban population, to leave marginalization behind. This does not mean that the school represents to people progress in the sense of the modern project of enlightenment. One asks of the school access to better opportunities, not equal opportunities. It is seen as a channel of social (and geographical) mobility, a way of somewhat improving their poverty, and also as way of appropriating the instruments of vindication with respect to the State and the powerful. It is not necessarily the doorway to the rights of a democratic citizenship.

In practical and symbolic terms, the key to the door of society is the learning of Spanish and of reading-writing, all of which were previously denied to the Indians. The popular struggle for schools in the XX century has been absolutely central to the social transformation of the country. The mythical image of the meeting between the Conquistador Pizarro and the Inca Atahualpa in Cajamarca in the XVI century subsists in the minds. The popular tale holds that, after trying in vain to listen to what the bible had to say to him, the Inca threw it to the ground claiming that it didn't say anything, which was what sparked the massacre of the Indians that accompanied him and the capture of the Inca himself. Garcilaso de la Vega says that this version is not historically accurate, yet this is the one that persists in the Indians minds, hence signaling that the inability to access the Spanish text is the origin of the social colonial rupture.

In tales of the XX century, it has been found that for the Andeans, the school – a space that is central to the access of the written text and Spanish – is desired as a possibility of appropriating the knowledge of the powerful, but as such, it can also be feared (for example, in a quechua tale, there lives a monsters that wants to devour the children of the Inca). But the ancient owners of school knowledge did not like the idea of Indians having access to reading. The tales that surround it show the strength of an old and deep distrust that has been inherited from colonial times. But, on the other hand, the struggle to have the school in the community – in emulation among villages – has been one of the most powerful factors of change in rural society. This supposed – and continues to – putting all the emphasis in the learning of Spanish, even if it means the loss of the mother tongue. This, however, must not be confused with a supposed 'alienation', with

contempt of their culture. Although the prestige of a hegemonic culture impregnates everything in society, the obsession with Spanish and the access to the culture of the school responds to a priority that has been placed in a given moment within the family strategy. In some parts of the country, this has been taking place for some generations, as is the example of the Mantaro Valley, in the central highland. It is a prosperous zone in commercial terms, where families consciously decided to adopt Spanish, and although this came at the expense of their language, this is not necessarily definitive, and in any case, instead of expressing the abandonment of their culture, it signifies the vigor of it and its capacity to adapt. This process had already been clearly perceived since the mid XX century by the great Peruvian anthropologist José María Arguedas (1975).

At the same time, soon there are experiments with a school that seeks to be different (see JM Encinas 1932), linked especially to the rural reality. In a modern elite, an idea is born that the school has to relate to the development of the countryside. The idea of the school garden takes hold, but for the people the school in the countryside is used massively to prepare for migration towards the city, as a springboard towards the outside. (Ansión 1989).

The desire was first towards primary school, then secondary school, in order to pass to an orientation towards university. The evaluation criterion of secondary education for the parents is that it prepares for university (Ansión et al. 1998). And when the orientation is towards superior technical education, this road, far from excluding university, rather reinforces the expectations of reaching it. (Sulmont et al. 1991). There is an expectation placed in scholarship that corresponds to reality in the sense that education effectively allows higher incomes (according to the analysis of return rates, see Rodríguez 1993, Ansión et al. 1998), but does not necessarily correspond with the possibility of the social ascension that was expected.

### **The peculiarity of the school institution in Peru**

Education in Peru has not been accompanied by a process of endogenous industrialization. In that sense, its principal function is not economical, but it plays an important role in the social reproduction.

At a mass level, it develops because of the pressure of social demand rather than because of the initiative of the State. At a popular level, more than a tool for securing the presence of the State, it has been a fighting tool in the struggle of the families to defend themselves from abuses and to gain recognition by society. The struggle for free education is explained because of it<sup>1</sup>. It is the historical vindication against the heirs of the colonial power that denied the Indians the access to writing.

Weakly linked with labor, bookish and acquired by memory, education continues ailing from many of the defects pointed out more than 30 years ago by the Education Reform

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<sup>1</sup> In 1969, the military government of General Velasco had to pull back in the face of the popular mobilization in defense of free education, which caused deaths in Huanta (Ayauchu) See Degregori 1990. It is also worth remembering that Mario Vargas Llosa's insinuation during his presidential campaign in 1990 that secondary education might not be completely free under certain circumstances generated a movement of rejection that might have cost him victory against Fujimori.

of the military government of Velasco. Already in the 20's, José Carlos Mariátegui made similar criticisms. In 1993, in the Diagnóstico General de la Educación Peruano, it was pointed out that the most popular teaching manual of reading and writing only taught reading in a mechanical way and not long ago public opinion has been touched by the diffusion of the scarce reading comprehension of the students and even of a significant number of teachers.

At times the results in terms of knowledge and technical skills do not seem to matter much: what matters is the 'bestowment of values': discipline and order, religious values, Homeland and Family. To that, the notion of 'progress' is added, even though it is only superficially linked to modernity: more a synonym of 'betterment' ('self-improvement') as well as national integration.

But the quality of schools varies according to the network we find ourselves in, be it the one of public schools or private. Despite being subject to national norms and common curricula, the private school enjoys a great deal of freedom. In the private network (which represents 15% of the student body) one finds the best schools in the country, some of which administer an education linked to other countries (United States, Great Britain, Italy, Germany, China, etc.) and others run by religious congregations. But there also exist many smaller education centers of a less clear quality. Some have focused on university preparation, that way becoming "academies" (institutions that prepare for university admission exams). Among the private schools the so called "alternative schools", born with a zeal for renewal within a modern pedagogic perspective, hold a place of their own. Within the public system (85% of the study body) the variations are also numerous. In the 50s the Great School Units (Grandes Unidades Escolares) were born as entities that absorbed the first great wave of new sectors that desired a secondary education. They had much prestige and quality, but were in crisis by the 80's. Currently, the most successful public schools are found in the outlying urban neighborhoods. Despite many difficulties, one finds in many of them interesting efforts at innovation. Rural educational centers, almost wholly public, are generally of poor quality. Some institutions ("Fe y Alegría" and some NGOs) make commendable efforts, generally successful, at improving the quality of education in the public education centers, but its reach is quantitatively limited, although in qualitative terms they contribute to a positive change of policies.

The school is clearly seen by the population as a decisive channel for social advancement, but it has enormous limitations to achieve that promise. Despite the sustained efforts from groups of innovating teachers and education specialists, the social tendency is clearly towards the reproduction of hegemonic cultural models. There is a convergence between the non-enlightened and powerful sectors of Peruvian society and an upset popular mentality around social advancement and the difficulty in instilling in the young the values of discipline and order. The answer in both cases is authoritarianism. Signs of this are the preference of military style parades in schools, 'Brigadiers' (persons in charge of discipline in the classroom) in the school organization or the occasional request for returning to schools of "Military Pre-Instruction" under the leadership of the Armed Forces. However, there is also another tendency that seeks to establish order in another way, be it by belief, be it because the traditional authoritarianism no longer works with the young. The institution of the school council

has worked in many state schools. At present, with the new General Education Law, institutional educational Councils are functional in all educational institutions, where, for the first time, students can participate.

### **Discrimination in the school**

The school environment remains an area where discrimination is reproduced and it is not exclusive to our country as Reimers points out, quoting Tenti Fanfani<sup>2</sup>:

“Recent surveys show that teachers in Argentina, Peru and Uruguay have high levels of rejection towards diversity. The highest percentages of negative discrimination are, as in the case of Mexico, against homosexuals. 20% of teachers in Uruguay, 34% in Argentina and 55% in Peru, would not accept having homosexuals as neighbors. There is also a strong rejection based on nationality, ethnicity or social condition of origin. 11% of teachers in Uruguay, 15% in Argentina and 38% in Peru discriminate against people based on their nationality or ethnicity. There is also discrimination against inhabitants of ‘Slums’ among 16% of the teachers in Peru, 33% of Uruguayan teachers and 53% of Argentinean teachers.

Not only is there rejection towards people from neighboring countries, but also towards immigrants from other latitudes and persons based on their religion. Around 19% or 20% of teachers in Peru, discriminate against Arab and Jewish people, against Japanese, Chinese, Ecuadorians and Chileans. The levels of discrimination based on this are lower in Argentina and Uruguay”. (Reimers 2005: 100)

What has been said in the title institutionally expressed the existence of multiple forms of social and ethnic-cultural discrimination. The public-private distinction marks an important social and cultural division, but it isn't the only or most important one since families from popular sectors also consent to a private education, but which is not equivalent with the one that schools attended by middle and upper class give. The other great distinction is between urban and rural schools. Once again, within each one of the two categories new subdivisions appear that also correspond to a hierarchical classification that is socially operated. The Lima-Province division is also important, but it is more or less subordinated to the first: a private school in the provinces that is attended by the middle and upper class will be better valued (and will effectively also have an education of better quality) than a public school in Lima, but when comparing two state schools that are similar, the one in Lima will have the advantage.

Now, not surprisingly, discrimination and prejudices are produced and reproduced inside each educational institution. Despite the efforts proposed by different policies and actions of civil society to recognize the rights of children, the respect for diversity, and other measures, we still continue to find diverse forms of discrimination in every day practices.

For example, teachers and principals recognize at a discursive level that discrimination should not be a part of school practices, however, this is not necessarily so. A study on discrimination in schools in Lima and Cusco finds that

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<sup>2</sup> International Institute for Educational Planning, 2003.

“teachers are not prepared neither academically nor emotionally to identify the discriminatory attitudes, even violent ones, that occur every day in the classroom.” Hence, said situations are resolved according to the perspectives of each teacher based on personal experience, more or less lucid, more or less vulnerable, which in many instances produces its unconscious reproduction, without being aware of the pain/harm done on the boys and girls.

Unconsciously they appeal to the resilient qualities of the human being, as an interviewee said:

*The teachers, we would say, are not prepared for that, it is something that solves itself (...) the kids by themselves adapt, time passes, they become closer friends, closer brothers and the other starts to accept things a little and takes it as a joke, like that (...) it is a matter of time (...)*.”(Ansi3n 2004:33)

Hence, teachers assume that there should not be discrimination in the school, but do not know how to proceed when signs of discrimination appear among the students.

The processes of discrimination are not homogenous in the country. In the capital, in marginal urban zones, discrimination seems to be more associated to economic differences or cultural levels, while in the provinces discrimination in schools is more directly associated to language and place of origin.

Besides, discrimination in the school place is not only present between teachers and students; it is a common practice among the different actors. This way, for example, teachers can mock other teachers or even a principal because of his or her accent, the provincial Spanish accent. Likewise, mocking and other types of discrimination among children are frequent and very difficult for teachers to handle, since, for the most part; they show little interest in handling this in their own relationships. .

In the case of schools in Lima, the differences between students are not so much expressed through the color of the skin or language but through economic differences and place of residence.

“Diversity presents itself as a ‘cultural level’ diversity. The ones with the most education (school) take more care of their children (also in the way they dress). This is a case of the school in which the first sections (A, B) are good while the last are “bad”. There one finds the boys and girls and it is considered good to keep them separated. In any case, the “cultural level” of the families in that school is considered better than the one in some other places in Lima (Canto Grande for example), but at the same time some believe that it is better that the mothers be natives of Lima.” (Ansi3n 2004: 13)

In Cusco, in contrast, it was found that discrimination tends to be more heavily related to place of origin and language

*“When you really speak to the indians of the countryside in quechua (...), there is a moment when you begin to speak in Spanish and then, it slips out, it lets lose, then our colleagues say: ‘this one is ‘moteando’ (speaking with errors), you are murdering Cervantes’. They don’t realize that at some point they also slip up, (that) it is having an impact on them. (...). There is discrimination among ourselves ‘that I am of blue blood, that I have this and such surname’, this is not something new, but has always occurred. To end it will require a lot of work.”* (Ansi3n 2004: 24)

Children can be very cruel in their discrimination of others because of the use of language.

*“Some children are embarrassed of speaking quechua because they begin to get mocked ‘go eat cancha (maize), with your ‘mote’ (...) maybe the children at seeing my presence do not express it very well, they do not manifest it because the vice-principal comes. (...) But among themselves,*

*possibly when they are among themselves there they try a little to lower self-esteem and maybe they discriminate, they.” (Ansi3n 2004: 24)*

In other respects, there are every day and wide spread practices in school that denote their hegemonic enthusiasm: cleanliness is one of them.

“Hygiene is associated with what is clean, the non-contaminated, the pure, the white, all which comes from the modern urban world. The apparently neutral description on the use of bathrooms is not innocent: in the complaints laid down by the teachers, children appear as unclean and contaminating and therefore linked to the world of the impure, of what isn’t white. The declared anti-racism does not seem sufficiently consequential or deep enough to question a rooted common sense. The clear exasperation of the teachers when speaking of the subject suggests that we are moving at a purely emotional level: even though worthy reasons are given, the most important ones seem to remain hidden and to respond to a reaction that is not reflexive. Furthermore, the children with more urban characteristics use the subject to make fun of the peasants and physically attack those who appear dirty. In this case, the teacher implicitly accepts the aggressive attitude, for his criticism is exclusively directed against those who do not respect the norms of hygiene.” (Ansi3n 2004: 3)

## **Gender Identities**

The achievement of gender equality in education supposes State policies that pay attention on one side to the access and permanence of girls in the system and on the other, that the quality of education that they receive is respectful of the difference and that it encourages their development. However, there has been little clarity in the concerned policies and they have insisted, above all, according to Mu3noz, Ruiz Bravo and Rosales (2006), in reverting sexism in the language and the stereotypes about masculinity and femininity. The perspective has also been one of searching for equality of rights rather than recognizing the difference between men and women.

Teachers are already well aware of the necessity of attending to gender identity in a perspective of equality, but they do not know how to do so:

*“It is government policy that gender equality should exist, that there is no discrimination between males and females (...) The advantages are that they work as a team, the disadvantage would be that when they reach a certain age, for example puberty, the boys look for their partner and this causes that for the same reason, by the very same fact that they are in couples it makes them uncomfortable and the rest of the classmates make fun, they realize it, but in the first years they do not, they live like brothers, as they grow up this gender design begins to break apart”.* (Ansi3n 2004: 24)

In a study of three state schools in Lima, Espinoza (2006) finds that *an unequivocal answer to the role of the school on the matter of gender is not possible. School practices and transmissions of messages of equality have been found but, also and above all, biases and prejudices socially rooted.* She found that the issue of gender, in school practice, is approached from didactic units, where issues generally associated with characteristics and/or sexual changes or with human sexual behavior are treated. Gender is still understood through sexual and corporal differences.

However, in the last few years there has been a clear interest from the State in improving the access to school education for girls, albeit with limitations. According to Montero, a larger number of girls from the rural sector currently have access to education, even though this is more common for primary education than secondary, showing that there is still much to be done. *“Girls are seen to have less ‘life time’ to*

*dedicate to their condition as students, hence the delay that is determinant for their possibilities of permanence in the system”.* (Montero 2006: 229)

## **The construction of attitudes towards violence**

The Peruvian school comes from an authoritarian tradition that is hard to overcome. Despite this, actual legislation<sup>3</sup> has a modern and democratic conception of the school and incorporates, to give an example; bodies of participation and monitoring in which diverse actors participate, including students. In the same way, the curriculum can hardly be improved. For example, in the Ministry of Education<sup>4</sup> website, the ‘personal-social’ area of primary education, which has the title “Identity construction and Democratic coexistence”, states among other things:

Responds to the need of developing the personal and social identity of the child; and emphasizes the positive development of his or her self esteem, which implies creating pedagogic conditions – in the classroom and school – so that each student may know and value him or herself positively, to have trust and confidence in him or herself, to express his or her feelings of belonging to a social group, accept his or her physical and psychological characteristics and positively value his or her gender identity.

In the same website, one of the learning achievements of the Fifth cycle of primary education (the penultimate year of elementary school) is formulated the following way in the current curriculum:

“He or her is recognized and valued as a person worthy of responsibilities and rights. Is recognized as a part of his or her family, school and community medium and interacts with others in an autonomous, cooperative and solidary way rejecting all violence, corruption and discrimination.”

We find much coherency in the law, regulations and curriculum. Although normative instruments can always be improved, it has been a long time since the problem in Peru has not been along those lines, but how to put these beautiful ideas into practice.

One teacher expressed this difficulty in the following terms

*“Nowadays with the rights of children, back in my time they would get smacked or their sideburns would be pulled and it wasn’t a big deal, but now that is something serious. They call DEMUNA and one has a lot of troubles, which is why I say that they are very spoiled. I think a good pulling of the ears does no one any harm, (...) the teacher is very careful of not stepping over the line because there might be trouble and because everyone makes sure to say, the television, that children should not be mistreated.”* (Ansi3n 2004: 24)

The changes officially proposed in Peruvian education have long demanded that the teacher abandon the pedagogy of vertical imposition of discipline. But this is no easy task. To demand that the teacher be a ‘facilitator’ of the teaching-learning process supposes a change of attitude and having the resources for it. However, many teachers in our country do not feel prepared to face this challenge and many believe that

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<sup>3</sup> General Law of Education N° 28044 of July 28, 2003

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.minedu.gob.pe/normatividad/reglamentos/DisenoCurricularNacional2005.pdf>

discipline is a necessary tool to achieve the necessary order for pedagogic practice. The models that have been interiorized by the teachers in their own educational process are not easy to modify, even more so when they receive constant reinforcements from society as a whole. This begins with the criteria placed upon learning conditions: the idea that in order to learn it is first required that there be a climate of silence and cleanliness and an order in which the students are not proactive but where they react to what is programmed by the teacher, all this conspires against an education in which creativity and initiative are displayed. The educational activity hence becomes a permanent negotiation between teachers and students where the teacher's biggest resource is the threat of sanction and not the enthusiasm for discovery.

For Patricia Ames, that tension reflects a series of conflicts that take place in any social space. However, conflict resolution strategies in the classroom are very limited. There is a constant appeal to sanction or indifference, leaving the conflicts of the children with their counterparts in their own hands. (Ames 1999: 322).

Ames notices some general tendencies in the application of the teacher's authority in the institution of the school:

- *The institutional environment exercises a strong measure of power over the students, sanctioning any transgression of the norms.*
- *The norms are set by someone (or someone else) foreign to the students, and they, subject to these norms, have no possibility of participating in their elaboration.*
- *The authority has at their disposition an illegitimate use of violence (endorsed by the institution and/or society) to sanction any transgression of these norms.*
- *Accommodation to the institutional norms supposes adopting the forms or formalities valued by the institution.*
- *With control exercised over the students, transgression is possible as an answer to that control.*
- *In conflicts the authority moves to sanction and when it does not the students must face each other, a situation in which the most used way seems to be answering aggression with another aggression.* (Ames 1999: 323)

In this context, children learn to establish alliances with their counterparts which constitute an affective and practical base in order to relate to the authority and the institution with other groups of children within the school. As a result of an ethnographic study of an "alternative school" in Lima, Mujica (2005) observes that the children elaborate their own strategies when relating to authority and also when relating to each other and, for it, they resort to violence between classmates.

"Violence and aggression are not exceptional actions but every day techniques of actions; this shows a particular disposition of power and of conflicts, that do not result in an eminent rupture of the system, but an effective way of conferring with the norms, a system of communication, systemic and organized, that allows structuring the groups and generating a kind of order. Hence, the conflict becomes a mode of communication that the children use to unravel the practical technologies of power. It is a space of effective application.

This points out that the informal, that is, the practices that are not included in the normative disposition of the school, such as conflicts, pranks, mischief or aggressions, are not played at the system's margin, but in the very interior of its structure. They are not outside the school system, but are a constituting part of its practical disposition. The formal institutionality, hence, implies the informal". (Mujica 2005: 39)

But the use of violence is not only present among classmates. As was mentioned before by Ames, the authority, in our schools, has a illegitimate use of violence; reason why we still find that punishing is still an everyday practice in the learning process. That the practices are common in our education is not to say that there haven't been any efforts made to eradicate child mistreatment as a mode of correction or raising guideline. There are learning institutions that prohibit it by assuming new corrective manners, more complex, as in the case studied by Mujica:

“Being there no physical punishment (torture) is difficult to specify a system more complex and sophisticated of punishment, correction and discipline. However, it is important to point out that the graver the fault or the rupture of the prohibitions the punishment is greater and more external. In other words, the initial mission seems to be related to the idea of disciplining, correct and shape “docile bodies”, so much so that the punishments of the internal ambit do not separate the subject, but face him with the group; when the fault is even graver then the attempt of “directing” ceases to be central and is directed towards momentary separation. Here the corrective discipline (under modalities of physical non-torture) gives place to the safeguard of other members of the group and the attempt of separating to reintroduce. Separation, as the ancient ostracism, becomes one of the most radical ways of punishment in this space: it is the punitive mode of saying “you are no longer like us, you no longer belong and we can no longer do anything for you”. (Mujica 2005: 17)

The separation of the student is an extreme corrective measure that is found in the limits of the instauration of a type of order that does not use physical punishment. But the handling of these types of strategies is difficult and does not make up the formation of most teachers. In any case, it requires a bigger effort from teachers, unlike sanction or physical aggression.

*E1: And has she hit you?*

*E2: No, she never beat me up, because I wouldn't let her*

*E1: ¿What do you mean you wouldn't let her?*

*E2: Ahh, once, when I didn't bring the copy the teacher told us to...she showed up angry... and said: I want to see all of your copies; I got nervous and said, no teacher, I didn't bring the copy, I'm sorry, she grabbed us and put those of us who didn't bring the copies in front of the classroom and said: why didn't you bring your copy and I explained that I had forgotten it and then: a belt! She grabbed the belt and she was already hitting...*

*E1: Where did she get the belt from?*

*E2: No, my classmates lend it to her. She grabs it and starts hitting, she said: your hand!...and since I was nervous and wanted to cry I said to her: no teacher and then she got angry at me, no teacher, because you don't get paid to hit, you get paid to understand me and then she got angry.*

*E1: And she didn't hit you?*

*E2: She didn't hit me.*

*E1: And she hit the others?*

*E2: She did hit the others*

*E1: And what did the others do?*

*E2: The others stood for like an hour and a half with red eyes.*

(Ministerio de Educación. 2006: 109)

Child punishment is part of school culture. This doesn't apply only in the classroom but is accepted by the educational community. Parents justify and even demand the use of violence as a 'corrective' element. Parents always justify violence and when it is used to chasten, then the idea is “that they hit, but not too hard either” (UMC 2006).

Now, the use of violence in the school has not been foreign to the possibility of the expansion of the violence of Shining Path. We had already warned in 1992 about the advantage that the group could gain from the authoritarianism and dogmatism of the school. (Ansi3n et al. 1992). With the failure of the official authoritarianism, a more efficient authoritarianism emerged, within its logic, which directly led to totalitarian power, but which enormously attracted young men and women accustomed to violence.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR) also highlighted the importance of the educational system in the development of radical ideologies and pointed that *“the State’s abandonment of public education allowed the educational space to become a place where radical and authoritarian proposals, like those of the PCP-SL (Peruvian Communist Party-Shining Path), converged and flourished”*. (Sandoval 2004: 5). During the years of internal armed conflict, the educational system became an important disputed “ideological and symbolic” terrain where the State lost its hegemony when it was unable to establish feelings of *“national community” prevailing authoritarian pedagogies and proposals of radical change only attainable via confrontation and violence*. Sandoval sustains that authoritarian projects flourish with greater efficiency in institutions like the school and the compulsory military service that do not recognize the differences and on the contrary, stand on homogenizing paradigms. In that sense, the CVR *“proposes prohibiting and drastically sanctioning the use of any kind of physical punishment or humiliating practice against boys and girls as a form of discipline and exercise of violence”*.

To summarize, authority backed by physical punishment as a way of imposing discipline continues to be the most diffused social model, despite it being less and less efficient due to the resistance of the children, the lack of conviction from teachers and the existence of an official discourse that rejects it. Parents expect the teachers to ‘correct’ the children, resorting to violence if necessary, but within the limits that their responsibility imposes: the teachers are heavily perceived as ‘second fathers’ or ‘second mothers’ and, as such, have the obligation of severely ‘correcting’ the children, without reaching extremes, but like good family parents would. But on the other hand, the existence of gangs in many neighborhoods, often linked with certain educational centers, is a product and at the same time a symptom of this situation: the gang creates a sort of anti-school culture but at the same time inherits the old authoritarian condition, each time less legitimate in the school, and which is reproduced in the street to express a fragile and boundless rebelliousness.

### **The construction of civic values**

The strength of discrimination mechanisms and the use of violence in the school is directly related with the values that are diffused from the school itself in terms of authority and discipline.

Civic values are often confused with ‘patriotic values’, at the same time assimilated with the obvious symbols (the flag, the shield, the national anthem) and heroes whose origin lay in warlike events. A generalized expression of this perspective is the school parade, which is a nothing but a children’s version of the military ones. A proper moment to also ‘instill values’ is the so called Monday ‘formation’, an occasion in which the children fall into lines, in military fashion, in the school playground, and are subjected to a speech from the principal on a set subject. More than once the children

are found in this situation under a hot sun. There remains to study what is the outcome of these speeches in the acquirement of values (which ones?) by the children. There seems to be a mix of voluntarism with the desire to stand out from the school authorities.

Beyond the superficiality of these acts, the feeling of frustration that stems off from studying the country's history is much deeper and real. Portocarrero y Oliart (1989), when presenting the view that is held of Peru from since the school, show how children learn a history of failures in which the heroes are characters whose greatness is in martyrdom.<sup>5</sup> Throughout the history of education, there are various interpretations of the history of Peru, but hardly anyone constructs, from any one of them, a positive vision of future that allows overcoming the feeling of frustration and lack of horizons, a widespread feeling that is found throughout society. Portocarrero y Oliart show how this experience of repeated failures constitutes the emotional background of what is called the 'critical idea'. Peruvians are a people secularly humiliated, and the first task that a reflection of its history should respond to is to explain this accumulation of frustrations, which is manifested in the weakness of social integration, the permanence of abuse and violence, poverty and backwardness. As a matter of fact, Portocarrero y Oliart (1989: 94) had already told us that Peruvian nationalism has been characterized by proposing a specific way of feeling about the country that can be called 'painful love'; that is, assuming as your own something that is known to be imperfect and full of evils in the spirit of contributing, of correcting it in some way. The crisis of political parties and the repeated success – and temporal – of outsiders such as Fujimori, Toledo or Humala expresses in some way this situation in which the 'national' is constructed on top of a base of resentments. One can also understand in this context the sympathy that the Shining Path enjoyed from an important sector of the population at its peak (in the late 80's, between sympathizers and adherents, it congregated 15% of Peruvian youth).

Inquiring further on about citizen formation, we find the interesting citizen formation tests, elaborated by the Ministry of Education in 2004, at the primary school level. The results indicate that the school achieves

“that the students identify rights and recognize those that can be present or absent in various situations. However, the students have many difficulties in explaining what these mentioned rights consist of and in arguing in favor of them from democratic principles. (...) The results would reveal that the girls and boys do not experience the respect and validity of their rights in everyday life. Hence the difficulty in explaining their importance and elaborating democratic proposals to defend them”. (Ministry of Education 2006: 102)

There have been initiatives from the state and civil society in support of the rights of girls and boys, the national plan 2002-2010 is the most recent document and the frame of actions, programs and strategies that have to be assumed in order to follow through with said rights. At the same time the said plan respects international agreements. It is an indicator of the government's intention of elaborating public policies for the child, yet, there is still much to be done if the rights are to be applied in the everyday lives of boys and girls.

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<sup>5</sup> Peruvian political culture has also developed to a considerable degree upon that base. That is clearly the case of the APRA party, deeply marked by its “martyrdom”, and that has also been the case, stronger even, with the Shining Path.

Not knowing their rights, at the same time students are very critical of democracy. In a survey conducted in 2002 (IMASEN 2002), from a total of 407 children and teenagers between the ages of 11 and 17 of different social backgrounds from 36 districts of Metropolitan Lima and Callao, 77, 4% are not satisfied with Peruvian democracy (55, 8% little satisfied, 21, 6% not satisfied at all) and only 19, 6% are satisfied, (17, 9% satisfied and 1, 7% very satisfied).

School, however, doesn't seem to be the only nor the principal holder of responsibility in these results, for these are similar to the results found among the general population. The questioning of the school, in any case, would be more of its incapacity to break with the vicious circle of authoritarianism and social differentiation that currently exists in society.

The already mentioned efforts in modifying the contents in terms of democratic values are important. One of the manifestations of this fact is the school calendar of civic activities. It is impressive to see the array of themes proposed to the schools throughout the year, which range from activities related to military heroes and commemorating loss battles to diverse subjects linked to a modern sensibility, like days of the week dedicated to the environment, the handicapped, human rights, etc. In this calendar, the listing responds to several "geological layers" of celebrations that come from different sensibilities, corresponding to different moments of national history, with a recent display of celebrations that welcome new values, which vindicate diversity and respect for different kinds of people. The school calendar as a listing of heteroclitic themes is very representative of a public opinion that is not solid, that oscillates between the clamors for a return to the Pre-Military Instruction<sup>6</sup> and the support for the conclusions of the Reconciliation and Truth Commission.

To paint an even picture, one must add that there also exists the ancient tradition of the school council, which is recognized by the current Law of General Education. Beside the system of "brigadiers" that functions as school police, in some learning centers exists the school council, with its elections and working mayors and aldermen. To this, the new law adds the Institutional Educational Councils, where the students are represented. This last institution is too recent to be evaluated, but holds enormous potential.

To return to the impact of the medium in the students, it is important to mention the role played by the media and especially television.

In past years efforts have been made for the teachers to recognize the information that the students receive from said mediums, however, as Trinidad (2002) mentions, teachers do not seem prepared to handle said information. The author found that in the case of primary school, what is seen in television is hardly ever used in class, save for the subject of news. For the teachers, the news are the most important programs. Students have to present a summary of news from the radio or TV as much as it allows

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<sup>6</sup> The Pre-Military Instruction consisted of military type exercises in secondary education from the part of a staff linked to the armed forces. It was eliminated in 1990, when practices of great violence were seen in the context of a supposed preparation for the fight against the Shining Path. In that instance the custom of demanding the children to kill a dog and smear its blood all over themselves. The Ministry of Education hence evaluated that such a practice with the teenagers was completely counterproductive, for it prepared them for eventual actions of bloody violence within the ranks of the Shining Path. Since then, periodical demands for the restitution of IPM in the schools appear.

them being informed of what occurs at a national level. But the school is not a place where the news are analyzed and made sense of. In secondary school, television is used as a technical medium, within the project of distance education, to show video tapes prepared by the Ministry of Education. (Trinidad 2002: 59).

Hence, television does not constitute for the teachers a source of knowledge. The discourse of the teachers is, rather, a speech very critical of TV, but not to teach their students to look at it critically, but to place it as an instrument that ‘un-educates’, that teaches “anti-values”. Far from seeing in television a potential ally, the teachers see it as their main rival.

We therefore find teachers in the defensive and without resources before the power of TV and lately, of the internet, which is heavily used by the young. The proofs of citizen reflection conclude:

“Television and Internet would be the main mediums that inform on social context and public affairs. Boys and girls would require developing a critical opinion that would allow them to reflect on what these mediums say.” (Ministry of Education 2006: 103)

However, according to a survey by IMASEN (2002) we find that more than 41% of children and teenagers access the internet in a daily or inter-daily basis. 76, 2% of those who were surveyed access the internet without adult supervision and only 21, 2% have parental control.

The incapacity of the school to positively interact with the media is a global phenomenon, but is even more worrisome in relation to the national programming. National journalism, in effect, has been developing a style of diffusing the news that allows little critical and objective evaluation of the facts and rather tends to become confused in campaigns (generally slander ones) based on very conservative values. The other ingredient which is ever more present is the morbid character of the information. Faced with it, the school does little or nothing.

A strong slander campaign, for example, was the one developed against the report of the Reconciliation and Truth Commission: before the nature of the report became public, the majority of the media had already disqualified it. Throughout this type of information, it isn’t only harder to tell truth from lie, but it has begun to change the meaning of what is true, which is confused with the ‘versions’ of the many protagonists of the news. The question no longer is: what is the truth? But rather: what is your truth?

Even the charges against the actions of nefarious characters, as is the case of Monstesinos, Fujimori’s former adviser, have had difficult effects in evaluating from the point of view of values. In fact, several testimonies point out the attractiveness of this kind of character that, from official anti-hero, can finally become a hero to certain people of groups, for being a ‘smart’ character, very ‘macho’, ready to do the dirty but necessary jobs, etc.

### **Language and intercultural education**

In Peru, like in many other places, the challenge of Intercultural Education is raised from experience and the necessity of Intercultural Bilingual Education (EBI) between Spanish and a native language. The technical proposal considers that a child has to learn

to read and write first in his or her mother tongue and learn to read and write in Spanish within the frame of a learning methodology of a second language. It has been proven that a child best becomes literate in his mother tongue and that from there he can better learn any other language.

This proposal however has been clashing for nearly four decades with our intercultural reality of conflict and marginalization. Given that Spanish is Peru's lingua franca, it is assumed that the learning of other languages is useless, because one does not write in those languages. To understand what happens in these aspects, it is important to consider the following:

- The **family motivation** for their children to go to school is that they learn to read and write in Spanish. This has caused the programs to adapt and in practice tend to develop reading-writing simultaneously in both languages.
- The **attitude of teachers** in rural areas is ambivalent: they vindicate the "revaluation" of the native culture, but are followers of "progress" in the XIX century sense. Few are capable of writing properly in the native language or of translating it correctly. They often are representatives of an ideology that associates school with a progress linked to western science and the Spanish language, but not in the original sense of the industrial revolution, rather as a reproduction of the old ethnic-social colonial hierarchy. They therefore represent in flesh and bone everyone's aspiration of escaping the marginalization inherited from colonial relations and that did not allow the access to writing.
- The **prejudices** of the urban society that range from the aristocratic hatred of the native languages to the idea that, within modernity and globalization these languages no longer have a place and are in any case disappearing. Here intellectuals, politicians and state officials have an especial responsibility. There have been findings of State officials in charge of primary education in quechua-speaking areas that were convinced that in rural communities an Intercultural Bilingual Community no longer had any sense since all the children already spoke Spanish.<sup>7</sup>

Despite interesting advances in many places, and the fact that the EBI is a program diffused at the national level, the prejudices are very persistent. For example, in recent years, intellectual and professional sectors, registering the resistance of the families (from fear that the children won't learn Spanish and from badly thought or implemented programs, with usually badly trained teachers) argue against EBI. However, where willingness and technical capacity have been shown, these programs have successfully unfolded.

The current General Education Law establishes the intercultural as a principle for all education in Peru. That, for now, is nothing more than a well meant wish, except for the children speaking native languages (and despite the deficiencies of EBI's programs). In other sectors, a concern is periodically manifested about the difficulty of relating to others only when serious problems appear (during the internal conflict with the Shining Path, or faced with the possibility that Humala would become President). But once the imminent danger is over, indifference is noticeable again. A real indicator of the total

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<sup>7</sup> Data from personal experience

lack of interest in understanding ‘the others’ in the country is that its very rare that someone who speaks Spanish as mother tongue learns quechua or other native language.

### **An agreement in crisis**

A way of resuming everything that has been said is to see the actors of education as the members of a social agreement surrounding education that was bred in the struggle against the imposed colonial system that blocked the access to literacy to the native majorities of the country.

This agreement was the product of the peasant’s mobilization – and afterwards of the migrant urban residents – so that their children may have access to education. The actors of the agreement are fathers and mothers, the authorities of the State, the teachers. We could point out the characteristics of the agreement as follows: (1) access to free education; (2) values of Homeland and order, with the acceptance of very general national contents, in particular the use of Spanish as language; (3) the imposing of discipline in an authoritative way to enforce order; (4) the consideration that children are passive subjects that within the frame of the agreement, have to study and obey the grown-ups.

This agreement, which founded the school, currently finds itself in crisis. A central fact is that children and teenagers are struggling to be part of the pact (the existence of gangs and the multiple forms of resistance to traditional education are indicators of this). The crisis is particularly manifested in (1) that the current access is insufficient and quality is required (that education effectively be useful for something); (2) that the meaning given to the values of Homeland and order has changed (see the ‘critical idea’ about the country and also the regional processes and decentralization); (3) that the majority of adults continue to seek imposing discipline on the children, but the latter are no longer willing to obey like they once did (the crises of the Great School Units is particularly meaningful in respect to this matter); (4) that the children want to and can be active subjects as the experiences of their participation in the school show.

This agreement surrounding the school also supposed, from the part of the teachers, that the peasant population – and then from marginal urban areas – was ignorant because they did not have access to books, and the acceptance by this very population of the imperious necessity of going through the school process to become part of society in better terms, something that we can interpret as a search for citizenship (this is very notorious, for prior to the 1979 Constitution the illiterate had no voting rights nor right to any official procedure before the authorities of the State). Teachers believed themselves to be superior and demanded the presence of children at the school, while the parents demanded that they rather not appear on time at the school. Hence, the minimum requirement of assistance was the center of attention. As the parents got to know the school better from inside, the basis of this agreement would change demanding greater quality.<sup>8</sup>

Anyhow, the crisis of the old agreement surrounding the school can prolong and reproduce indefinitely, leading to the deepening of a vicious circle of mediocrity and

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<sup>8</sup> For a greater analysis of these relations between teachers and parents in the rural school, see Ansión 1989.

inequality. But the crisis is also an opportunity for the founding of a new agreement towards a more democratic proposal.

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