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Education for Social Change. Peru 1972-1975

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Peru, education and the state, revolutionary government of the armed forces, ideology and education

The 1972 Education Reform implemented by the Juan Velasco military regime in Peru (1968-1975) was the result of the alliance between a progressive branch of the armed forces and a group of cosmopolitan intellectuals influenced by radical pedagogy from the 1960s and 1970s, but the reform project was also tributary of a long tradition in progressive ideas and social movements pursuing social change through education from Peru and Latin America. Analysis of this truncated project brings to light critical debates about the role of politics and ideology and social movements in education and resonates with contemporary discussions about education and citizenship, development and post-development studies. The present-day significance of the 1972 Education Reform is that its legacy, embodied in prominent members of the education community, played a role in the application of the neoliberal reforms in education in Peru in the 1990s, and helped to provide a vision for a consensus-based educational project for the future.

1 Introduction: Peru, Education and the State, Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces, Ideology and Education

In 1968 General Juan Velasco Alvarado led the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces (RGAF) to power and governed until 1975. Elections were eventually called in 1979, but the intervening four years under military rule were led by conservative General Francisco Morales Bermudez in a process predominantly dedicated to undoing the reforms of the Velasco regime. Social memory and academic interpretations about the RGAF in Peru remain controversial.

In the following pages I will present and comment on some aspects of this regime's Education Reform law launched in 1972. Of particular interest is the continuity it sought to maintain with a historical heritage of political movements seeking to transform education into a political tool to pursue social transformations in Peru and Latin America. I will briefly present some of the changes the reform tried to implement and the different types of resistance it found from those who felt negatively affected. A final section is dedicated to the impact this failed project and its objectives had among a group of intellectuals and policy makers who had an unlikely return to decision-making positions during the 1990s, when the World Bank pushed for education reform as part of the neoliberal reform of the State.

For the presentation of the reform project I summarise the text published by the regime (Ministerio de Educación 1970), together with published accounts of the process by two of the reformers (Barrantes 1990 and Salazar Bondy 1976). I also resort to newspapers, official documents and

interviews I held with direct actors while conducting three different research projects (Oliart 1986, 1989, 2011, 2013). All translations from Spanish are mine. My analysis about the influence of the 1972 reform in the elaboration of the National Education Project (2006) is based on a close reading of the document and my own observations of the process, discussions with some of the participants, and current literature on the matter.

Itzigsohn and Vom Haum (2006) have identified moments in the history of contemporary Latin America, when education became a tool to disseminate cultural and political scripts that allowed new political forces to redefine the relationship between the state and different social groups. The redefinition of citizenship to make it more inclusive, for example was a common issue these authors identify as crucial in the development of representations of the nation that the emerging elites needed to have control of, in order to create a sense of progression and transit into a new historical period. This was precisely one of the main components present in the Peruvian reformers discourse in the 1970s.

The current post-neoliberal scene in Latin America makes this episode of the Peruvian experience, relevant to reflect on the trajectory of education policies and other similar attempts in the region. Current debates are gearing towards a shift to more political criteria concerned about the role of education in the achievement of democratic access to relevant and quality education, moving away from analyses focused solely on performance indicators (Holst 2007; Pulido Chavez 2010; Gorostiaga & Tello 2011).

2 The Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces

Unlike other military dictatorships at the time in Latin America, the RGAF was led by a group of officers who wanted to carry out a process of deep transformation of the power structures in the country. Several authors have tried to explain both the political inclination and radical ideas of the men who conducted the "revolutionary process", as it

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came to be named. Some attribute this originality to the Centre of Advanced Military Studies (CAEM in Spanish), the military training centre which, within the framework of the Alliance for Progress led by President Kennedy in the US, promoted the idea that Latin American armed forces should play an active political role in both the defence of democracy and the path to development. The CAEM commissioned socio-economic studies, normally recommending social transformations, which were then part of the elite military training (Atiz & Garcia 1972). However, analysts such as former military man Victor Villanueva (1972) commented that even if the radical officers agreed with the analyses of the country's problems contained in the studies, the military men gathered around Velasco had political reasons to step aside from the developmentalist approach led by the United States. They adopted an anti-imperialist position, establishing dialogue with other political sectors in society who were after social change and with a vision of the future different from that presented at CAEM as an ideal (Malloy 1973)¹.

As has been previously established, the political agenda of the military regime included issues long demanded by different left-wing groups during the twentieth century (Klaren 1999). For a few decades prior to the formation of the RGAF, large urban and rural movements struggled against the power of the traditional elite of landowners, centralism, and lack of political representation. Paradoxically, this radical agenda was imposed by the RGAF without the support of those who had struggled for change in the first place. This isolation, along with some serious faults in the reform projects, made some of them fail while others faded in time, but they are still remembered with either passionate resentment and criticism or nostalgia (Cotler 1978; Martuccelli & Svampa 1998; Martin 2002).

With the exception of the Agrarian Reform, most important reforms were either suspended or changed once the right-wing General Morales Bermudez took power in 1975. Memories of all the truncated projects linked to the authoritarian character of the regime that initiated them predominantly elicit harsh criticism of the RGAF. In fact, mainstream media and political commentators have used the Velasco reforms to epitomize undesirable State intervention during the neoliberal reforms.

The radicalized military men joined forces with a group of intellectuals and professionals who were part of the new political groupings that emerged in Peru during the 1950s and 1960s, attentive to the need for social and political change, but different from the political parties of the traditional left. They wanted to transform Peruvian society and act upon the costs that capitalism had brought, such as inequality and lack of democracy (conceived of access to rights and citizenship), but without being part of an international socialist or communist movement. Their stance set the tone for the reforms to come. Informed by recent developments in Latin American social sciences, the RGAF produced their own account of Peruvian history and society

and formulated original reform projects inspired by other international experiences and past reformist attempts in Peru. Prevalent developmentalist trends at the time in the West imagined development as the overcoming of poverty that would be the result of a progression of stages going from traditional "underdeveloped" societies to modern and "developed" ones (Escobar 1995). In open contrast, the Peruvian reformers associated development with the liberation of Peru from the political and economic domination of the United States and the transformation of rigid traditional power structures in Peruvian society. In the words of General Velasco Alvarado:

This revolution would account for very little if it simply aspired to modernize the country, introducing minor changes in its traditional institutions. For us, development necessarily needs the fundamental transformation of the political and economic relationships that until a year ago organized our society. (Ministry of Education 1970, 5)

With these orientations, the RGAF nationalized strategic industries that were in foreign hands. They also legislated the workers' participation in the profits and ownership of the companies they worked for. The Agrarian Reform explicitly sought to override the landowners' economic and political power in the country. To secure dissemination and support for the reforms, the RGAF took control of the main cultural institutions to push forward the ideological transformation of society, expropriating the mass media and promulgating the Education Reform.

3 The Education Reform: grounded in history and forward-looking

The Education Law 19326, implemented in March 1972, was the result of a specialist commission formed in 1969 to prepare an assessment of the state of education in the country and to propose a radical reform attuned with the revolution. The commission received a report prepared by the armed forces as a starting point. It had over 100 members comprising educators specialized in all levels of instruction, from nursery school to university, joined by scientists, psychologists, social scientists and philosophers among other intellectuals. The original report was substantially changed by the commission and the revised version was published in September 1970 as the General Report. *Reform of the Peruvian Education* (Ministry of Education 1970), also known as *The Blue Book*. This publication is perhaps the document that best reflects the ideological alliance between the military and the group of progressive intellectuals who joined them in power.

Emilio Barrantes (1990), a primary school teacher, militant of the early days of the Popular Alliance for the American Revolution (APRA) and former public officer in the education sector, was part of the commission of reformers. He vividly describes their work as one based on deliberation and consensus, with lively discussions around the different topics of their wide-ranging and complex agenda. Minutes

were taken and then those were discussed, revised and approved. According to Barrantes, (1990, 39) the text of the final report was mostly written by Augusto Salazar Bondy, Carlos Delgado, Walter Peñaloza and Leopoldo Chiappo. But it is the writing and ideas of Augusto Salazar Bondy which left an indelible trail from the first pages of the *General Report* (Ministry of Education 1970). The Peruvian philosopher and professor at the University of San Marcos, as well as Vice President of the Reform Commission, was an animator and public advocate of the project. His academic writing in those years, as well as his column in the newspaper *Expreso*, were devoted to explaining the meaning of the Education Reform with a clear sense of urgency.

The common ground among all participants was the need to transform the education system, but establishing a continuity between the new project and successful experiences and ideas from the past, to be articulated in the reform (Barrantes 1989). At the time, there were frequent references to the student movement that gave rise to the University Reform in Argentina in 1918, which encouraged the transformation of the Latin American Universities' governance structure up until the 1960s (Salazar Bondy 1976). This movement significantly influenced Latin American intellectuals, and as part of them, Peruvian educators and politicians advocating for an innovative, critical and vigilant role for education in their societies (Bernales 1977). One of the most important ideas of the movement started by the students of Medicine at the University of Córdoba, was that higher education and scientific research had to be relevant to the problems and needs of each society. The movement also demanded that educational institutions had to be committed to society in order to both strengthen democracy (understood not only as a political system, but as a guarantee of access to citizenship) and the development of the sciences (Manifiesto 1918). Two key ideas clearly formulated by the Argentinian movement were that education should concern every member of society and that there was an inextricable relationship between educational reform and social transformation (Slocum & Rhoads 2009). Both became mottos of the Peruvian Education Reform.

The General Report, as well as the writings of some of the reformers, also established explicit connections between the 1972 Reform and the transformations that were attempted during the brief democratic regime of President Bustamante y Rivero (1945 -1948), particularly regarding rural education and the need to include awareness about the importance of using indigenous languages in the schools (Oliart 2011a). In 1945, President Bustamante included well-known intellectuals from the Peruvian Andes in the management of the education system. Prominent *indigenista*² from Cusco, Luis Valcárcel, was Minister of Education. He brought on board Emilio Barrantes from Cajamarca, and teacher, ethnologist and writer José María Arguedas from Apurímac for the direction of rural education. In Parliament, José Antonio Encinas from

Puno, an enthusiast of John Dewey's education methods, was in charge of the Rural Education Commission. Apart from sharing an interest in indigenous education and anti-centralist concerns, they had also been exposed to contemporary criticism of the education system and were eager to revise it in Peru, not just by copying ideas from elsewhere, but adapting them to the realities of the country (Barrantes 1989; Rivero 2007). As Minister of Education Valcarcel created a networked system of schools that could support each other in order to maximize public resources. This system was quickly abandoned by the following regimes, but the idea of networked schools was included in the 1972 Reform as a way of improving the management of, and increasing access to, resources for small and isolated schools. In his role as director of rural education, José María Arguedas developed important criteria about the crucial role of rural teachers working in indigenous communities. He linked knowledge, respect and appreciation for the students' languages and culture with the effectiveness of schooling in indigenous Peru (Arguedas 2001). These criteria were shared not just by the promoters of the 1972 Education Reform; they constituted an integral part of the cultural policy of the RGAF, represented by initiatives such as making Quechua an official language. In his book *Un Ensayo de Escuela Nueva en el Perú* (Attempting a New School in Peru) (Encinas 1932), José Antonio Encinas had emphasized the social role of the school, the importance of teaching in democracy, and the need to respect learning processes linked to concrete experiences of the students. These ideas, common among progressive pedagogues, had a very clear influence both in the discourse and practices of the reformers in 1972 (Oliart 2011a).

Together with the explicit acknowledgement of the continuities with previous innovative attempts, the Peruvian reformers of the 1970s aligned with radical pedagogies of the 1960s in the Western world. Several paragraphs in the presentation of the reform project echoed the important criticism faced by the school as an institution in the 1960s because of its reproductive role of social inequalities, and support of capitalism (Bowles and Gintis 1976). The reformers also eluded the predominant discourse during the Cold War, which identified the defence of the democratic order with the struggle against the Communist threat. Instead, the rationale for the reform defined its goals as linked to the formation of free individuals who were active participants in the fate of their societies and freed from all forms of social, political or economic domination (Ministry of Education 1970, 51). They fervently embraced the belief that schools should play a role in the education of citizens who could strive to change the world (Apple 1988), and, finally, they also embraced the understanding of the great importance of teachers in any change to be implemented in education because of their absolute control of the classroom (Lowe 2007).

The Peruvian reformers firmly endorsed criticism to what they considered obsolete, inefficient and

oppressive methods in pedagogy. The General Report displays long paragraphs criticizing intellectualism, memorization and the tendency to make school education and teacher training "academicist". They criticized long and tedious homework, and favoured the acquisition of critical study skills, promoting more participatory methods (Matos 1972). The school system was also criticized for being bureaucratized and having senseless routines, distorting the teachers' mission, overloading them with administrative responsibilities and financial concerns, taking away responsiveness and dynamism from the system and producing highly frustrated teachers and students.

The Peruvian reformers, as well as other Latin American intellectuals at the time, engaged in dialogue on pedagogy with their North Atlantic contemporaries, bringing in their own traditions, some of which had constituted a transformative force. Dependency theory and liberation theology are two examples of these traditions that are connected to the important impact that *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1970) had among educators in Latin America, where critical self-reflection was a key exercise to develop commitment to social change at a personal and collective level. The Cuban revolution (1959) also exerted important influence, legitimized by its achievements in defeating illiteracy and raising the quality of the education system (Carnoy 2009). In the Cuban education model it was hoped that school and teachers would play a fundamental role in indoctrination and support for the revolution, teaching primary and secondary students to take into account the needs of the revolution, from practical aspects in the organization of everyday life, to the interpretations of the national history, reflecting the new values and understanding of the world (Blumm 2011). This image of the school as a space for "straightening of consciences" was enthusiastically adopted by the Peruvian reformers (Salazar Bondy 1970).

4 Nationalist and liberating

In his analysis on the discursive practices of *Velasquismo* (as the period studied is usually called), Juan Martín Sánchez (2002) notices how the presentation of each reform started with a critical assessment of the current situation in the area of intervention, followed by the RGAF project, which was presented as an independent and autonomous alternative. This alternative constituted the necessary path to definitively break with the colonial past previously not resolved by independence from Spain in 1821. Another constant element in the texts and discourses announcing the reforms was the condemnation of the fallacy of developmentalism, offering modernity and progress divorced from the unavoidable task of transforming social structures of domination and liberation from imperialism. After establishing the conceptual and discursive differences with the political past, including the account of the ravages of capitalism in the country, the reform taking place was explained along with the

objectives it would help to achieve. The presentation of the Education Reform was no different.

The General Report (Ministerio de Educacion 1970) begins by describing the national education system as elitist, dependent, alienating and inefficient. In tune with the critical pedagogy of the time, it claims that the State-funded education system could not afford to be ideologically neutral while the country was under a revolutionary regime. Its commitment to the "process of change" had to be firm and clear, and therefore educational goals should be linked to the on-going political objectives and reforms.

Summing up; the end goal of education is a fully developed person, free, and capable of acting creatively in a truly independent and prosperous nation, harmoniously integrated within the national and international community, without any trace of discrimination or domination. In order to achieve these objectives, the new policy should foster a liberating education, conscious-rising, and 'Peruvianizing'. (Ministry of Education 1970, 50)

In several instances Salazar Bondy stated that the education system had failed the country, being irrelevant to its needs. He understood the transformation of education as an area of activity or political intervention that should involve Peruvian society as a whole. From his perspective, Peruvian education could only be transformed if it went hand-in-hand with wider social transformations, impossible to achieve or have a lasting effect without the committed participation of all Peruvian citizens. But, given that liberation from oppression and an imperialist ideology occur at individual and collective levels, this liberation would be the outcome of a process of education in which the systematic practice of reflection and action should combine to achieve independence "from the inside" of individuals, with full awareness of their place in the world (Salazar Bondy 1976). These same ideas are reflected in the Blue Book. Because the education system had "applied foreign social models or systematically transferred standards of authority and subordination that benefit dominant groups or the hegemonic powers of the world" (Ministry of Education 1970, 19), school education should stimulate young Peruvians' sense of personal and national independence, infusing in their spirit the conscious and unwavering struggle against injustice and oppression, so that they could affirm and enhance "the truly positive achievements of the Peruvian nation" (Ministry of Education 1970, 19).

In pursuing the elimination of all forms of discrimination in the school system and full access to opportunities for the disadvantaged, the 19326 Law established, for example, that women should have access to all skills and training in order to have the opportunities to become leaders. The regime created a technical committee formed by the Ministry of Education, the National System of Social Mobilization (SINAMOS), together with the Ministries of Labour, Health, and Transportation, whose mission was to promote, monitor, investigate, diagnose, stimulate and educate society about the role of

women in the revolutionary process. Targeting another problematic area, the reform created a parallel structure to the Basic Regular Education, called the Labour Basic Education, proposing an alternative and flexible curriculum to award academic qualifications to people who, for various reasons, had been excluded from the system during their school age.

The law also recognized the multi-lingual situation of Peru, noting that schools should use the indigenous language when necessary, and for that purpose, should employ teachers who were native speakers of both Spanish and the indigenous languages. It further stipulated that at least 30% of the curriculum should be dedicated to fostering recognition and appreciation of the cultures and languages of the country.

The Reform Law also demanded that the school year calendar should be flexible to adapt to the characteristics of the school population, taking into consideration the regional effects of the rainy season and the agricultural calendar. It established the Civil Service for Graduates (CECIGRA) as a compulsory scheme for higher education graduates to ensure professionals would work in remote areas, but also to produce a greater commitment to the country among young people of different professions, putting them to work in communities that would otherwise be unable to access the services of these professionals.

Combining the agenda of appreciation of the national cultural diversity with the anti-imperialist stance, the Ministry of Education was imbued with the mission of ensuring that schools would not be "instruments of cultural imposition". Its specific targets were the numerous private international schools, founded throughout the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century by the North Atlantic immigrant communities, which offered an alternative for the wealthier local middle classes. The ensuing regulations were very controversial. The law banned the use of English in the classroom for children under five. Foreign languages would be introduced after first grade and only as a foreign language, going against the common practice of international schools teaching certain subjects entirely in the foreign language. It also became mandatory that head teachers of private schools should be Peruvian. The agenda against discrimination and in search of a more egalitarian school system had even further requirements for the elite private schools. Licenses to open new private schools were conditional upon a signed commitment against social discrimination of prospective students. Tuition fees were regulated and private schools were required to grant scholarships to 10% of the students. These, among other changes and regulations, such as the use of a common uniform for all schools in the country, granted the regime a firm opposition from wide groups among the urban middle classes, for whom exclusive education was seen as a path for social differentiation.

Considering the importance given to ideas, values, attitudes and ways of interpreting the world through

education, an obvious intervention occurred in the contents and methods for the teaching of Peruvian history and the social sciences. A new subject of socio-historical sciences was created and it became a pillar in the formation of a "new type" of student. In his study of primary school textbooks during the Velasco Alvarado regime, such as Peruanito, Fichas and Amigo, Vom Hau (2009) notes how representations of the family ceased to be exclusively of generic middle-class characters and included, both in the narrative and graphic representations, workers, peasants, settlers of diverse regions of Peru, while the traditional dominant classes became the "cultural other", the social group incapable of relating to the interests of the country and the majorities (Vom Hau 2009, 140). Another very noticeable change was the representation of the Spanish conquest and the colonization period as violent and predatory, which were quickly embraced by teachers (Vom Hau 2009; Portocarrero & Oliart 1989; Oliart 1986). In the RGAF-reformed textbooks, Peruvians were represented as social actors in pursuit of their liberation throughout history. Tupac Amaru, the wealthy mestizo muleteer who confronted the Spanish abusive tax system in 1879, leading a massive rebellion, became a national symbol of the revolution. The 150th anniversary of the independence of the country in 1971 became a milestone for the reappraisal of many other national heroes whose presence had hitherto been inconspicuous in school textbooks.

As part of the "liberating agenda" within the classroom, the reform promoted occupational education stating that education should teach young people how to enjoy what they do, to oppose the dominant ideology that radically separates enjoyment from work, alienating the enjoyment of productive creativity from the education process. The practical expression of these ideas in the classrooms was the transformation of the classroom space to make it conducive to working in groups, with the assumption that it enhanced the role of research and critical thinking in the learning process. The required changes in the curriculum, as well as to teaching materials and methods, necessitated substantial teacher involvement and was crucial to the success of the reform, however this proved difficult to achieve.

5 "Without teachers the reform won't work"

General Ramon Miranda, a member of the Reform Commission and Minister of Education during the Velasco regime, said in an interview:

This was a revolutionary process, it was a dictatorship, and of course we knew that not everybody would agree with the process and the reforms. And the truth is also that the [teachers] union at that time, and even now, was not quite a plural organization. It was - as it is now - strongly controlled by one political party that presented a very vocal opposition to the reform and the regime. But one thing is clear... No other regime did so much to grant an important protagonist role to teachers in the educational process, they were seen as active agents for

social change. For the commission and the regime, it was absolutely clear that without the teachers we had no chance to succeed on the reform. That was one of our mottos: '*Sin maestros, la reforma no va*'. (Oliart 2011a)

In fact, for many teachers, the reform represented a professionally stimulating moment because the State officially and openly recognized their social role in the school system (Oliart 1986). In order to integrate teachers into the process, the regime organized training programs that started even before the promulgation of the law. The training sessions put teachers in touch with the reformers, school text authors, and different experts with whom they could discuss the new ideas. The reform represented an important milestone not only because it was introducing new teaching methods, but also because teachers felt that their practice was in touch with new research in the social sciences and the humanities, and that their work was of intellectual and political relevance. The classroom had become an appropriate and legitimate space for teachers to channel their social and political interests (Barrantes 1989; Salazar Bondy 1976).

But many teachers who could, in principle, agree with the ideas of the reform and be enthusiastic about the new challenges, were at the same time loyal members of the Union of Education Workers of Peru (SUTEP), firmly opposed to the military regime due to a complicated dispute around teachers' salaries (Angell 1982; Ballón & Pezzo 1984, Oliart 2011a). SUTEP leaders were sent to prison, transferred to other regions in the country, deported, or simply fired. To worsen the situation, in an attempt to weaken the emerging power of the radical teachers' union, the military regime created a parallel organisation: the Peruvian Revolution Teachers Union (SERP) which spurred even more animadversion towards the regime and the reform. Thus, while in many ways teachers boycotted the reform (Angell 1982; Wilson 2000; Vom Hau 2009), there were also teachers who participated in strikes and other Union activities opposing the regime, while in the classroom would be happy to implement a curriculum that expected them to be inspirers of the social critique and liberation ideologies that the reform had legitimized (Oliart 1986).

In 2012 former SUTEP leader Cesar Barrera Bazan revealed that his organization had critically evaluated their stance towards the reform:

In the light of time past we realized that we failed to consider the importance of the reform. There were very good people working with them, they had important and innovative approaches, issues such as the affirmation of national identity against imperialism, or the critical study of history and society. (Oliart 2013)

Educator and Jesuit priest Ricardo Morales, who was directly involved in education reform describes the teachers' participation in the re-training sessions he led during the reform:

In those years criticism to traditional education was deep. And teachers were quick to come on board. For the first time in history, teachers had

the opportunity to sit and calmly reflect about the connections between education and politics as a collective exercise. (Oliart 1986)

The General Report (Ministerio de Educacion 1970) stated that teachers were ill-prepared to take on the challenge of educational innovation. The reform took on board the task of re-training in-service teachers, and also reformed teacher training colleges. But all necessary changes would not happen by decree. A transformation of this magnitude needed a long time to take place and crucially, a wider consensus.

6 "Education - a task for all"

The regime used several resources to foster the changes the reform needed. One important characteristic was that the RGAF displayed an unprecedented effort to coordinate the actions of all sectors, especially in rural areas. This was particularly the case for the Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Education, who performed a coordinated action in rural Peru (Martin 2000). For the wider society they had other resources. The newspaper *Expreso* was dedicated to education, and the TV State-run Channel 7 and some radio stations also worked to convince the nation that education was a national concern. General Miranda remembers:

We had to make the country realise that society needed to take back the responsibility it had long abandoned, that the whole national community had to take part in the transformation of the educational system. The revaluation of the teachers' role had to come together with the revaluation of the role of the national community to be in charge of the country's fate. (Oliart 2011a)

In the end many of the changes proposed by the reform were not implemented, but not purely because it lacked enough budget or time to succeed. On the one hand, transforming the nature of power relations in each situation proved to be more than problematic; the reform was taking away power from local officers who traditionally had used the State apparatus as part of their power and influence networks (Bourricaud 1970; Poole 1994). On the other hand, the reform encountered the resistance of teachers and communities to dissimilar aspects of it. Some questioned the authoritarian aspects of the model, particularly the urban middle classes, who openly challenged the politicized character of the education and were uncomfortable with the attempts to censor racial and social discrimination. They also resisted the number of compulsory activities that parents had to attend in order to be part of the governance of the schools and the local clusters or Nucleos Educativos Comunes created by the reform (Rivero 2007). This issue had a different face in rural areas, where Norman Gall, a North American journalist who travelled through Peru in those years, registered resistance among teachers to the governance structure proposed by the reform, because it was granting power and participation to the communities, so they felt their authority and prestige threatened (Gall 1974).

Several analysts of the Education Reform state that part of its failure was due to its late implementation during the RGAF. Tensions between the left and right wings of the military were already obvious in 1972. The more progressive wing in the military had no allies in the country, and the opposition was becoming increasingly radicalized (Cotler 1978; Tovar 1987; Rivero 2007; Martin 2002). The military regime produced two government plans. The first phase started with the *Plan Inca*, and in 1977, two years after Velasco had been removed from power, they issued the *Plan Tupac Amaru*. Unlike what happened with other sectors of the government, there was no mention of changes in the orientation of the Education Reform in the second plan, but according to Teresa Tovar (1987) and Jose Rivero (2007) the boycott of the Education Reform had already begun in 1975 via reductions to the budget and personnel assigned to support the development and strengthening of the local education clusters or nuclei.

Another clear sign of the lack of consensus concerning the Education Reform during the second phase of the military Government was the appointment of conservative historian Juan José Vega as director of *Expreso*, the newspaper assigned to the education community. From his editorial column Vega constantly fustigated the left-wing ideological manipulation that teachers allegedly tended to exert in the classroom. The ideological intervention on the curriculum was attacked directly through various measures. The subject which had been renamed socio-historical sciences was withdrawn in 1977. In literature, Peruvian authors who addressed issues of social inequality or injustice were deemed to be encouraging of social resentment and conflict, and their work (such as Paco Yunque, a story by poet Cesar Vallejo) was gradually removed from primary school textbooks. The Belaunde regime that started in 1980, eliminated specific pages of textbooks from the first and second cycles of basic education, and at the Ministry of Education, the Director of Secondary Education decreed the need to eliminate from the curriculum and textbooks any reference "to social conflict and the class struggle" (Oliart 1986). A government official who worked in the ministry in both regimes said in an interview that the Ministry of Education during the second regime of Belaunde had no other plan for the education system in the country but to eliminate any traces of the 1972 Reform Project (Oliart 1986).

In summary, the 1972 Reform had important flaws, a few modest achievements and yet a lasting legacy. One of the main flaws was the lack of investment in infrastructure and coverage. Lack of clarity about how the changes would be funded was evident from the start. However, the goal of reducing illiteracy from 27% to 21% was attained. The distribution of resources through clusters of schools of education, the literacy programme, and the comprehensive non-formal education programme allowed the State to expand education services to remote areas of the country (Tovar 1985). In an

attempt to improve teacher training, the RGAF closed down teacher training schools working below certain standards demanded by the government (Oliart 2011a). Perhaps the most lasting achievement was the transformation of the way the country was represented in school textbooks. Geography and history were integrated to introduce the different cultures in the country. But the most important legacy was probably the formative experience of the members of the Reform Commission. Their understanding of the education system, the attention to innovative ideas, and the expertise they contributed in the formulation of the project was crucial for the development of an active group of organisations and experts that did not disappear with the Velasco regime.

7 The Legacy of the 1972 Education Reform

Duncan Green calls "the silent revolution of neo-liberalism" to the process in which for nearly two decades, language on the role of the State as provider of services assumed a technocratic tone, associating its intervention to the stabilization of the economy and structural adjustments, but disconnected from society, its needs and its history (Green 2003). For about two decades, proposals made in Washington by groups of experts to improve the services of health, education or justice, generally disregarded historical, economic and political conditions in the countries in which the reforms were implemented, dealing with long-standing problems as if they were technical challenges for social re-engineering (Hansen & Stepputat 2001). But country-specific analysis on different neoliberal policies show that the involvement of local political actors in the different reforms can account for very different political results (Torres & Puigross 1997; Hale 2005; Gustafson 2011). This evidence of the importance of a local political agency and the fact that several countries in Latin America are now living in post-neoliberal regimes help in questioning the established consensus that there were no alternatives outside the neoliberal reform parameters. In this context, reflecting on the legacy of the Peruvian education experiment of the RGAF can be enlightening.

In the field of education, neoliberalism has introduced the notion that the effective provision of a service needs to be ruled by the market, guaranteeing competitiveness and diversity of choice in the supply. In the case of State-funded education, amendments to the school system inspired by this language aimed at the effective use of resources in the education process, measuring success through indicators of students' achievement through standardized tests (Hursh 2000). The ultimate goal is to produce successful individuals who are entrepreneurs themselves, hard-working, competitive and flexible, prepared to craft a place for themselves in the market, according to their skills and abilities. Many critics point out that this conception of education keeps teachers, students and communities away from other concepts, interests and purposes that were previously associated with the objectives of education, linked not only to effective resource use

use and development of "abilities and skills" but to the ethical, political, and aesthetic education of young citizens (Ball et al. 2009). It is because of its attention to these other wider dimensions of education that the debates stimulated by the 1972 Reform remain important for present-day Peru. The work of about a hundred Peruvian educators and academics who tried to imagine an education system tailored to the country and its needs, in the context of the profound changes that they expected to be part of, did not simply vanish with the Velasco regime or the dismantling of the reform.

After the end of the military regime, most members of the commission continued with their roles as educators in schools and universities, and some of them remained in public service. But more importantly, they continued to be part of a critical mass that kept thinking about education in the country, following discussions on pedagogic innovation, renewing ideas, and integrating new generations into this community of interested professionals and specialists in education. They did this in their university and teacher training classrooms, in different NGOs and creating organisations such as *Movimiento Pedagógico* (Movement for Pedagogic Innovation) in the 1990s. Thus, in spite of the dramatic lack of continuity in education policies at State level (Balarin 2008), Peru has a community of very important and diverse individuals and institutions who have education at the centre of their concerns. They support teachers' networks, lead NGOs and alternative schools dedicated to disseminating a democratic approach to education, including the appreciation of cultural diversity and teacher training in indigenous languages as well as the production of bilingual teaching materials.

Some members of two civil society organizations, *Foro Educativo* and the National Council of Education, used to be influential former participants of the 1972 Reform Commission, while other members of these organisations were influenced by the reform as students. These plural institutions have a wide and comprehensive agenda for the country, and have been instrumental in the dissemination of ideas and principles of the process that some of their members were part of four decades ago, nurturing their experience and their reflections.

In the early 1990s, during the Fujimori regime, when the World Bank mission and other international cooperation organizations went to Peru to implement the Education Reform recommended by the Brady Plan, they found a critical mass of specialists to enter into dialogue with outside of the State apparatus. In his study about the World Bank led education reform in Latin America, José Rivero (1999) describes well the particularities of the Peruvian case and how it differed from what had happened in Colombia, Chile, Brazil, Bolivia and Argentina. While the Education Reform designed in Washington was integrated into the political agenda of the new regimes in those countries, in Peru the agenda was clearly imposed from the outside and found on the one hand the acquiescence of the regime, but little organic support on the other³.

In Peru, as everywhere else, the World Bank approach to education reform aimed at producing measurable results through specific efficiency indicators, such as coverage and educational attainment. Under this framework, little attention was given to finding the historical roots of the education system's problems in the social and cultural structures of society (Carnoy 2009). During the Fujimori regime (1990-2000) problems such as inequality and exclusion were dealt with, but devoid of any political implications (Hornberger 2000), and corruption and its reproduction in the school system were overlooked. Improving the quality of State basic education and teacher training received priority attention from the World Bank. But the identified lines of intervention in each country were applied differently, according to what the social and political circumstances allowed for. In Peru measures such as the decentralization and modernization of the State apparatus, the improvement of the quality of teaching (through teacher training for the dissemination of constructive pedagogy, renewal of textbooks, infrastructure investment and the introduction of systems of quality measurement) and the development of measures to remedy educational exclusion were well-received ideas in spite of the limited and fragmented way in which the State implemented them (Oliart 2011b).

In this context, Rivero (1999) explains, non-governmental organizations and universities, as well as some social organizations interested in the transformation of the educational system, took advantage of the opportunity to bring their concerns back onto the national stage. Thus, the opposition that the World Bank education "package" encountered in other Latin American countries did not occur in Peru. Instead, some of these actors used the 1990s Education Reform context as an opportunity to push their particular agendas using the media and the focus on education prompted by the international organisations. For example, the development of Intercultural Bilingual Education became an important aspect of the World Bank Reform. It has been widely acknowledged that the 1972 Reform played a pioneering role in the search for alternatives to address the issue of multi-lingualism in rural education, producing and inspiring projects that influenced the development of similar processes in Ecuador, Bolivia and Guatemala several decades later (Zuñiga & Ansion 1997; Hornberger 2000; Howard 2007 among others).

The wider education community in Peru is vigilant of the performance of the State, and is also interconnected to a complex web of social networks in the country which is used to sharing resources for information and discussion. Some of their institutions and individuals have a well-established presence in the media. Three post-Fujimori regimes, Presidents Valentin Paniagua (2000-2001), Alejandro Toledo (2001-2006) and currently Ollanta Humala (2011-2016), appointed Ministers of Education coming from these networks. Furthermore, former President of the National Council of Education, Patricia Salas, is the current Minister of Education.

Even though this education community did not directly confront the neoliberal education policies, they managed to produce a consensual alternative vision for the development of education in the country. First they created the National Council of Education, then they conducted a wide-ranging participatory process for the formulation of a National Plan for Education. A national consultation process followed to approve the final text of the plan in 2007, so that Peru now has a National Plan for Education which aims to ensure universal access to quality education, to strengthen democracy and allow the participation of the community in the education system (PEN, 2006). Today, in Peru, implementing the National Plan of Education has become a political indicator, a landmark used by the public opinion to judge a regime's commitment to improving the education in the country (Cuenca 2009). It is worth noting that there are clear similarities between the main goals of this plan and important issues that were raised during the education reform of the 1970s. The plan envisions an education system that recognizes, celebrates and works with cultural diversity in the classroom, ensures teacher training that has national and local relevance, and that is committed to treating teachers with dignity, and providing higher education that responds to the needs of the country. It also considers of crucial importance to set in place mechanisms that guarantee participation of the wider community in the education system. All of these resonating with the final words of Emilio Barrantes' *Memoirs* (1990), hoping that time would allow the country to bring back the "most important ideas" of the 1972 Reform Project "for the good sake of the country's education and its protagonists".

The failure of neoliberal education reform in Latin America in achieving modernization and overcoming low performance indicators in rural education, has re-ignited debates about the relevance of education reform inspired in ideas and projects conceived of before the 1990s, such as the Peruvian reform of 1972. Also, new debates, particularly those concerning post-development and decolonization theories, encourage a re-evaluation of the RGAF because its discourses and agenda clearly diverged from developmentalist approaches common in those years, contributing to establish a continuity with anti-colonial narratives and postcolonial theorizing in Latin America that challenge dominant discourses, in the quest for educational policies and practices conducive to social transformation (Crossley & Tikly 2004).

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Endnotes

¹ Anti-imperialism in Latin America should be understood as a stance against the economic, political and cultural power of the United States of America over Latin American societies.

² Indigenistas were provincial intellectuals who advocated for the full citizenship of the marginalised rural indigenous population in the country .

³ Maria Balarin (2008) states precisely the opposite, that Peru was one of the countries where the World Bank reform had the most support. My research suggests that several of the WB recommendations were applied uncritically, but with no commitment from the State to pursue them. The implementation of the reforms was fragmentary, mostly executed through separate projects. If there was a continuity in the teams implementing the reforms, it was precisely due to the fact that they were a superficial structure working almost in parallel with the rest of the Ministry of Education. The most accurate description of the way these reforms were implemented came from Oscar Trelles, Minister of Education under Fujimori, who announced the reform as a "series of projects funded by the World Bank" to improve the quality of education.