INTRODUCTION

Public Education in Times of Pandemic

In 2020, the Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas (IDEA Network) hosted a series of webinars called "Public Education in Times of Pandemic" with the objective of analyzing the impact of the crisis on public education. We also wanted to contribute to a discussion on alternatives to the changes that COVID-19 has produced and that have had a serious impact on education. We hoped to make space for reflection on the kind of public education that we will need in a post-pandemic world.

Our first area of analysis was to look at two aspects of contemporary capitalism - disaster capitalism and platform capitalism. This allowed us to recognize the dominant role of corporations and international organizations which, when educational authorities decided to change to distance or virtual learning, received large transfers of public money. On the other hand, the move to online learning-teaching meant a transformation of the working conditions of families, affecting both students and teachers. This led us to analyze the risks of normalizing online education as the solution for many of the problems facing public education. Howe-

ver, that debate is yet to be resolved and the dilemma continues in the face of the ongoing health crisis. Understanding the implications of seeing health and education as a right led us to a dialogue on some positive collective bargaining experiences, where favourable working conditions for teachers, including infrastructure, have been negotiated.

The final webinar looked at the big questions like "What will education be like in the new period?" After the pandemic (or maybe between pandemics), and in the middle of a new economic crisis, "What is next for public schools?" "What type of public education does society need?" "What kind of teachers and students do we require in this new period?"

In this edition, the reader will find contributions with diverse perspectives that locate the state of public education in the Americas in the context of the increased involvement of corporations in education. In virtual platforms these companies have found a new way to exploit work, a space in which to control content and an opportunity to advance the privatization and commercialization of education. However,

resistance and emerging actions are brewing on the continent in defense of education and labour rights in a post-pandemic world.

The first article looks at "Key Geopolitical Issues Before, During and After the Covid 19 Pandemic." The author, Alejandro Álvarez Béjar, shows how the great technological powers set the course for the main geopolitical strategies in the techno-commercial war, whose main global competitors are the United States and China. Larry Kuehn, in his article "Platform Capitalism Colonizes Education," looks at the dominance that technology has over a large part of our lives and how digital platforms represent a tool that not only generates profits for corporations, but also allows them to enter into the debates over education. Along similar lines, Andreé Gacoin's article "Transforming Education During a Pandemic: Global trends and spaces of resistance" analyzes the implications of education as a contested field and looks at where the OECD has managed to influence, with the advancement of technologies, what is taught and how it is taught.

In this fight for education, pedagogical subjects play a leading role in seeking to defend education as a human right, which in turn requires reflection on "The Public Education that We Need in the New Period." Here Adriana Puiggrós suggests the need to design a new kind of education that synthesizes the experiences and learning that have taken place in the context of the pandemic. At the same time, it is necessary to continue fighting the various forms of privatization and the control of technology companies over education.

In the section Teaching Work, Attacks on Education and Resistance during the Pandemic, we identify trends in the fight to defend public education. Five different experiences reveal inequalities before and during the pandemic. María de la Luz Arriaga warns about "The Dangers of Institutionalizing Online Education: The impact on teaching work." Her analysis looks at how the closure of schools and the move to education through online platforms and television reinforced privatization processes that were already underway. Noemí Tejeda looks at this same context and shares the Argentinean experience of a collective bargaining process that reached important agreements for teachers across the country, allowing for the regulation of teaching work in the virtual context.

We then return to an analysis of "Disaster Capitalism: Puerto Rico's experience with public education" by Mercedes Martínez who tells how the tragedy was used to implement privatization measures in public education in Puerto Rico. In "COVID-19 and Online Learning in Ontario, Canada," Gary Fenn explains how conservative authorities responded to the pandemic by imposing a plan for remote teaching of "continuing education" which basically became an emergency measure that sought greater control of education and teachers. We close with "Defending Public Education in Times of Pandemic: The experience of teachers in Los Angeles, California," in which Cecily Myart Cruz has an important message about what it means for communities to defend public education, especially in a country where there are no guarantees and the dismantling of public education and health takes a devastating toll. Nevertheless, paths of resistance have been opened up that will lead to further struggle.