

# Reforming Teaching and Learning

Comparative Perspectives  
in a Global Era

Maria Teresa Tatto and Monica Mincu (Eds.)



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# Reforming Teaching and Learning

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The WCCES also promotes research programmes involving scholars in various countries. Currently, joint research programmes focus on: theory and methods in comparative education, gender discourses in education, teacher education, education for peace and justice, education in post-conflict countries, language of instruction issues, Education for All and other topics.

Besides organizing the World Congress, WCCES issues a Bulletin in *Innovation*, the publication of the International Bureau of Education in Geneva, Switzerland, and in *CERCular* published by the Comparative Education Research Centre (University of Hong Kong), to keep individual societies and their members abreast of activities around the world. A web site is maintained, at <http://www.wcces.net>.

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This volume is the first of five, with their origins in the proceedings of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies XIII World Congress, which met in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 3 – 7 September, 2007. The conference theme, *Living Together: Education and Intercultural Dialogue*, provides the frame linking the set. The books represent four major strands of the discussions at the congress, and a commemoration of the work of David Wilson, a major contributor to the field of comparative and international education and to the work of the World Council. Each chapter in this peer reviewed series have been developed from presentations at that meeting.

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and

Masemann, V., Majhanovich, S. and Nhung Truong (Eds.), *Clamoring for a Better World: Papers in Memory of David N. Wilson*

# Reforming Teaching and Learning

## *Comparative Perspectives in a Global Era*

Edited by

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MARIA TERESA TATTO AND MONICA MINCU

## REFORMING TEACHING AND LEARNING

### *Comparative Perspectives in a Global Era<sup>1</sup>*

In this book we have chosen to frame these contributions in terms of education reform within the context of globalization. Education reform movements are omnipresent in societies in all regions of the world and are indeed the common thread that cuts across all the contributions in this book. In tune with the Congress' theme, "Living Together, Education and Intercultural Dialogue," education reform initiatives provide a window into the values and priorities that individuals hold as they work together within systems and institutions in attempts at improving themselves. Reforms also signal "dominant patterns" as systems move in some directions and not others.

According to dictionaries, the term reform can be first found in Middle English in the 14th century to mean "change into an improved form or condition; to amend or improve by change of form or removal of faults or abuses"; "to improve by alteration, correction of error, or removal of defects; put into a better form or condition," in short to "change for the better; [to seek] an improvement" (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2008). Importantly the term "reform" also means "actions to improve social or economic conditions without radical or revolutionary change" (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2000). Thus, paradoxically and in order to accomplish its aims, reforms must occur in relatively stable environments.

Current patterns of educational reform seem to be caused by increasingly global notions of the knowledge, skills and values that are worth teaching, and by attempts to invent ways to more effectively impart and transmit such knowledge, skills and values to larger numbers of people, and especially to those that have been marginalized. A number of scholars have documented the global character and the fast pace of world-wide reform tools such as decentralization, privatization, nationalization, and increased regulation (Carnoy, 2000; Ginsburg, 1991; McGinn, 1997; Stromquist and Monkman, 2000; Tatto, 2007). Importantly and according to Kjaer (2004), "privatization, nationalization, and the creation of new regulatory bodies also change the boundaries of the *state* in relation to society" as they give place to organizations with diffuse boundaries or what could be understood as "policy networks" and "decentralized governance" that in contrast with traditional *state* bureaucracies have indirect control over policy.<sup>2</sup> For instance in cases of decentralized governance the state has used local level organizations to override resistance from high levels of governance and to on occasion pass on the costs of

education reform from the center to localities (see Tatto, 1999). Conversely, new governance structures do in a number of instances act above the state to promote international or even global reform that challenges traditional arrangement across education systems (e.g., OECD, 2002, a, b, 2003; the EU via mechanisms as Eurydice 2002, a, b). These “global” organizations have produced a growing urgency for nation states and their institutions respond to global pressures according to their own societies’ economic, political, societal, and cultural priorities (see Cummings, 2003; Tatto, 2007).

Whether global or local, education reform initiatives persist because they provide the tools used by political systems to affect – or at least appear committed to improving – education access or opportunities without radically altering those very systems. Thus, on many occasions reforms are used to legitimize dominant regimes, to signal alliances with others, and to reflect their goals and aspirations. In this sense some scholars consider that the discursive dimension of the reforming process is as significant as concrete policy measures and initiatives (e.g., see Ginsburg, 1991). Moreover, the highly diffused language of educational restructuring highlights processes of imagined globalization through knowledge transfer as shaped by idiosyncratic world-views (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004). In the era of globalization the convergence of discourse formation around the reform concept is paralleled by “multiple internationalities” (Schriewer, 2004).

As we will see in these book’s chapters reveal there is a wide variety of possibilities, nevertheless dominant trends can be identified such as the development of formal and informal quality control and accountability mechanisms (e.g., curricula and standards to regulate teaching and learning), and the growing emphasis given to some school subjects over others (e.g., mathematics and the sciences). Importantly, reforms addressing teachers have acquired more salience at a global level, as a policy tool to improve quality (e.g., development of standards for recruiting and selecting teachers into the profession, re-designed teacher education curricula, new systems of accreditation and certification for teachers and schools, incentives and rewards linked with performance, and curricular and achievement standards for primary and secondary teacher education in subjects considered essential to compete in the global market) (see Tatto, 2007).

In sum, the education reforms promoted in the globalization era emerge in part from changes in governance in political systems mainly for purposes of economic gain [such as the EU—free trade agreements]; in part from the desire to participate in an ever growing global economy (a desired that is facilitated, legitimized and regulated by international agencies such as the IMF, 2008). Reforms aid systems in transforming themselves to signal readiness to act in accordance with global dynamics. Thus, in the name of globalization, reform has become in many cases the essential tool of political systems to initiate change that often displaces other—more culturally relevant—arrangements. Fully aware of this instrumental effect, the modern comparative scholarship expresses great interest in gathering contextual meanings of those culturally relevant arrangements. This is also the case in this volume.

The chapters in this book address the larger question of the effects of (global) educational reform on teaching and learning, as they relate to the context, the policies and politics where reform occurs (e.g., Who controls what teachers teach and pupils learn? What is the impact of globalization on local education systems and traditions? What roles do international agencies play? What is the role of the state? What is the role of policy networks? How do we understand the functions of quality assurance mechanisms, standards, competencies, and the “new” accountability?). In doing so the chapters discuss the institutions and organization of education (e.g., what are key changes in the institutions of education? How do institutions shape how and what teachers learn and, eventually, teach?), and the role of the curriculum and experiences in education institutions (e.g., what norms regulate teaching and learning? What assumptions govern the subject content teachers are expected to teach? How are teachers expected to teach diverse or marginalized populations?)

Through the careful treatment of the dynamics of education reform across different contexts, the authors make palpable the shifting and contested notions of the teacher and of teaching practices across schooling contexts and their resonance for teacher education.

The chapters are organized thematically and follow the logic of the teachers’ lifecycle as conceptualized by Tatto (2000; 2008). Under this conceptualization, teacher-focused policy tends to create reforms that may affect any point, several points or all points either in a linear or non-linear manner of this continuum. The anticipatory socialization stage (when future teachers are in school as students) has also been highlighted by Lortie (1975). Entry into teacher education signals the beginning of teachers’ careers and is triggered by recruitment and selection processes and by the individual expectations of those thinking of becoming teachers. Once in teacher education programs, individual characteristics interact with the opportunities to learn provided to student-teachers; these opportunities to learn are shaped by cultural and social assumptions of what it takes to become a good teacher and are expected to have an important influence on the teachers’ knowledge and practices, and presumably also on the quality of teaching and pupil learning. The outcomes of teacher education are reflected in actual teachers’ knowledge, attitudes/values and practices that are refined during practicum or equivalent experiences. Induction activities and further professional development is expected to extend and update teachers’ knowledge as well as help improve and support teaching quality. The knowledge acquired during teacher education and development is expected to transfer into knowledge for teaching and, presumably, to lead to improved pupil learning.

How well this theorized sequence underlying teacher-focused policy occurs, depends on larger regulating/mediating factors such as the culture, the economy, the society, and the political milieu, as pointed out in recent publications by Alexander (2000), Alexander, Broadfoot and Phillips (1999), Ginsburg and Lindsay (1995), McGinn (1997), OECD, (2005), Osborn (2006), Stromquist and Monkman (2000), and Tatto and her colleagues (2006; 2007).

Thus, policies and reforms affecting the teachers' professional life continuum—mostly via reforms currently emboldened by regulatory mechanisms—emerge as nation-states and localities seek to accommodate and respond to (and in many cases resist) the demands created by international economic integration (for a cross-cultural analysis on education reform and the global regulation of teachers' education, development and work see Tatto, 2006).

The first chapters in the book entitled *Reforming teacher education Latin America and the USA*, a comparative perspective through critical discourse analysis (by Pini and Gorostiaga) and *Imagined globalisation in Italian education: discourse and action in initial teacher training* (by Mincu and Chiosso), use a critical discourse analysis framework and a system reflection model to analyze education reform mandates and its effect of teacher education in contexts as different as Latin America and the USA, and Italy.

The next three chapters present important reflections emerging from empirical exploration of teacher education reform. The chapter by Papier, *Policy, practices and persistent traditions in teacher education in South Africa: the construct of teaching and learning regimes*, shows how traditional views of teaching and learning permeate current attempts at reforming teacher education programs in South Africa. Using current experiences in Egypt Megahed and Ginsburg, in chapter 5 *Documentation for diffusion of education reform in Egypt: rationale, approach, and initial experiences*, discuss the use of pilot approaches and document analysis as a way to explore the possible implications of educational reform implementation and diffusion in dynamic or unstable environments.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 have as a common thread the enduring policy concern with teacher quality and its interaction with key policy tools such as employment, qualifications, and competencies in high demand content knowledge areas in the global economy such as mathematics and science. Paula Razquin's chapter, *Global trends in teaching employment: challenges for teacher education and development policies*, presents a comprehensive comparative analysis of significant trends on teacher employment, teacher education and professional development and the impact of reforms in economies that are challenged by globalization. Show in her chapter, *Qualified teacher status: one indicator of the teaching profession's standards: lessons for California from Finland, Ireland, and Korea*, analyzes the role of standards on teacher qualifications as it occurs in three countries known to have done well in the global race for high quality teaching. Ono, Nakamura, Maeda, Chikamori, and Kita are the authors of the chapter, *Japanese technical cooperation to enhance teacher quality in developing countries: a multiple case study in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Cambodia*, which shows the role of culturally respectful technical support in the implementation of an ambitious program to help teachers in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Cambodia learn to teach new mathematics and science curricula.

The comparative analysis of teacher competences on specific subject matters is the dominant thread in the following chapters. Nevalainen and Kimonen' chapter 9, *A comparative analysis of teacher competences in England and Finland*, use their experiences in England and Finland to help us understand the role of teacher

development on the pedagogical and dispositional competence of teachers in a changing school culture. Nataša Pantić in chapter 10, *Teacher education in Serbia: towards a competence-based model of initial teacher education*, discusses the European Union's competence-based teacher education framework and its impact on educational reforms in Serbia. Derya Çelik in chapter 11, *Pre-service secondary school teachers' use of symbols and algebraic relationships in Turkey*, studies a small group of future teachers in Turkey to illustrate the challenges faced in learning to teach the new mathematics curriculum with a stronger algebra emphasis.

In the last part of the book, the content of the chapters shift to the study of teachers' thinking and actions within school contexts. Questions that frame this section are, what is the role of teachers' concerns and conceptions about teaching challenging topics? How do these views support or hinder the teaching of curricula that, while responding to current and sometimes urgent social demands, challenge what they have come to believe and value? These difficult yet highly relevant questions are raised in the next set of chapters. Chapter 12 by Tuba Gökçek explores *Teachers' concerns profile regarding the reformed mathematics curriculum in Turkey*. Two related and complementary studies address important issues of health and sex education, chapter 13 by Carvalho, Laurent, Clément, Jourdan, and Berger *Health education: analysis of teachers' and future teachers' conceptions from 16 countries (Europe, Africa and Middle East)*; and chapter 14 by Berger, Bernard, Khzami, Jourdan, and Carvalho *Sex education: analysis of teacher's and future teacher's conceptions from 12 countries of Europe, Africa and Middle East*.

The last three chapters show the rewards and challenges of building supportive school communities. Chapter 15 by Dinvaut and Alvir discusses *Teachers' linguistic and cultural potentialities: empowering new school practice in France and Switzerland*. Sunethra Karunaratne in her chapter, *Knit together for a better service: towards a culture of collegiality in teaching science in Sri Lanka*, analyzes how education reform can be used to develop better curriculum for the teaching of science in Sri Lanka. Joël Rich's chapter 17, *School projects in France: management strategies and state disengagement*, examines the challenges of decentralization reform at the school level.

Editing this book has been a challenging and rewarding task. We both meet for the first time in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and spent one week together listening to our colleagues as they presented their work, and inviting them to participate in the adventure of producing this book. We have enjoyed the process and have become good friends and collaborators. We are very thankful to our colleagues who have responded with patience and understanding to our detailed commentary and feedback in crafting each chapter. We are also thankful to those anonymous reviewers who gave kindly of their time and talents to comment on each chapter providing critical and helpful advice. We hope that our joint product contributes to what in essence was the goal of the conference, learning how to establish intercultural educational dialogue to understand and improve teaching and learning.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The collection of chapters in this book were selected from about 100 papers presented in the XIII World Congress of Comparative Education Societies held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, September 03-07, 2007 under the overall theme teaching and learning. The session of the thematic group 9: Teachers and Teacher Education was organized by Maria Teresa Tatto of Michigan State University in collaboration with Radmila Jusović (radmila@coi-stepbystep.ba) who served as a local convener. [<http://www.wcces.net/worldcongress/13thcongress.html>].
- <sup>2</sup> Scholars have questioned the use of the term “state”, usually defined as a political entity with sovereignty over a geographic area and population, as “too imprecise and loaded to be used productively in sociology and political science, and suggests that it ought to be replaced by the more comprehensive term *political system*.” The term political system denotes a broader concept than the state and “refers to the ensemble of all social structures that function to produce collectively binding decisions in a society [...] such as political regime[s], political parties, and various sorts of organizations” (Easton, 1990, p.xx). In spite of Easton’s suggestions, in this book we use both terms. Particularly we use the term state in contrast with “policy networks” to sharpen the distinctions that characterize emergent structures of governance which in some cases are broadening and in others “weakening” the traditional role of the state in an increasingly dynamic global economy.

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MÓNICA E. PINI AND JORGE M. GOROSTIAGA

## REFORMING TEACHER EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE USA

*A Comparative Perspective through Critical Discourse Analysis*

The human being is present as history and conscience behind each word, and it is in the nature of the human being where necessary to go deeper at the time of engaging with, exposing and defending our conception of democracy and social justice.

Julio Cortázar, Argentina: Años de alambradas culturales

The demand for education to address the needs and configuration of contemporary societies, and the variety and pace of changes related to knowledge is common to different countries and regions. Internationally, we have witnessed decades of educational reforms that are assumed to be the answer to the so called “school crisis.” Overall, this “crisis” is a consequence and a reflection of uncertainties and conflicts that go far beyond schools.

Many of the policies for school reform have been dictated by neoliberal-neoconservative agendas promoted by international agencies (especially the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund). During the 1990s, several Latin American countries developed policies such as the decentralisation of the school system, promotion of school autonomy and managerialism, and the establishment of national evaluation systems. These policies converged with the insufficient funding of schools and the elimination of State regulations that preserved the equality of educational opportunities.

With the new century and in the context of a post-neoliberal scenario in which the state plays a more active role, Argentina and other Latin American countries have shown some important changes in their political context. Improvements are related to the defense of human rights, more progressive public policies, increasing employment and a more inclusive economic model. Nevertheless, there are still continuities and deep social consequences that are hard to remove, such as social injustice, poverty and marginality, especially among young people.

As part of a wider study, the purpose of this chapter is to explore teacher education policies in Latin and North America through the comparison of policy documents. Teachers are key agents in educational processes, but they often are not involved in planning (and monitoring) reform, though they have frequently been the targets of reform. Teachers are today in the eye of the storm because they are

in part blamed for students' deficits. Pre-service teacher training and in-service professional development are among the priorities of political decisions in education, including policies that define what kind of institutions should educate teachers and under what professional and labor conditions.

Since the theme transcends national limits, this work explores and compares different perspectives and specific proposals in recent documents from different agencies and countries.

### THE CONTEXT OF PRODUCTION

The context of production is one important element in the interpretation of texts. In the USA, the prevailing perspectives on education have been built for many years around the "crisis" of public education. These perspectives blame public schools for the decline in American international competitiveness, rarely taking into account how social inequality impacts student learning or other government policies and business strategies may be responsible for economic decline.

At the same time, the school system has grown and created more opportunities for social groups that traditionally had no access to school. This expansion has increased heterogeneity and generated resistance from conservative groups to the democratisation of education. Based on this "crisis," since the early 1990s the main strategy of conservative groups has been to hand the administration of public schools to private corporations. Nowadays, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, China and India seem to be "the new menace", since their highly qualified workers could replace American technicians and do so at much lower salaries. Again, responsibility for this situation is falling onto the educational system.

Numerous American reports have affirmed that one of the reasons for public school failure is the poor quality of teachers and curricula (Apple, 2000). According to Apple, who critiques neo-liberal reform as it applies to teachers' work, the social pressure that this judgment implies has consequences for the nature of teachers' "complicated *labor process*" (p. 115). A pre-structured curriculum determines the first consequence, the "separation of conception from execution," when teachers have to follow fixed class plans. The second is closely related to the first, the "deskilling" that occurs when any worker loses control over his/her work (p. 116). Professional skills atrophy due to lack of use. Apple (2000) calls this "degradation" of labor, which represents the increasing power of conservative ideologies and pressure to reduce teaching to the requirements of the tests. In Latin America, teachers have experienced similar pressures with the establishment of evaluation systems and performance monitoring (Gajardo, 1999).

The context of economic reforms, including privatisation of public services, unemployment, reduction of domestic consumption, and regressive income distribution, became critical in Argentina at the end of the 1990s. As a consequence of the last economic recession period (1998-2002), poverty levels have been increasing in Argentina. The end of 2001 accelerated this process with the collapse of the Argentinean peso, which had parity with the dollar.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, even though educational reforms established the extension of compulsory basic schooling (kindergarten-grade 9), and the increased enrollment at this level, the educational gap between poor and non-poor became deeper, at all age groups (children, adolescents, and adults).

Since the end of the 1980s in Latin America, and particularly in Argentina, international agencies have promoted recipes to reform educational systems with similar orientations as those proposed for the economy: decentralisation and privatisation, evaluation systems for quality assurance, back-to-basics education and development of work skills, efficiency as the main criterion for managing funds, and the regulation of teachers' work through "merit-based" salary incentives and mandatory training programs (Gajardo, 1999).

Related to teachers' professional development, the *Red Federal de Capacitación Docente* (Federal Network of Teacher Training), created by the Argentine Ministry of Education in 1995, sought to develop a policy on knowledge, abilities and practices of teachers. As a consequence, a more heterogeneous scenario of institutions and actors involved in pre-service teacher education was configured in Argentina, in which the national State had previously played a leading role (Ministerio de Educacion, 2001).

Currently, there is an important switch taking place, at least in relation to the political climate and to the economic model of the 1990s. As changes take place in the fields of human rights and citizenship, different conceptions of economics, politics, and education can be developed if society appropriates and follows the struggle for meanings in the public spaces. However, the social consequences of neoliberal policies are still profound, and democracies remain constricted by different forms of inequality.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The idea of studying relevant educational policy documents from North and Latin America is based on our interest in exploring continuities and discontinuities in policy trends among countries. Typically, policy trends emerge in the USA and other developed countries and define economic and educational policies in Latin America and other peripheral regions (see Ball, 1998; Steiner-Khamsi et al., 2006). This study continues a line of previous research that applies critical discourse analysis to policy think tanks and other sources of educational policies (Pini, 2004; 2005; Pini & Vales, 2005), and to mapping educational policy debates as inter-textual fields (Gorostiaga & Paulston, 2003). In previous studies we had registered the ideological consistency between the strategies of marketisation and privatisation of education in the USA and those that were being promoted in Latin America (Pini, 2005). This trend in the US seems to have shifted its focus to public-private partnerships and outsourcing of services (Burch, 2005). However, educational management organisations and charter schools are still popular, in part because of the power of some corporations that look at education as a fertile field to colonise.

Despite the fact that the political climate and the economic model have changed somewhat since the 1990s, democracies in Latin America continue to be constrained by inequity and the lack of legitimacy of politicians (and the State). The dominant groups remain the same, but the era of the “just one discourse” has seemingly ended (Munck, 2003). In this study, we aim at contributing to the public debate on the role of education in building a more just society by providing an analysis that increases understanding of teacher education policies.

#### METHODS AND DATA SOURCES

This is a qualitative study based on critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989, 1995; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Fairclough (1989) uses the term discourse:

to refer to the whole process of social interaction of which a text is just a part. This process includes, in addition to the text, the process of production, of which a text is a product, and the process of interpretation, for which the text is a resource (p. 24).

Both the process of production and interpretation are socially determined. Thus the analysis of the text is only one part of critical discourse analysis, since it also includes the social conditions of production and interpretation of the text.

Critical analysis of documents located in their context of production offers the possibility of illuminating certain aspects of educational policies in specific historical moments. In addition, a comparative perspective allows researchers to explore similarities and differences among political statements from a variety of governments and agencies, in order to characterise common elements and particularities of teacher education policies in the context of late capitalism.

The corpus of this study involves a selection of recent documents of educational policies at national and international level (we detail them below). The criteria for selection were pertinence and relevance for teacher education policies (Tatto, 2002). We have taken into account the presence of common aspects which allow for comparison, as well as differentiation of elements in the context, type of discourse, and topics. Note that teacher education is not the exclusive focus of any of the documents, although in each teacher education is defined as a key factor for improving education.

The sample of documents includes three texts. One is an official government document. The other two documents are relevant because they were produced by an international agency and a US-based nongovernmental organisation, both of which have an important role in building agendas of educational policies. The following table summarises relevant information for each document included in the analysis:

The National Education Law from Argentina was enacted in December 2006 (Republica Argentina, 2007), a year after a law with similar ideas was enacted. Both the 2005 and 2006 laws reflected a political decision by the Argentinean National Government to signal its commitment to meaningful change from the educational reform agenda of the 1990s.

Table 1. - Selection of Documents

Title	Geographic Focus	Year	Author
Ley de Educación Nacional N° 26206 (Education National Law)	Argentina	2006	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Argentina
Educación de Calidad para todos: un asunto de derechos humanos (Education of Quality for Everybody: a Human Rights Issue)	Latin America	2007	UNESCO, Oficina Regional de Educación para América Latina y el Caribe, Santiago, Chile
<i>Tough choices or tough times</i>	USA	2007	National Center on Education and the Economy, USA

The second text, from the UNESCO office in Santiago, Chile, is a document prepared for its discussion at the Second Intergovernmental Meeting of the Regional Project of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean, organised in Buenos Aires in March 2007. It was produced in collaboration with the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) of Buenos Aires, and with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

The document from the USA was elaborated by The Skills Commission for the National Center on Education and the Economy. The new commission<sup>2</sup> on the skills of the American workforce released this report in 2007 after two years of research in the USA and other countries. The commission's work and research received the support and funding of several private foundations.<sup>3</sup>

#### THE TEXTS

The Argentine National Education Law legislates on all topics related to the organisation, government and components of educational system, except universities. The law is organised into twelve titles. Title IV includes two chapters about teachers and their formation. Chapter 1 on "teachers rights and obligations" and Chapter 2, "teacher education". In general, the law stresses the need for education to contribute to building a more just society, and to overcome inequalities and different forms of discrimination.

The UNESCO document has five parts: education as a right, equal access and quality, teachers, funding, and policy recommendations. Noteworthy are its critique of neoliberal economic policies previously implemented by Latin American countries, recognition that Native and African descendance groups as well as women have suffered social exclusion, and stress on the dramatic inequalities and the percentages of people living in poverty that characterise the region.

The Skills Commission's text starts by arguing the necessity of changing the school system, and it develops ten steps to follow in order to accomplish educational change. The steps mainly refer to: teacher recruiting, training and compensation; creating a set of Board examinations; improving efficiency in the use of resources;

developing curriculum and evaluation systems; providing universal early childhood education; giving “strong support to the students who need it the most” (p. 17); and providing new literacy skills for adult workforce.

As our goal is to focus on teacher education policies, we analyze and compare the documents’ sections that place special attention on the definitions of education and teacher education, and the sections that propose policies of teacher education that involve market conceptions of education.

## RESULTS

### *Education: Public good or market device?*

The National Education Law establishes that “education is a public good and a personal and social right, guaranteed by the State” (Art. 2°). The UNESCO document defines education as a “human right and public good”, as a “proposal of quality lifelong education for all” (p. 7). The Skills Commission’s text explicitly states that improving education means developing high international standards, as the condition for individuals and countries to successfully compete in the world market: “It [the United States] would have to adopt internationally benchmarked standards for educating its students and its workers, because only countries with highly skilled workforces could successfully compete in that market.” (p. 1).

The two first definitions in the previous paragraph only differ on the qualification of “right”, personal and social right in the first definition, and human right in the second. Document 3 does not elaborate conceptual definitions. Instead, it pragmatically addresses the issue of the purpose of education, and how it could be achieved. The document reflects the main values of market ideology assuming that individual and national competitiveness and high performances are the main objectives of education. The stance above expresses an instrumental conception for which investment in education is only valid if it yields high returns.

Both the Skills Commission document and the Argentine Law acknowledge the national relevance of education, but in the first it appears linked to competitiveness, efficiency, and the primacy of market defining educational contents since “a swiftly rising number of American workers at every skill level are in direct competition with workers in every corner of the globe” (p. 5), and in the second it is related to social rights, public goods, and the State.

The Skills Commission text adopts an economic and technocratic perspective, which is illustrated, among other elements, by the vision of “fixing” disadvantaged students through the provision of eyeglasses, hearing aids or therapy for dyslexia (p. 18), and ignoring the influence of social structures inside and outside the school that maintain or reinforce inequality<sup>4</sup>. On the other hand, the document proposes two measures that could have a positive impact in terms of equity: establishing a system of state funding instead of local funding of schools, and providing universal early childhood education.

*The meaning of teacher education*

The Argentine Law defines teacher education as a key factor for improving the quality of education (art. 73), since its goal is to prepare professionals who are able to teach, generate and transfer knowledge and values that are needed for the integral formation of each person, national development and building a more equal society. Teacher education will promote the construction of a teacher identity based on professional autonomy, in the context of contemporary culture and society, team work, commitment with equality, and trust on students' learning capabilities (art. 71). Before the broad statement of professional expectations, the previous enumeration of teachers' rights (art. 67) – free and in service professional development and reasonable work conditions and salary, among others – is very pertinent, since without the right conditions better results are not possible.<sup>5</sup>

The UNESCO text specifies that the quality of teachers and the learning environment they generate is one of the most important factors influencing students' learning results. The implication is that the policies oriented to improving educational quality can only be feasible if the efforts concentrate on transforming not only teachers but also the culture of schools. Besides, it is emphasised that no reform would be successful without teachers' participation (p. 10). The document notes the importance of teacher quality for promoting learning and for safeguarding the right to education. Different forms of participation are also included among teachers' rights in the Argentine Law.

The Skills Commission text affirms that:

it is simply not possible for our students to graduate from our schools by the millions with very strong mathematical reasoning skills, a sound conceptual grasp of science, strong writing skills, world-beating capacity for creativity and innovation, and everything else we talk about in this report unless their teachers have the knowledge and skills we want our children to have (p. 12).

The quality of teacher education is determined by students' results, according to standards and general examinations. While the Skills Commission does not reference the debate concerning the direct connection between teaching-learning and test scores, it mentions other factors which can influence results. However, the Skills Commission does so in relation to how unequal opportunities for women and minorities in the American workforce lead to many teachers being recruited from the less able of the high school students who go to college (p. 12).

*Teacher education policies*

The objectives established by the Argentine law for teacher education policies (art. 73) are aligned with the aim mentioned above, oriented to prepare professionals who are able to teach, generate and transfer knowledge and values that are needed for the full development of each person, for national development and for building a more equal society. The objectives follow directly from the law's definition of education and of teacher training: to upgrade and revalue teacher education; to develop the required capacities and knowledge for teaching work; to provide

incentives for educational research and innovation linked to teaching tasks; to offer a variety of in-service training programs and mechanisms that favor professional development; to promote further studies in university institutions; to plan and develop the pre-service and in-service teacher education system; to implement accreditation processes for education institutions and teaching qualification programs; to coordinate and articulate academic and institutional cooperation actions between teacher training institutes, universities and other educational research institutions. Some of these general objectives could represent a qualitative leap if they were implemented in a collaborative manner with teachers and students, and educational institutions.

In addition, the Law indicates that the National Ministry of Education and the Federal Council of Education should reach agreement on teacher training policies, guidelines and actions. Since the Federal Council of Education is constituted by all the Provincial Ministers of Education of the country, this is a very important decision for a federal country. At the same time, the Law creates the National Institute of Teacher Education which is responsible for implementing many of these policies and actions. The Institute, which started to operate in May 2007, has very broad functions and includes an advisory board with representatives of different sectors.

While the Argentine Law mentions other factors related to teacher education, the UNESCO document addresses this policy through an approach that integrates the three basic issues that are considered to affect teaching practices:

Achieving good professional performance demands addressing in an integral manner a group of elements that are fundamental for the development and the strengthening of teachers' cognitive, pedagogic, ethical and social capacities. Three of them require priority attention from national governments: an articulated system of permanent education and professional development; a transparent and motivating system of professional career and teacher evaluation; and an appropriate system of labor conditions and welfare. (p. 10)

Moreover, this text stresses the importance of recruiting qualified candidates, making reference to studies that show the increase in the number of students coming from impoverished social sectors, but it frames this issue within an explicitly political logic:

In order to attract well qualified candidates, retain the best professionals and guarantee their permanent development, it is not enough to implement partial or occasional actions; what is required is State public policies, integral and systemic, and with an inter-sector perspective. For the viability of these policies it is essential that they are formulated with social and political consensus that guarantee long term solutions, encourage a culture of joint responsibility, and translate into concrete agendas and commitments. (p. 12)

As we have already pointed out, the issue of candidates' qualifications has a prominent place in the Skills Commission document: "recruiting, training, and deploying a teaching force... recruited from the top third of the high school students going to college" (p. 12) is one the three priorities in which the savings resulting from a

more efficient use of available resources.<sup>6</sup> As in the other documents, the topic of teacher education is linked to other labor issues such as: changing the compensation system toward increasing salaries of early career teachers and introducing incentives, in some cases tied to teacher productivity in terms of student achievements. In addition, we find some distinctive elements in the US NGO document: a) a rigorous evaluation of teaching performance and b) opportunities for teachers to form their own organisations for the operation of schools (p. 14). We further elaborate on these issues below.

With regard to specific policies on teacher education, the Skills Commission document proposes a radical shift from the current situation in which universities are mainly responsible for organizing teacher education. In this proposal, each state would create a Teacher Development Agency in charge of recruiting, training, and certifying teachers. These Agencies would contract out among different public and private agents:

the state would launch national recruiting campaigns, allocate slots for training the required number of teachers, and write performance contracts with schools of education, but also teachers' unions, school districts, and others interested in teacher training. (p. 14)

### *Professionalism and evaluation*

In discussing the issue of professionalism, we need to consider that professions typically develop strategies for minimizing the intrusion of non-professionals into definitions and routines of work (Esland, 1980). Therefore, the professionalisation of teaching may imply restricting the participation of other actors like community members in educational policy and practice (see Ginsburg & Gorostiaga, 2003).

On the other hand, in recent decades there has been a visible growth of control over teachers (Apple, 2001; Tatto, 2006; 2007) in different countries. Even though we need to acknowledge that historically teachers were conceived as agents who were part of a bureaucracy and lacking any autonomy (Tenti Fanfani, 2006), the change from “licensed autonomy” to “regulated autonomy” occurred since “teachers’ work is more highly standardised, rationalised, and ‘policed’ . . . Under the growing conditions of regulated autonomy, teachers’ actions are now subject to much great scrutiny in terms of process and outcomes” (Apple, 2001, p. 51). This phenomenon is also present in Latin America, where it has led to the expansion and intensification of tasks in precarious and deteriorating working conditions (Andrade Oliveira, 2006).

Both the Argentinean Law and the Skills Commission document define teachers as professionals. The Law, for instance, promotes a “teaching identity based on professional autonomy” (art. 71). Nevertheless, it is the UNESCO text which makes the strongest call for advancing toward professionalisation, including under this conception the development of rational competencies, pedagogic techniques, responsibility and commitment toward student learning, which would allow teachers to exercise their “citizen right in decisions about education, the school and their own practices” (UNESCO, 2007, p. 51).

Furthermore, the three documents consider the establishment of evaluation systems that include assessing teacher's performance. The Argentinean Law does not specify much about this, while the UNESCO document stresses the need for making teachers accountable for student performance, linking the evaluation of teachers to their professional development and their career ladders (p. 56).

According to the proposal of the Skills Commission document, every teacher would have to pass a "rigorous teaching performance assessment." In the United States, educational evaluation at all levels (from classrooms to central offices) is based on standards. These standards imply uniform results to be reached that are established by each state and, in most cases, evaluated through tests implemented by big private companies. This form of evaluation, which quantifies complex processes, has been criticised as an application of economist models that reduce knowledge to its measurable aspects and limit learning processes to the contents that can be assessed through these procedures (Anderson, 1998; Apple, 2000). Although it is recognised that examinations and assessments need to be improved in order to measure qualities like creativity, innovation and self-discipline, the text stresses that "it all starts with the standards and assessments" (National Center on Education and the Economy, 2007, p. 15).

### *Marketisation*

The proposal made by the Skills Commission for the formation of teachers' organisations to manage schools looks like a euphemism for *charter schools*. In the document, Step 5 explains that in the new governance and organisational scheme for creating high performance schools and districts, public schools "would be operated by independent contractors, many of them limited-liability corporations owned and run by teachers" (p. 16). As previous research (Pini 2004) explains, during the last 10 years, there have been many attempts to promote the charter school's model in the USA. This trend has opened public education to the market by allowing private companies, including big corporations, to manage schools and districts. The reasons behind the arguments in favor of increasing autonomy of and providing freedom of school choice for parents are:

- There are large sums of money moving around the educational system that attract business people.
- Teachers find it difficult to manage complex administrative procedures and controls, so they end up contracting private companies for these tasks.
- An "educational industry" specialised in schools has developed, following the pattern of other industries.
- This is the model proposed by the Skills Commission document for teacher education, allowing state agencies to openly contract in the market, following a logic of profit that is opposed to the logic of education as a right and as a public good.<sup>7</sup>

The Argentine Law and the UNESCO document seem to espouse the perspective of education as a public good, but there are aspects of the realities of education and

teaching in Latin America that may question to what extent those general guidelines are translated into practice. We need to be aware of the increasing participation of private companies, through different organisations and negotiation mechanisms, in the decisions about educational policy. There is a silent advance of companies and corporations promoting different kinds of educational projects, sometimes in association with private and/or public universities and other private institutions.<sup>8</sup> This advancement includes programs and actions for teacher education and training implemented by big companies and their foundations, both local (Noble Foundation; Argentine Banks Association) and multinational (Microsoft Argentina; Coca Cola; Santillana; Fundación Telefónica, etc.).

### CONCLUSIONS

The comparison shows similarities among the discursive features of the National Education Law (Argentina) and the UNESCO document, related to the definition of education and the meaning of teacher education. The policy discourses in these two texts look very different from the US NGO document, because they emphasise education as a social right, but in the light of educational and social realities in Latin America, their implementation is not guaranteed. In the case of Argentina, the text of the law is too generic and the Institute that has been created concentrates too many functions at a national level for a federal country. At the same time, the power of big companies and the huge social inequalities have not disappeared, in spite of changes in the economic model.

The findings that emerge from the comparative analysis of educational policy documents are significant. Even though each context is different, the ideological influence of the American policy context and financial agencies has been traditionally important for the development of policies in Latin America. For example, regarding teacher education policies, a first glance shows very different approaches. However, the general character of the Argentinean Law statements, as well as the current social and educational scenarios for Latin America, demand a constant struggle for achieving policies that respond to the right to a quality education for all.

During the last decades, in almost every Latin American country, including Argentina, evaluation systems have promoted the “regulated autonomy” of teachers’ work. They have not produced better student learning, but more pressure and worse labor conditions for teachers (Apple, 2000; Andrade Oliveira & Feldfeber, 2006). For both the American and the Latin American cases, the recommendations and policies that the three documents express neither foster the development of teachers as intellectuals nor acknowledge their political role.

Multinational corporations based in the US have profited from education through the provision of auxiliary services, textbooks, tests, training, evaluation, and even instructional programs (Molnar, 1996; Boyles, 2000). Meanwhile, the neoliberal agenda has found a fertile field for market-oriented practices in education in Latin America. In addition to pushing for changes in the role of the State, corporations have developed expansion policies, increasing their capacity to influence regulations

for their own benefit. This can be seen in the case of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the General Agreement on Trade of Services (GATS), through which the idea of education as a private good has become naturalised (Ginsburg et al., 2003). As Ball (1998) has pointed out, “education is not simply modeled on the methods and values of capital, it is itself drawn into the commodity form” (p. 126).

Education as a public good can be claimed and struggled for as a right, while as a private good it is simply a commodity that is only available for those who can pay for it. Education as a public good is potentially inclusive, bringing social benefits and helping to build a society of active citizens who are capable of participating in political life. Instead, education as a private good generates individual advantages, contributes to the formation of elites, and casts citizens as passive consumers.

While the State does not guarantee good teacher education for every teacher, nor adequate institutions for those who prepare teachers, corporations expand their power and provide a good image to the public while saving taxes at the same time. In unequal societies such as those in Latin America, the laws themselves are not enough to ensure the universal right of education.

Neoliberal educational reforms in Latin America produced a restructuring of teachers’ status and work lives (Andrade Oliveira & Feldfeber, 2006). The expansion of access to school was accomplished off the backs of teachers, eroding their already battered professional and social role. Organised teachers, in concert with parents and other community members, need to take initiatives to defend and improve public institutions. These initiatives should seek a redefinition of the social goals of those institutions, criticizing and challenging growing instrumentalisation from the private sector and promoting the authentic participation of teachers and students (Anderson, 1998). New discourses are needed to critique the growing influence of marketisation in Latin American education systems. This also requires new social networks of communication (e.g., think tanks, blogs, etc.) and solidarity among those working for a more just and democratic society.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> According to SIEMPRO (2003), by the last four years, more than 27% of the Argentinean population became poor *by income*. Between 1998 and 2001, 8.6% became poor, and between 2001 and 2002 another 18.6% of the population fell below the *poverty line*. The loss of home equity, higher prices, and increasing inequity of income are the main factors that have contributed to the growth of poverty.
- <sup>2</sup> The first commission released a report in 1990, called *America’s Choice: high skills or low wages?*
- <sup>3</sup> Annie E. Casey Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, and Lumina Foundation for Education.
- <sup>4</sup> By contrast, the UNESCO document acknowledges the impact of social structures on how educational systems have developed in the region (p. 20).
- <sup>5</sup> Art. 2, inc. i of the Law of Education Funding establishes as one of its priorities improving work conditions and teachers’ salaries, as well as professional career and teacher education.
- <sup>6</sup> The other two would be building a high-quality early childhood education system and giving disadvantaged students the resources they need to reach international education standards.
- <sup>7</sup> This is not to say that schools organised by teachers, parents and/or community members may not have, in some cases, a progressive character. For example, Whitty & Power (2002, pp. xiii-xiv)

argue, “The Kura Kaupapa Maori in New Zealand and some of the ‘alternative’ US charter schools provide examples where self-determination by communities and professionals has brought about innovative and potentially empowering educational environments.”

<sup>8</sup> “Universidad y empresas: el nuevo romance”, *Clarín Económico*, 16/5/04.

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