

Editors' Note

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Public Education Policies and New Privatization Trends

This new issue of Intercambio Magazine arises from a concern to identify trends in education policies in the Americas, and how these are embedded in a global framework of new waves of privatization, which became more common with the advent of the Covid 19 pandemic, as a necessary condition to guarantee access to education.

This has led to a restructuring of national education systems where the penetration of technologies in the teaching and learning processes condition and intensify teachers' work and alter working conditions. The private sector has become very active, trying to gain more influence in the definition of education policies and expand its profits in this sector.

In this issue, IDEA seeks to assess the situation in the region, providing information on the education policies and the privatization processes that have occurred since the beginning of the Covid 19 pandemic. The articles within can be ordered on three central themes: 1] Education policies of recent years, especially in the context of the pandemic. 2] Positioning of teachers' unions and student and social organizations in the face

of these policies. 3] New trends in privatization in the field of education.

We open from the south with Liliana Pascual, who shares the effect in Argentina's education system of the incorporation of technology companies as an integral component of education. In her article: **The processes of privatization and commodification of education after the pandemic in Argentina: Public-private partnerships**, she describes proposals for technology in public schools that are promoted by technocratic foundations and theoretical-ideological frameworks that drive market values in the education field. They set agendas, influence the legitimization of pro-market values and enable changes in public policies in this direction.

We continue with a contribution from Brazil. In their article **Privatization Advance in Brazil Education: An Analysis of the Processes of Political Direction and Execution**, Everton Bandeira, Monique Robain and Vera Maria Vida develop different ways to understand the debate on the relationship between the public and the private as disputed projects within basic education. The authors address management and

execution policies. In the management processes, the State continues to be responsible for access, but the curricular content and management of the school are increasingly determined by institutions that introduce the logic of the market, as in the case of the Everyone for Education movement. They conclude that the advance of privatization in Brazilian education puts different societal projects into dispute and undermines the right to education.

Ángela Zambrano and Edgar Isch present an analysis of **Ecuadoran education and privatization trends** in the context of a country that since the 1980s, has been affected by ongoing social and economic crises, accompanied by strong pressures for privatization in various sectors. Education does not escape that trend and different governments have applied policies commodifying education, with the aggravating factor of a visible decrease in the level of education. This raises obstacles for this strategic social sector to contribute to solutions to the problems that Ecuadorian society is experiencing.

We continue with the article: **An overview of the advance of the privatization of post-secondary education in Mexico**, by Rodolfo Bautista, Eduardo Cárcamo, and Verónica Teneria. Starting from a characterization of how neoliberal policies have been deployed in education, the authors expose the deepening of the commodification of post-secondary education in Mexico. They argue that the General Law of Post-Secondary Education, approved by the Mexican Congress in 2021 to serve as the primary guideline for post-secondary education, favours the installation of a hybrid virtual/face to face model at the expense of in-person education.

From Canada, Bárbara Silva enters the ideological debate that prevails in public opinion regarding **freedom of choice**. She demonstrates that this apparent freedom, presented as a personal right, is nothing more than a **formula for inequality**, where the main beneficiaries are private schools that receive various incentives and transfers of public resources. The author tells us that the formula is more complex, since such choices are not accessible to all. Instead, Silva calls for putting the rights of society at the center, where education prioritizes public schools as spaces for children from all walks of life to learn and grow regardless of socioeconomic, cultural and religious differences.

To close this issue, we expand the problematization looking at changes to education in Spain. Author Enrique Diez shows how the combination of “*neoliberalism and neofascism constitute two inseparable expressions of the same current configuration of the capitalist system. It is a neo-fascism 2.0, which uses a populist language and style and spreads through social networks, such as Tik Tok.*” It becomes an ideology that is transferred partly via schooling, but also in the socialization of new generations through the neo-fascist discourses and narratives that permeate social networks and the media.

Finally, we have an invitation to approach a recent book by Mexican academic Mauro Jarquín, who offers a deep, historical, analytical and critical look at the expanding activities of the right in Mexican education. We invite our readers to follow Sara Unda's analysis in the review of Jarquín's book: **The Pedagogy of Capital**, published by Akal.

various institutions in Argentina are described. The majority of proposals are supported by technocratic theoretical-ideological foundations and frameworks which promote the values of the market in education. In this way, they set an agenda and influence the legitimization of pro-market values, enabling changes in public policies. To carry out this research, information was found on the Internet regarding the activities of the various foundations, businesses, and NGOs which intervene in the educational field.

Key words: post-pandemic—educational policies-technological businesses—public-private alliances—pro-market values.

Introduction

In Argentina, privatization and the commodification of education date back several decades, and we can observe that the interests of the market are currently at the centre of decisions regarding educational policies. This process is increasingly taking place in the context of a new phase of capitalism called “surveillance capitalism” in which, by using digital devices, we produce free of charge the stock of capital of large technological corporations. These are then, by means of algorithms, translated into predictive behaviors.

During the pandemic, we observed a significant growth in educational technology in all countries of Latin America. This growth was accompanied by an increase of private investment in the educational sector in order to sustain both teaching and learning.

Tech companies have thus become a key component of education throughout the world. In addition, this new form of relation between the state and the private sector is taking place in a regulatory vacuum which opens the way to “de facto alliances” between states (national and subnational) and private business providers of educational services. Technological businesses promote the use of TICs for the creation of new pedagogical models, encouraging pro-market forms of logic, themes and values based on a neoliberal con-

ception of education in which a linear and simplified vision of the complex relationship between technology and teaching prevails.²

With more than fifteen hundred companies and a multimillion dollar market, Latin America has become fertile territory for innovation and educational transformation. A census recently carried out in the education industry indicated that there are over 150 EdTechs (companies that utilize and develop educational technology) in Latin America and the Caribbean. Brazil (with 866), Mexico (with 152), Chile (with 114) and Argentina (with 108), are the principal actors in the region, occupying almost 70% of the market.

Now that the pandemic is over, many of the initiatives carried out by the private sector in the educational field have continued. Nevertheless, the conclusions reached by the 9th International Congress of Educational Innovation (Jan. 2023) at the Technological Institute of Monterrey suggest that the major challenges for the growth of digital business in Latin America are: 1) the low level of digital maturity in educational institutions and in the work sphere in general and 2) a general resistance to change on the part of workers. In consequence, the main support required by EdTech at this moment comes from government initiatives to incentivize the use of digital technology in schools, universities and workplaces.

The business of technology in education

The focus of large corporations which develop digital technology for the educational field is to accelerate digital transformation through collaboration and alliances between the public and private sector. In order to legitimize the business of the digital world represented by the

2. Many of the actions of large private corporations in the education field were documented in a previous investigative work: “Educational situation and emerging problems during the pandemic in Argentina,” carried out in the “Marina Vilte” Institute of Pedagogic Research (CTERA). MEDIATECA PEDAGÓGICA DE CTERA, revised September 25 2023, <http://mediateca.ctica.org.ar/items/show/462>. (“Mediateca” refers to a library containing various kinds of media—digital, video, etc. Translator’s note).