

A TEXTBOOK FOR THE LEFT? PROVIDING A FRAMEWORK FOR LEFT-WING EDUCATION POLICIES IN LATIN AMERICA

¿UN MANUAL PARA LA IZQUIERDA? PROPUESTA DE UN MARCO CONCEPTUAL
PARA LAS POLÍTICAS EDUCATIVAS DE LA IZQUIERDA EN AMÉRICA LATINA

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Received: May 7, 2008. Accepted: July 18, 2008

Abstract: The article presents a framework by which the approaches taken in educational policies by the Left in Latin America may be understood. This framework takes the form of a continuum by which left-wing or *progressive* education, between *deep* and *shallow* poles, drawing at an abstract level the continuum on the equality-difference features associated with Bobbio's (1996) Left-Right political spectrum.

Presenting the Cuban (and to a lesser extent) the Sandinista Revolutions as the main source of progressive education in the region prior to the 1980s, the article examines the neo-liberal and neo-conservative features associated with the New Right and the Left's response. This took several forms in the 1990s and 2000s: traditional communists (Cuba), Third Way reformers (e.g. the PSDB in Brazil and the Concertación in Chile) and between first generation (e.g. PT, Frente Amplio, Izquierda Unida, Causa R, Sandinistas since 2007) and second generation (e.g. the Chavez, Morales and Correa governments) radicals. The educational approaches of each are then placed tentatively along the progressive education spectrum.

Key words: Left and Right, education, framework, progressivism, neo-liberalism.

Resumen: El artículo presenta un marco conceptual para la comprensión de los enfoques de las políticas educacionales de la Izquierda en América Latina. Este toma la forma de un continuo entre cuyos extremos, *superficial* y *profundo*, se ubican las políticas educativas de la izquierda o *progresistas* que dibujan el continuo a un nivel abstracto sobre la base de las características de igualdad-diferencia asociadas al espectro político Izquierda-Derecha de Bobbio (1996).

El artículo presenta a la revolución cubana, y en menor medida a la sandinista, como las principales fuentes de educación progresista en la región antes de los años ochenta; luego examina las características neo-liberales y neo-conservadoras asociadas a la nueva derecha y la respuesta de la izquierda. Esta tomó varias formas

en los años noventa y en el dos mil: comunistas tradicionales (Cuba), reformistas de la tercera vía (por ejemplo, PSDB en Brasil y la Concertación en Chile) y *radicales de primera generación* (Partido de los Trabajadores en Brasil, Frente Amplio uruguayo, Izquierda Unida de Perú, Causa R en Venezuela y los sandinistas desde 2007) y *radicales de segunda generación* (por ejemplo, los gobiernos de Chávez, Morales y Correa). Luego, las políticas educativas de cada una de estas corrientes progresistas son ubicadas tentativamente a lo largo del espectro educación progresista.

Palabras clave: Izquierda y Derecha, educación, marco conceptual, progresismo, neo-liberalismo.

INTRODUCTION

How might the Left's educational policy be understood today? In what sense is its approach to education distinct from the Right? Such questions became increasingly important during and following the 2005-06 election cycle in Latin America, when a number of countries either elected or re-elected governments run by the Left, including Brazil, Chile, Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Ecuador.

However, the bulk of discussion about the Left has tended to focus on the political forms and economic models pursued by these governments (see Ellner, 2004; Harnecker, 2005; Petras, 2005; Castañeda, 2005). As a result its approach to social policy and education in particular is sometimes overlooked. This is especially unfortunate given the role of education as the means by which the transmission of social values, knowledge and beliefs or social control is achieved (see Carnoy and Samoff, 1990; Kivinen and Rinne, 2000). The role of the state – and the political group that controls it – is therefore of importance in making sense of education policy. Its use of power, including its relations with other social, political and economic groups, is at the heart of the debate about education and how it should be shaped (Apple, 2003; Popkewitz, 2000; Torres, 1999).

To make sense of educational policy, this article presents a framework by which these Latin American left-wing governments' educational policy directions may be understood as well as their tentative placement within it. In particular this involves defining left-wing education or *progressivism* and the variations that exist between its *deep* and *shallow* versions both at an abstract level and in practical terms. This is achieved in the following manner: first, the main social and ideological features that distinguish the Left from the Right are identified, along with the Left's association with progressive education

and its particular reference in the Latin American context when socialism was the main challenge to the Right, by the Cuban and Nicaraguan Revolutions; second, changes to the Left and Right are considered in the light of social, political and economic changes of the 1970s-80s, which weakened the Cuban model as the main left-wing version (given its more long-lasting status compared to the Sandinistas) and encouraged the rise of a neo-conservative, neo-liberal Right in education. The third section considers the Left's response to the New Right in the 1990s. This includes the decline of the socialism-capitalism dichotomy as the main feature of the Left-Right divide and the emphasis on Bobbio's looser distinction between equality and difference as the main points of reference. The different branches of the Left that have emerged since the 1980s are then examined, in particular their social origins and manner of policymaking. These features are then applied to their educational approaches to plot their tentative position along the updated progressive continuum.

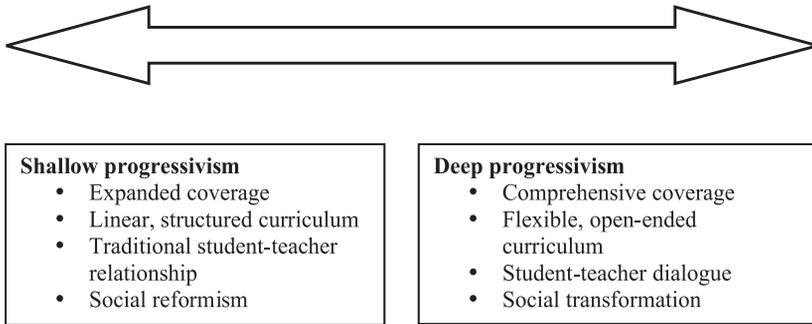
The Left and Right: conservative and progressive education

For much of the last century the political Left and Right were mainly identified by their support or opposition to capitalism. Sociologically, the Right tended to be associated with the dominant classes which controlled the means of production and coercion. Ideologically, this encouraged commitment to the status quo or conservatism (Miliband, 1982, 1989; Scruton, 2001). In Latin America the Right's approach to education was most evident in the conservative regimes (both military and civilian) that took power in the 1960s and 1970s throughout the region. Their intention was to develop labour forces that were capable of meeting the demands of industrialisation, most notably in the manufacturing sector (Cowan, 1997). This required an expansion in educational access, although the regimes tended to discriminate against the working class in favour of the middle class. Social spending was skewed towards its middle class supporters, with increases in welfare expenditure being directed primarily in that direction to ensure political legitimacy. In education this meant proportionately more being allocated on higher education than primary and secondary levels. At the same time the models were repressive in their approach, most obviously in the military regimes in the Southern Cone that expelled teachers and students who challenged the position (Brint, 2006). This was also evident in repression against students in other non-military regimes, such as Mexico in 1968. For the Right to achieve greater access then, it relied on the private sector at primary, secondary and higher levels to respond to the growing demand for more education, thereby reinforcing their links with the dominant classes. The result of such policies though was of limited value and questionable merit (Brock, 1985). Private

provision was largely unregulated and the focus on expanded coverage came at the expense of quality.

In contrast to the Right's elite bias, the Left tends to be associated with the subordinate classes. As a result it is predisposed towards challenging the prevailing system, in a struggle between the "haves and the have-nots" (Miliband, 1989: 14-15). This places the Left in an ideologically different position to the Right, with social and economic transformation achieved through social mobility, deliberation, participation, non-discrimination and non-repression. In the educational arena this was termed *progressive*, with an emphasis on concepts such as expansion of the school system through greater access for all citizens, entitlements to forms of education and positive assistance to disadvantaged groups (Dewey, 2007; Guttman, 2007; Kivinen and Rinne, 2000; Whitty, 1997; Trowler, 1998).

However, the Left's commitment to educational progressivism does not mean that it is all encompassing. Rather than being seen as an *either or* form of educational policy, progressive education may be viewed as a continuum between *shallow* and *deep* versions (Fig 1). In its shallower form one may observe more modest goals such as those "developments which have been considered to increase the opportunities for or care of large numbers of people" (Nuttal, 2004: 53-54). In this respect the shallower version is only a short step away from the Right, which limited itself to increased access. By contrast, a deeper –and more identifiably leftist form of progressive education– stresses the notion of a student-centred process over that of any top-down approach (Sarup, 1982). This is reflected most clearly in Freire's work (1978, 1985), where he distinguishes between education as a "banking process" (shallow) and as a dialogue (deep). *Banking* education involves teachers *depositing* information into students while maintaining the established power structure between the two within the classroom and between dominant and subordinate classes outside. This is contrasted with a libertarian alternative where the difference between students and teachers becomes indistinguishable as both engage in a collaborative process of critical thinking and problem solving.

Figure 1: Progressive education

With socialism as the main ideological challenge in the region until the 1980s, the two main examples of progressive education in Latin America were the Cuban and (to a lesser extent) Nicaraguan examples. The extent to which they were deep or shallow in their approaches varied. Both governments were arguably progressively deep in their aim to enact a systematic transformation of society through education. This was evident in the Cuban government echoing the Soviet model of collective action and the building of a new socialist morality. Basic education was made a universal right and both basic and post-secondary were provided for entirely by the state. A literacy campaign was launched in 1961, reaching nearly one million people and focusing considerably on education in rural areas (generally overlooked elsewhere in Latin America at the time). This was achieved mainly by sending both teachers and literate students into the countryside to participate in the programme. Curricular changes were made to encourage collective working between students and co-ordination between educational institutions and the local economy (Sack *et al.*, 1978; Carnoy and Wertheim, 1979; Rojas *et al.*, 1983). The result was that by the 1990s Cuba's education system outperformed others in the region (López, 1999; Ramos, 1999; Ratliff, 2003; Lutjens, 1998). Similarly, in Nicaragua the Sandinistas sought social change through education, also initiating a literacy campaign in its first year and establishing a textbook industry, revising the curriculum, encouraging greater school autonomy in teaching and undertaking a more long term approach to education planning (Arrove, 1994).

Despite these advances, there were limits in both cases which reflected the shallow nature of each government's educational policies. Although the Cuban Revolution had been popular, this did not mean that either the regime or the educational system was sufficiently democratic. Politically, a single-party state had directed these changes and the wider public remained largely

cut off from political participation. Second, the tension between ideological, pedagogical and economic objectives was seen as compromising the educational system. For example, the best schools tended to select students from the elite, the system remained closed to Western educational theories and values, education was conducted in a more traditional top-down manner, prompting claims of possible indoctrination (Gasperini, 2000). In Nicaragua the Sandinista government faced various domestic and external challenges, including natural disasters, economic difficulties and military conflict. This limited the government's ability to implement its educational policies. Teachers remained underpaid, contributing to large turnovers, while teaching materials and methods – especially at the secondary level – remained geared towards the academic and higher educational sector. Finally, following the Sandinistas' defeat in 1990, the new government began to reverse many of its policies, including privatizing costs at university level and excising what it saw as political content from the syllabus in favour of more traditional values (Arnove, 1994). The elimination of Sandinista educational policies was arguably made easier by the relative absence of lasting social democratic ideology or political form within that country, a situation that was common throughout Central America (Torres-Rivas, 1993).

The rise of the New Right in education: neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism

Although the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions had represented a specific challenge to the Latin American Right, various pressures during the 1970s and 1980s challenged political and economic thinking throughout the developed and developing world, leading to the rise of the New Right. For education this meant 'progressivism' became discredited (see Giroux and McLaren, 1989; Sarup, 1982).

In Latin America the 1982 debt crisis put pressure on states' ability to spend on social and economic development. International financial institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank began to press domestic elites on structural readjustment, advocating balanced budgets, financial liberalisation, deregulation of domestic markets and privatised public services (Kempner and Jourema, 2002). These *first generation* reforms were followed by support for *second generation* reforms in the 1990s to include state modernisation, strengthened governance and improved social services (Scheman, 1997). For education this involved a focus on primary education spending and improving the system's overall productivity while easing pressure on the public sector by opening up the post-primary sector to the market (Brint, 2006).

However, despite the prominence of the World Bank in the development of this policy package, the Washington Consensus, the extent to which it was fully adopted by domestic elites remains debated. While Jones (1992) notes that World Bank sought to influence and shape opinion, this was constrained both by its banking approach and those borrowers who stood firm against the Bank's policy prescription. Such opposition tended to come from political leaders rather than the technocrats and ministry bureaucrats who supported these reforms and was reflected in the lack of redistribution towards primary education spending or correlation between World Bank lending and spending priorities (Hunter and Brown, 2000). Indeed, despite the World Bank's status as the largest external donor for education projects, relative to total government spending its contribution remained small (Brint, 2006).

Notwithstanding the role of the IFIs, mainly domestic elites shared the neo-liberal goals within the Washington Consensus. Others were more closely associated with the neo-conservatism. These two strands made up the New Right, which were potentially contradictory (Ball, 1990; Whitty, 1997; Giroux and McLaren, 1989; Olssen, 1999). The neo-liberals sought to create an educational free market to encourage competition, consumerism and diversity. By contrast the neo-conservative element drew on the traditional Right's support of a strong government to maintain public morality and order in society (Apple, 1997; Trowler, 1998; Manzer, 2003). The outcome of this coalition was the development of policies emphasizing privatization, administrative decentralization, common standards and a broadly non-consultative approach to relations with other educational actors (López, 1999; Carnoy, 2002; Belfield and Levin, 2002).

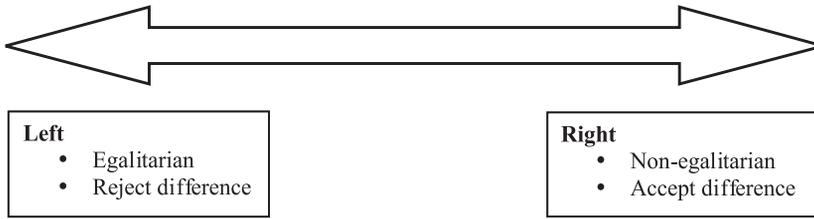
The durability of the New Right's educational policies was ensured by the overlapping between the two strands. Both groups could agree on the importance of preparing individuals for the world of work, most notably through greater emphasis on vocational forms of education (Moore, 1987). Similarly, the use of non-partisan language helped gloss over potential tensions, by the use of terms such as *choice* (via vouchers and tax credits for schools), *raising standards* (through tests and assessments of both students and teachers) and condemning the old curriculum as anti-family, anti-business and secular (Apple, 1997). Finally, alongside an educational free market, the state would maintain overall standards through a national curriculum and nationwide testing of students, teachers and schools (Apple, 1997, 2003). The advantage of this approach would also lie in the use of such tests as a form of market indicator, especially in its less contextualised forms (Carlson, 2000; Gray and Wilcox, 1995).

Throughout the 1990s the region's governments largely followed this policy agenda because they were promoted by economic and finance ministers who concurred with the need for structural readjustment (Kaufman and Nelson, 2005). However, despite these aims, the extent to which those policies were achieved were constrained, due to the involvement of other actors in the policymaking process at the national and local levels, such as unions and bureaucrats (Trowler, 1998; Ball, 1990). This meant that by the mid-2000s implementation of the New Right policy agenda was mixed. Among the most successful had been the expansion of educational access through greater enrolments and students staying in school for longer. At the same time many countries had decentralised their education systems. Against this though, governments had failed to introduce comprehensive standards and devolved decision-making had neither sufficient managerial or oversight capacity. Investment in teacher training programmes appeared to have made little difference in the classroom and the growing use of student testing at domestic and international levels suggested little overall improvement in education results (PREAL, 2006).

Redefined progressivism: the Left in education since the 1990s

The challenges presented by the New Right prompted a rethink by the Left both in ideological and educational terms. The effect of the various social, economic, political and educational changes in the 1970s and 1980s were seen as permanent and made the possibility of a return to the previous form of progressive education or the Cuban model remote. Socially, the Left came to recognise the importance of pluralism: various global and local pressures had transformed societies, prompting them to become more mobile, fluid and flexible (see Giddens, 1991, Lipovetsky and Charles, 2005, Beck, 1994, 1997). Such processes had consequences for politics: the previous model had envisaged a substantial role for the state and expertise being concentrated in the technocratic and bureaucratic classes. The decline of these actors meant the relative rise of influence by other actors beyond the state (Beck, 1994).

Perhaps more importantly, ideologically the end of the Cold War heralded the end of the socialist-capitalist divide. Yet the Left-Right dichotomy persisted, largely reflecting the persistence of the basic values at the core of each pole. This was summarised as a difference of opinion between each pole regarding its acceptance of equality and inequality, or difference and non-difference (Bobbio, 1996; Giddens, 1998; Beck, 1997; Jaguaribe, 1998). In particular, this argument suggested that for the Left, there was a greater tendency to redress inequities (Fig. 2).

Figure 2: Left and Right in the post-Cold War era

The implications of this dichotomy suggested that differences between different political actors were relative. If the Right was generally more tolerant of difference and inequality than the Left (e.g. the consequence resulting from the use of the market), it also held that within each pole there could also be variations and degrees to which an actor was more or less associated with the Left or Right than another. This continuum (Fig. 2) also fitted the differences between deep and shallow progressive education, providing a loose framework by which the Left could be assessed regarding its educational policies (Fig. 3). Indeed, this was useful given the efforts since the 1990s to create a taxonomy of the Left (see Castañeda, 1994, 2006; Kirby, 2003). By the turn of the century it appeared that the Latin American Left had largely divided between three main groups: traditional communists, reformers and radicals (Kirby, 2003).

The traditional communists largely represented the Left of the past, most notably the Cuban regime and its commitment to state-led development and educational policies that echoed the wider expansion in coverage occurring throughout the region. Unlike other regimes though, it was progressive owing to its effort to build the new socialist man. Furthermore its commitment to socialism meant that it was strongly associated with egalitarian values, ensuring that it occupied a clear position on the Left (Fig. 3). Yet as noted previously, not all aspects of Cuban policy indicated that it was especially deep; although it sought to transform social reality, the means were not especially participatory or pluralist. More recently this has begun to change. Since 2001 the regime has pursued various reforms, including efforts to universalise higher education and providing more vocational training in an effort to breathe new life into the Revolution. Although economic opportunities remain limited for graduates, the regime has sought to manage potential conflict, by involving student and youth organisations in the implementation of these policies (Vasquez, 2002; Mesa-Lago, 2005; Kaptcia, 2005).

Unlike the communists, the reformers were less tied to socialist ideals. They broadly concurred with the notion that social, economic and political changes had weakened the salience of ideology. The features of this model came to be identified with the so-called Third Way. However, despite its rhetoric in Latin America the application of its policies tended to rely on technocratic methods employed by (predominantly) middle class state officials, rather than a more socially inclusive and diverse approach. In part this was due to their electoral strategy, which stressed alignment with the political centre. While this has delivered them success, it has meant compromise with some of the elements associated with the prevailing political and economic system, including acceptance of the market and a relative failure to attend to the inequalities of such policies or represent effectively those sectors of society disadvantaged by them (Castañeda, 1994; Roberts, 1998; Goertzel, 1999; de Souza, 1999; Ellner, 2004). Examples of reformers during the 1990s and into the 2000s were the FREPASO-Radical, Socialist-Christian Democrat/Concertacion and PSDB-PFL coalitions in Argentina, Chile and Brazil respectively (see Ellner, 2004).

The modest nature of reformers was evident both in their educational objectives and the policies implemented, which suggested a more shallow approach (Fig 3.). Generally reformers viewed education in primarily economic rather than social terms; education was seen as needing to be sufficiently flexible and professional so as to impart the necessary skills for individuals to engage in the labour market (Giddens, 1998; Bottery, 2000; Petras *et al.*, 1994; Souza, 1999). Education was not seen as ideological (as the Cuban and Sandinista cases before 1989 were) and the policies tended to mirror those undertaken by the New Right, such as decentralisation and student tests. The private sector, for example, was largely left to its own devices: in Brazil the Cardoso government achieved only limited regulation of the higher education sector while in Chile the Concertacion maintained the tripartite school system, including the state-funded private schools which grew throughout the 1990s (Cunha, 2007).

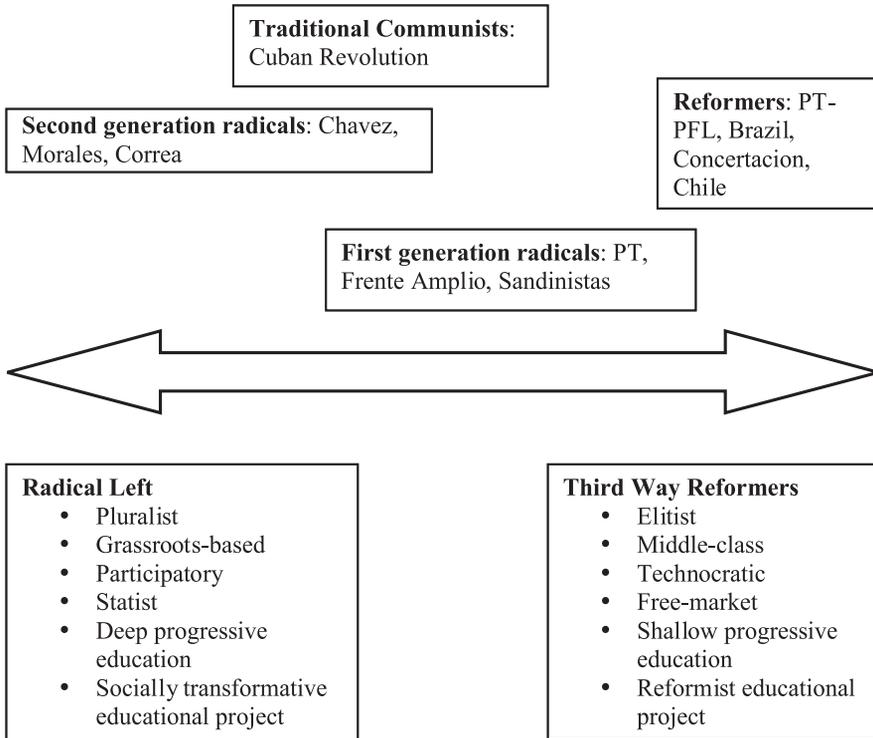
But where the reformers' policies differed from the New Right was in their intent or motivation. In Chile, for example, the Concertacion policymakers introduced programmes directed towards needier groups, such as additional finance for poorer schools and students through the P900 and preferential voucher programmes (Cox, 2007; Kaufman and Nelson, 2005). In Brazil the government sought to make primary school funding more equitable, redistributing funds to the poorer regions and linking resources to the number of students through the creation of FUNDEF in the mid-1990s (Levačić and Downes, 2004; Souza, 2005).

In contrast to reformers, the radicals appeared more inclined to maintain the socialist ideology, at least in its rhetoric. Although it drew on the changes affecting the Left in the 1970s and 1980s, it did not originally share the remedy proposed by Giddens, Beck and others. Socially, its base of support was more inclusive than the largely middle class-dominated Third Way reformers, drawing from a wide range of social movements and actors, including human rights activists, independent trade unionists, neighbourhood associations, feminists, indigenous peoples and sympathetic members of the Church. Furthermore, these activists played a more direct role in policy development and management within these parties; the party generally tended to be an umbrella organisation under which various forms of action and causes were pursued (Petras, 1999). Economically, the radicals were different from the Third Way reformers. They sought to revive the state-led development process during the 1980s, but from the 1990s as they shifted from opposition to government they came to accept the prevailing free-market orthodoxy (Roberts, 1998; Soares *et al.*, 2004; Coggiola, 2004; Katz 2005; Couto and Baia, 2006).

Unlike the traditional communists and Third Way reformers, the radicals could be divided between a first and second generation. The first to emerge in the 1970s and 1980s consisted of parties and coalitions such as the Frente Amplio in Uruguay, the PT in Brazil, Causa R in Venezuela and the Izquierda Unida in Peru (Chavez and Goldfrank, 2004). To this may perhaps be added the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. However, various changes, including falling union memberships, union bureaucratisation, growing labour markets and electoral pressures served to blunt the anti-establishment rhetoric and policy stance of these actors (Petras, 1999). The result was either their virtual disappearance (e.g. Causa R and Izquierda Unida) or a growing moderation once elected to government (Frente Amplio, PT, Sandinistas both in the 1980s and since 2007). Nevertheless, what distinguished them from the more reformist Third Way was their continuing association with grassroots groups in the educational community: the PT government in Brazil, for example, has relatively strong ties to the teachers' and student movements even as their commitment to a more libertarian form of education has diminished since the 1980s (Gadotti and Pereira, 1989; Araujo, 2007). In Uruguay the Frente Amplio government has not made any substantial changes to the education system, following reforms undertaken during the 1990s. Its main contribution has been to host an Education Debate during 2006 with considerable involvement from the unions (Midagliani and Antíall, 2007). In Nicaragua, the main educational development following Sandinistas' return to power in 2007 was an increase in education spending in the first year; although efforts to end school bills have been limited (Roberts, 2008; Friedman, 2008).

The second generation of radicals appears to have overcome the moderation of the former. Rhetorically, such radicals –which Castañeda (2006) defines as the “populist Left”– maintain a more explicit commitment to socialism and nationalism and apparently use policy primarily to either gain or maintain itself in power. The most visible exponents of such radicals include the Chavez government in Venezuela and to a lesser extent the Morales and Correa governments in Bolivia and Ecuador respectively. In Venezuela, the longest established of the three cases, the government has introduced educational programmes geared towards basic literacy and evening and weekend classes for adults: the Robinson and Ribas *misiones*. The rhetoric associated with these programmes has been explicitly associated with equality and reducing difference, with the government’s higher education policies (through the Sucre *mision* and the Universidad Bolivariana de Venezuela) opposed to discrimination and economic domination. The deeper dimension of these programmes has been claimed by the supposedly more libertarian approach adopted, including the use of a *community social-labour component* in adult classes, where small groups of adult students apply both academic discussion and personal experience to solving local and community issues. The impact of such policies as socially transformative –and socialist– has been endorsed by the opposition, who claim that such educational practices are ideologically inspired and not neutral (Wagner, 2005; Vasquez, 2007; Muhr and Verger, 2006). This participatory approach within the educational system and its ideological vision suggests its association with the deep form of educational progressivism, even as it contrasts with the more authoritarian nature of the government itself (Castañeda, 2006; Corrales, 2006).

Figure 3: Contemporary Lefts in Latin America and their educational approaches



CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this paper was to provide a framework by which education policy by the Left might be understood in Latin America. We have sought to do this by seeking to place different Lefts and their educational approaches along an educational continuum, between *shallow* and *deep* versions.

To achieve this we sought to define what is meant by *progressive* education –the form most commonly identified with the Left– and to account for the variations that exist within it, between its deep and shallow forms. In addition, we sought to distinguish between the most visible form of progressive education in the region during the second half of the 20th century, that associated with Cuba (and given the shorter experience of government in the 1980s, the Sandinistas), which challenged the main form of education proposed by Latin American regimes in this period.

In the 1970s and 1980s various economic, social and political challenges not only undermined the status of the Cuban Revolution, but also opened up the region both to democracy and a new policy agenda associated with the New Right. This took the form of a neo-liberal and neo-conservative alliance, of which the Washington Consensus formed part and which was supported both by domestic elites and IFIs. The impact of these actors and ideas was felt in the structural readjustment of the region's states, economies and social services, including education. Increasingly governments began to prioritise public spending on primary schooling while relying on the private sector to accommodate the demand for post-primary education (Brint, 2006).

The effect of these pressures was not lost on the Left. The period saw the emergence of reformist and radical branches alongside the established communists, with different bases of social support and varying degrees of commitment to socialism. Of the three, the reformers, which began to come to power during the 1990s, had the weakest commitment to socialism; they were succeeded by the first generation of the radical Left, whose support for socialism had diminished during the decade. Since the turn of the century a second generation of radicals has emerged, whose rhetoric is notable for being more nationalist and socialist.

The existence of different Lefts affected education in varying degrees. Given the minimal nature of socialism in their ideological content, reformers were amongst the most shallow of progressives in the region: educational goals were largely tied up with the prevailing form of economic development. By contrast radicals (and communists) had a more challenging vision for education and the extent to which this was participatory –both in the development of policy and its implementation– was arguably deeper than that associated with the reformers.

However, we recognise that this effort to develop a framework for the different Lefts and their educational approaches remains limited, including the fact that an attempt to place a government and its educational policies along the progressive continuum will not always result in a clean fit and also the absence of any assessment of performance by these various approaches.

First, the *level of abstraction* required in the construction of the framework ensures that it will not always match reality and tends to be *reductive*, especially in historic terms. As a result while particular regimes and governments may conform to most of the themes and features associated with a particular social/political or economic sub-division, it may not necessarily meet them all; the extent to which Cuba in 1959 may be compared with the Chavez or PT

governments in 2008 will be limited. Consequently, this means that the use of the framework in explaining educational policies and practices must be treated in a relative fashion. The placement of the different branches of the Left in Fig. 3 will not be completely precise, owing to the different degrees to which a government's various educational policies conform to shallower or deeper forms of educational progressivism. Indeed, for example, while some forms of the Left may be more explicit in their commitment to socialism or socialist transformation than others (e.g. the Cuban Revolution, the Chavez government), thereby warranting a position closer to the deeper end of the progressive continuum, in other areas such positions may be less justified. This is most evident in the less pluralist nature of the governments themselves, even as efforts to introduce a more libertarian dialogue within the classroom were being attempted.

The *reductive nature* of the framework may also mean that no substantial difference in policy may be perceived between those governments that are more shallow –especially Third Way reformers– in their approach compared to governments of the New Right. In such circumstances Third Way reformers are seen as implementing the same policies as those governments more associated with the New Right. Indeed, the apparent application of the Washington Consensus and its common policy package, regardless of the particular circumstances of a country, across the region since the 1990s would suggest very little difference in this respect. IFIs do not always get their own way. The obstruction employed by sections of the political class against the more Washington Consensus-inclined technocratic class demonstrates the difference of opinion that may exist within educational policymaking teams. From this perspective it should be apparent that the Left and Right may pursue similar policy paths for substantially different ends. For example, while actors may use similar terms and means to achieve them, such as those for *quality* and *efficiency*, it is necessary to pay close attention to their understanding and interpretation of them. Similarly, despite the contemporary participatory Left's commitment to the market, its categorisation suggests that substantial sections of such political parties and governments may still identify with *state-led* solutions.

Second, the framework provides *no indication of the relative success or failure of a given educational approach* by the Third Way or participatory Left. This may be an issue for observers keen to assess the performance of contemporary governments' educational performance, not least given the recent electoral changes that have taken place in the region. Although some judgment may be made of the cases presented, the achievements or limitations of the latter may not necessarily be derived from the former. Yet this concern should

not be too problematic since it ignores *the main purpose* of this framework, which is to *provide an insight* into the way social democracy may be distinguished within the educational arena.

Despite these limitations though, *the framework remains important* given wider political developments *indicating a growing convergence between Left and Right* (see Bottery, 2000; Panizza, 2005; Zurbriggen, 2007). Both poles are seen as paying similar attention to social justice and equality, which makes the framework. In such circumstances it becomes pressing to identify the main features that distinguish the Left and Right and the implications this has for social policy generally and education in particular.

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