

CONFERENCE « PRIORITES-PRIORITIES-PRIORIDADES »

November 15 to 17, 2000 - Paris

TEACHER TRAINING IN LATIN AMERICA

MODELS AND TENDENCIES

Denise Vaillant

A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE REGION

The first part of this paper places teacher training in its regional context, Latin America, and then goes on to look at the main models of teacher training as well as, at the tendencies which appear in the development of this type of training. We'll give a general overview taking into account the diversity of national situations in Latin America.

1.1 Economic, political and social context

In the 1960's, Latin America begins a phase of deep changes. Without going any further, let us look at the implications of economic and social changes that took place beginning with the second half of this century.¹

From the fifties onwards, Latin America goes through important structural changes linked to the high growth of population, the rapid development in the process of urbanization, the modernizing of national economies, and the strengthening of the State and its institutions (Rama, 1978). Parallel to this process the educational system benefits greatly from a quantitative development without precedent. The great increase in the demand for teaching from the fifties onwards change the face of educational systems in Latin America.²

Between 1950 and 1970, we saw a process of modernization and development linked to the rise of industrialization in the majority of Latin American countries. This phenomenon, which began in the 1950's, intensified itself in the 60's and 70's.

¹ There is a large bibliography on this theme dating mainly from the 1980's. Among others, we can refer to work by Graciarena (1984), Rama (1987), Tedesco (1983 et 1987) et Weinberg (1984).

² This phenomenon is described among others by Braslavsky et al.(1989), Graciarena (1984), Latapi (1990), Rama (1987) and Tedesco (1987)

About that time, the educational growth reaches extremely high rates, in comparison to other parts of the world and or historical moments.³

Toward the end of the 1970s, the socioeconomic situation of Latin America suffered considerable deterioration due in part to the world's economic crisis set off by the oil war.

Latin American countries began to get further and further into debt. The effects of this crisis, the stagnation and the reduction of public spending on education, soon became clear.

The crisis of the educational system during the 70's and 80's can be expressed in different ways, but in most cases in terms of financing, since the deterioration of Latin American economies affected the money allotted to education, which remained stationary and often even decreased.

The financial restrictions imposed on teaching systems had immediate effects on the level of teachers'salaries. The question of salaries had a deep effect in the life of schools. Braslavsky (1991) even considers that increasingly poor teacher pay leads to a vicious circle: the quality of education suffers, and because teachers are badly paid they do not get involved in the process of improving the quality of education⁴.

Economic variables played an important role in the crisis of Latin American teaching systems. This situation worsened in certain countries for political reasons: in the 70's and 80's Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Chile were under a military government. Hundreds of teachers and researchers were forced into exile depriving their countries' cultural institutions of their participation. The relationships between University and Government took a dramatic turn. Rama (1974) qualifies this prejudicial situation, as

³ This theme is fully developed by Figueira (1978)

being the worst that Latin American culture had known over the course of the last hundred years. The result was a worrying impoverishment of teaching, research, exchange of ideas, and intellectual life.

During the 90's, a new model appeared in Latin America. It was based on the opening up of national economies to international competition, foreign investment, technological innovations and macroeconomic balance. The democratic model of government began to spread to the majority of countries in the region and public administration became decentralized. Gradually, Latin America entered a new economic and political order whereas closer links with the USA were created. Open economies, which are part of a global system, require a competitive work force at an international level, particularly in the field of science and technologies.

To meet these demands, Latin American educational systems must set challenging and sometimes, contradictory goals. They have to prepare pupils for the tasks inherent to a modern, competitive international economy; trigger scientific and technological change and at the sometime, promote social equity and mobility. They have to prepare the population to become active participants in a democratic system. To reach these goals, educational systems are required to be sensitive to economic and social changes.

1.2 Educational systems

Access

Latin America has successfully managed to extend education to vast sectors, which were previously excluded from the system. The illiteracy rate went from 34 percent in 1960 to an estimated 13 percent in 1995⁵. The number of children under the age of five

⁴ Braslavsky (1991)

⁵ UNESCO, 1996

attending schools went from 2 percent in 1960 to 17 percent in 1990⁶. The enrollment of children in primary schools has increased by almost 50 percent and today is more than 90 percent in the majority of countries. The secondary education enrollment has gone from 36 to 66 percent per age group and for higher education the enrollment grew up from 6 to 27 percent.

Enrollment levels for secondary education are higher than those in Africa and similar to those in East Asia, whereas enrolment levels for higher education are close to those for Europe and Central Asia⁷. These achievements are quite impressive when put in the context of an average growth in the region, of 3 percent per year for the school population, the phenomena of migration from rural to urban areas, and the debt crisis of the 80's.⁸

Post secondary and higher education has expanded remarkably. Enrollment levels have multiplied by five since 1960, spread out geographically, and diversified by offering new areas of expertise. New specialities have been offered. Today, Latin America has a vast and extremely varied system including polytechnic schools; traditional and new universities (both public and private) designed to meet the growing demand for post-secondary training.

However along with this progress we can identify a certain number of weaknesses. There is inequality of access to education between countries and within the same country. The least well-served social classes are those of the indigenous population and the poor, whether they are from rural or urban areas. The preschool enrolment is still low. Development has been faster in higher social classes-secondary and higher education- and mainly concerns young people from higher or middle-income families. Moreover, the primary and secondary systems in Latin America are highly segmented

⁶ See others publications UNESCO, 1996.

⁷ World Bank, 1995.

⁸ Puyear, 2000.

according to economic status. The least well-off are relegated to the public system while the upper classes and a large part of the middle classes resort to private education.

Quality:

The quality of education given to the majority of children in Latin America is defective. This is particularly true in state schools, which bring together the majority of primary and secondary pupils, belonging to the least well-off classes. Since the emphasis has been placed on development, the system has paid little attention to the processes and results of learning. Financial resources, which could have been spent on laboratories, textbooks or teacher certification, have been invested in classrooms, administrative jobs and teacher salaries.

There are at least five areas suggesting serious problem with the quality of all educational levels.

- a) Average spending per student is well below the level of industrialized countries. As a result of the debt crisis of the 80's government spending on education decreased significantly.
- b) The number of children unable to go up to the next school year in Latin America is among the highest in the world. The average pupil spends 7 years in the primary system to do a four-year syllabus (Schiefelbein and Valenzuela, 1995). One out of two pupils repeats the first year in primary school. The average rate of pupils repeating years within the primary system is 30% per year⁹.

⁹ Wolff, Schiefelbein and Valenzuela, 1993.

- c) The number of pupils who complete the whole cycle in primary schools is low, since only less than half of those who enter the system reach the end¹⁰. The majority of pupils entering the secondary cycle do not complete it. By combining these two indicators, it is clear that while all children spend time at school, few draw significant benefits from learning. In Mexico, for example, almost half the pupils entering the elementary cycle do not complete it. This implies that they are unable to read and write, and they do not master basic arithmetic.¹¹

- d) The level of examinations is low. The success rate of Latin American pupils is low when the few comparative studies available are analyzed. A comparative study carried out in 1997 by the Association for the Assessment of the Effects of Education and the regional office of UNESCO for Latin America and the Caribbean shows that 7 Latin American countries, including Chile are below the countries of Europe and East Asia (Indonesia, Hong Kong and Singapore being among these).

- e) Productivity in science and technologies is low. Latin American contributions to the international scientific community are limited and concentrated in only a few countries. Although the number of qualified engineers and technicians has significantly increased over recent decades, the proportion of students enrolled in basic sciences remains low.

There are numerous obstacles to improving the quality of education and among these we choose to focus on two in particular.

- a) Traditional educational systems have given birth to a certain number of problems, which are difficult to overcome. Large, centralized ministries keep a

¹⁰ UNESCO-OREALC, 1992.

jealous eye on their power and their charges. Teaching Unions, which are powerful and well organized, have in certain cases resisted decentralization, a greater autonomy for school administrators, and greater parental decision-making power. Often, Ministers of Education have had too much power although they stay in office for an average of only one-year.

- b) Governments have not given education the political priority it deserves. In certain cases Latin American nations increased budgets, changed syllabuses, and invested in laboratories or regulations, but very few were prepared to invest their political power in educational reform. The result is that Ministers of Education-those mainly responsible for deciding on educational policy-have always been weak-kneed, lacking qualified, prestigious, charismatic and responsive professional staff, and the necessary political support needed for bringing about significant changes.

¹¹ De Ibarrola, 1995.

THE MAIN MODELS OF TEACHER TRAINING

2.1 The teachers

In Latin America, teachers at all levels of education lack the motivation for professional development. A third of the teachers in the region do not have certification or professional qualifications¹². In rural schools in NorthEast Brazil only 40 percent of the teachers have completed their own elementary studies¹³. This is due partly to financial reasons, but also due to an educational system, which accords greater importance to increasing the number of enrollments than to reinforcing the professional role of teachers. The considerable increase in the number of jobs for teachers over the last forty years has occurred without having the necessary means to create and maintain quality of teaching. Low salaries and poor working conditions have brought down the level of recruitment of new teachers. Recent research has shown that beginning teachers, who enter training, have incredibly low academic levels.

A study carried out in six countries has shown that levels of satisfaction and prestige as well as the desire for excellence were very low¹⁴. The principal factor causing a low quality of education in Latin America is the lack of attention to the professional development of teachers. The motivations for encouraging teachers to improve their teaching (adequate salaries, perfection, rigorous periodic assessment, and competitive entrance examination) are seldom found.

Teacher training and school management have not changed the traditional method of « frontal » classroom teaching, in which learning is dictated to pupils, where

¹² World Bank, 1993.

¹³ Harbison and Hanushek, 1992.

¹⁴ Schiefelbein and all, 1994.

memorization plays an active role, and where only correct answers have value. Discussion among pupils for solving problems is a rarely.

2.2. The models

In the case of Latin America, the research carried out by Messina (1997) based on data from nineteen countries, has made it possible to state that the last twenty years have seen a clear tendency for the transfer of secondary school initial teacher training towards higher education (tertiarization¹⁵), by slightly increasing the required level of study for qualification as a teacher.

In fact, between 1975 and 1995, the general level of education (from primary level to the final qualifications as a teacher) has increased in two ways, in sixteen of the nineteen countries studied. The number of years of teacher training and the academic level required for entry into the course of study leading to qualification as a teacher in training syllabuses in numerous countries, Now having completed a full cycle of secondary studies is a compulsory prerequisite¹⁶. In this respect, Latin America follows the trend of the majority of industrialized countries, which require from all teachers at primary and secondary levels a University diploma or equivalent (UNESCO 1998).

Messina's study also shows the great heterogeneous nature of training programs at national and regional levels. We find, for example, universities combined with teacher training colleges in the category of higher education, lower level teacher training colleges working with universities, professional institutes working with universities, all of which have created in a number of countries, training structures of differing quality.

¹⁵ In this movement towards tertiary level which Messina calls « tertiarization », there are considerable time differences between countries since the movement is spread between the 1960's and the 1990's.

¹⁶ Messina points out that between 1975 and 1995 the number of years required went from ten to eleven and the duration of teaching studies from 3 to 3.5 years. Thus the total number of years spent in education went from 13 to 14.5 or 15 years.

According to the author, the key points of the regional studies can be summed up in two words: tertiarization and heterogeneity (1997: 68)¹⁷

Out of the nineteen countries studied, nine have a training structure with differentiated systems (Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Peru, Venezuela, Panama, Brazil and Nicaragua) whereas 10 have more homogeneous institutional structures for a given level of the educational system and in a single type of institution. Uruguay is part of the second group along with Colombia, Paraguay, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico, The Dominican Republic, Honduras and Guatemala. However, in several of these countries the Universities play an active role which may take different forms, which itself clearly introduces heterogeneity into teacher training.

This tendency to transfer teacher training to universities has implied a break with the traditional model, which historically has been the source for initial teacher training for more than a century. This model was part of the 19th century liberal movement for public education, free of charge, compulsory and non religious in which the State claimed its role and responsibility in primary education and consequently in teacher training.

« This diversity developed from a common origin-the teacher training college » (Messina, 1997: 74). Processes of change, which took place between 1960-1995, can be grouped in three categories:

- a) The closure of the teacher training colleges and the transfer of teacher training to the universities. This was observed in Chile during the authoritarian regime¹⁸.

¹⁷ Carnoy and de Moura Castro share this view of the quality of teacher training in Latin American countries: «Teacher training in colleges is undergoing a transition everywhere in the world. The young generations, in general, have access to higher and higher levels of teaching and educational systems require that teachers have greater knowledge of subjects and improved teacher training. However teacher training colleges have undergone little change in Latin American countries and one may question their efficiency » (1997: 23).

- b) Teacher colleges were still in existence at the intermediary level, in Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. However, tertiarization is coming around and in Brazil and Panama universities are involved in Initial Training while in Colombia universities are getting more involved. Finally, teaching remains at the secondary level only in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.
- c) Tertiarization of teacher training colleges in most countries (13). In three of them (Cuba, Uruguay and Paraguay) the colleges have the monopoly of teacher training.

The policies of change for teacher training have triggered an important academic debate in Latin American countries about what Diker and Terigi (1997b) called « institutional anchoring of Initial Training », that is the role teacher training has or should have in the educational system, and the consequences of this position in teacher training colleges and/or universities.

The above mentioned authors notice that the transfer of teacher training from the traditional training colleges – *the Escuelas Normales, the Institutos de Profesorado*- to Universities is often presented as a sine qua non condition for better quality. The arguments are as follows:

- a) It is a way of giving greater value to the teaching profession in so far as University awards the diplomas and ensures a longer and more complete period of training.

¹⁸ Today in Chile, initial training is shared between the universities and professional colleges (non university colleges of higher education)

- b) It is the consequence of the acknowledgement of the complexity of teacher training and the need to reinforce teacher training in the specialized subjects, to the detriment of didactic and pedagogical training.
- c) It is the result of the legitimacy of the university as a place providing academic knowledge.
- d) It is a way of introducing changes in the structure of teacher training centers, to give them a less bureaucratic aspect, and to make them more flexibles.

Diker and Terigi underline some of the advantages of a university teacher training model (the different qualifications, the link between teaching and research, the academic organization and the forms of socialization based on another conception of intellectual activity) but they also reveal some problems:

- a) The gap between initial teacher training (university) and the practical field of teaching (in school) may increase.
 - b) There is a risk of supposing that a higher level of education means an improvement in training. In fact, it has never been clearly shown that the transfer of teacher training to universities has improved the quality of teaching.
 - c) The change in the academic organization in teacher training colleges to the corresponding organization in universities can be very difficult and sometimes inefficient.
-

Diker and Terigi (1997c: 32) claim that the key question is not to know which type of institutions and structures should be responsible for training but which practices we want to transform or develop. We have to find a structure that can develop professional teaching practices, where teacher educators can increase their knowledge of school practices and strategies. They would then be able to rely on training in the specialized subjects, on contact with teachers by means of certification and pedagogical research. The structures can be considered as alternatives aimed at facilitating the practices that we want to promote or develop. The definition of these practices is one of the greatest uncertainties in the ongoing process.

TENDENCIES AND CHALLENGES

3.1 What themes?

Among the themes under study in the teaching in Latin American countries, we can mention the one in relation with the access to teacher training courses. In Latin American countries where studies have been carried out, it has been shown that a student who enrolls in teacher training studies is less successful than one who chooses a different university course and will have lower qualifications than those required of him throughout his career.

Secondly, at what level do teacher-training centers operate? At an intermediary level, at a non-university level of higher education or at university? In Latin American countries, the answers have varied. The common objective is to reach a university level of study or a non-university level of higher education. Some countries have placed teacher training at university level (Costa Rica and Chile). In most Latin American countries the old « *escuelas normales* » have been transformed into institutes of higher education with two to five year courses and for which the entry requirements are having completed secondary studies. In other countries such as Brazil, there are other possibilities. Brazil is a process of transition towards a higher level: teacher training colleges and institutes of higher education continue to accept students and some university courses continue to train secondary school teachers.

A very important third line of development recently has been Continuing Education. Everybody agrees that teacher training must be linked to professional qualification. However no country has thought of applying this to the whole territory, apart from Argentina where the colleges have to include professional qualification in their function.

The professional qualifying policy does not yet coincide in its theoretical bases with the teacher training. If they did coincide, this would mean that teacher training and professional qualification would have the same pedagogical aim even if they were given in different institutions. In Latin America, teacher training colleges have not been given the money necessary to implement the validation of professional qualification since the money has always been given to the central agencies which have continued to be responsible for awarding professional qualification. There would always be national validation programs competing with colleges of higher education if the latter were really responsible for awarding teaching qualifications.

The other axis is that of training and research. Latin American countries have no clearly defined policies on this subject. In no country can we find teacher training colleges which carry out research on teaching enabling them to run their teaching courses in connection with research findings on educational phenomena and the functioning of the system. In almost all the countries, there are prestigious colleges, which have research centers, but the teacher training colleges as such do not carry out research. No Latin American country includes research as a component of its teacher training apart from Argentina, which does so with unequal results. However, in the last three meetings of Latin American countries on teacher training, there has been agreement that the teaching should be based on research: the gap which exists nowadays between what is taught and what is known about one particular phenomenon in the country should no longer exist.

The fifth axis concerns training and innovation. For a long time the educational system has been characterized by its routine, with isolated examples of innovation which have no influence on the every day life of the system: that is the reality of Latin American countries. When there is innovation, it is not a consequence of the functioning of the system. The system does not produce innovative ideas, which would be applied because they result from an analysis, a critical assessment and suggestions. This phenomenon is

a logical consequence of the absence of any link between training and research, which would lead to innovations. If the teacher training colleges were in constant contact with the every day life of primary schools and high schools, there would be innovation in teaching.

Finally, there is general questioning about actual practices. In almost all Latin American countries, the practice continues to be « applicationist »- that is to say that the theory learnt is applied in the professional practice. This is generally reserved to a course in the last semester or the last year of the course. A fairly generalized reaction has resulted in suggestions in a small number of countries and within these countries in a small number of institutes. The practice as a structuring principle in teacher training is one of the suggestions made by Argentina, and some countries (such as Brazil and Mexico) have decided that the practice should be applied to the different levels of the system and in different ways. In other words, the conception of the « *escuela de practica* » which was traditional in teacher training colleges has become the exception

3.2 What challenges?

An analysis of teacher training in Latin America, at a time of great social changes underlines the huge complexity of the problems and the need to face them with systematic strategies of action and not partial policies. But recognizing the need to consider the problem in its entire dimension does not mean that it is possible or even desirable to try and solve everything at the same time.

The systemic characteristic must be understood as the need to define a sequence in the actions, through which it is shown when and how the different aspects of the problem will be considered.

The global and systemic characteristic which the training policy of teachers in Latin America must adopt goes hand in hand with a series of challenges which will appear in the decades to come:

1. Recruitment of teachers: attract the most competent students towards the teaching profession
2. Initial training: improve the link between initial training and the requirements for professional development
3. Training at work: provide permanent qualification for all the staff
4. Involvement of teachers and other staff in the process of transformation of education: autonomy and responsibility
5. Promotion of professionalism as a strategy to improve the situation and working conditions of teachers.
6. Solidarity with teachers working in difficult conditions
7. Regional and international cooperation: an instrument to promote the mobility and competence of teachers

The great challenge for those responsible in Latin American countries is to learn to deal with the complexity of teacher training and education in the future. A future which will concern educational change and an education which is « From the cradle to the grave critical and reflexive, which inspires us with a new way of thinking and encourages us to discover who we are in a society, which is happier with itself. Which takes maximum advantage of our inexhaustible creativity and which conceives of ethics- and perhaps aesthetics-for our immeasurable desire and our legitimate wish to fulfil ourselves. Which combines sciences and arts within the same family, in accordance with the aims of a great poet of our times who wanted us to stop loving them as two warring sisters » (Gabriel Garcia Márquez, *Por un país al Alcance de los niños*, 1994)

BIBLIOGRAPHIE

BRASLAVSKY, C. et al. (1989). Educación en la transición a la democracia. Santiago de Chile: UNESCO/OREALC.

CARNOY, M. ET DE MOURA CASTRO, C. (1997). La reforma educativa en América Latina- Actas de un seminario. Serie del Departamento de Desarrollo Sostenible. Washington D.C. : Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo.

DE IBARROLA, M. (1995). Dinámicas de transformación de los sistemas educativos. Dans J. Puryear and J.J. Brunner. Education Equity an Economi Competitiveness in the Americas. Vol II. Washington, D.C. : Organization of American States.

DIKER, G. ET TERIGI, F. (1997): La formación de maestros y profesores : hoja de ruta. Buenos Aires : Ed. Paidós.

FILGUEIRA, C. (1978). "Expansion de l'éducation et stratification sociale en Amérique latine (1960-1970)". Perspectives, vo. VIII, No 3. Paris : UNESCO

GRACIARENA, J. (1984). Universidad y desarrollo en America Latina y el Caribe. Caracas: UNESCO/CRESALC.

HARBISON R. W. ET HANUSHEK , E. A.(1992). Educational Performance of the Poor : Lessons from Rural Northeast Brazil. New York : Oxford University Press.

LATAPI, P. (1990). "La recherche éducative en Amérique latine: quelques défis à relever". Perspectives, vol XX, No 1. Paris : UNESCO.

MESSINA, G. (1997): Cómo se forman los maestros en América Latina. Boletín del Proyecto Principal de Educación Nro. 43. Santiago. UNESCO.

PUYEAR, J. (2000). La Educación en América Latina : Problemas y Desafíos. Serie Documentos No 7. Santiago de Chile : PREAL.

RAMA G. (1987). Desarrollo y educación en America Latina y el Caribe. vol.1 et 2. Buenos Aires: CEPAL-UNESCO-PNUD.

TEDESCO, J.C. (1983). "Tendencias en el desarrollo de la educación superior en America latina y el Caribe". Cuadernos sobre la educación superior. Paris:UNESCO.

TEDESCO, J.C. (1987). "El impacto de la crisis en el sector educativo: situación actual y perspectivas futuras". Dans *Desafío educativo: calidad y democracia*,. Buenos Aires: Grupo Editorial Latinoamericano.

SCHIEFELBEIN, E. ET AL (1994). *Caracteristics of the Teaching Profession and the Quality of Education in Latin America. The Major Project of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Santiago de Chile : UNESCO.

UNESCO (1995). *Statistical Yearbook 1995*. Lanham, MD : UNESCO.

UNESCO (1996). *The State of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1980-1994*. Santiago de Chile : UNESCO

UNESCO-OREALC, (1992). *Situación educativa de América Latina y el Caribe, 1980-1989*. Santiago de Chile : UNESCO-OREALC.

WEINBERG, G. (1984). *Modelos educativos en el desarrollo historico de América Latina*. Buenos Aires: Kapelusz.

WOLFF, L., SCHIEFELBEIN, E. ET , J. (1993). *Improving the Quality of Primary Education in Latin America : Towards the 21st Century*. Latin America and the Caribbean Technical Department Regional Studies Program Report 28. Washington, D.C. The World Bank.

WORLD BANK (1995). *Priorities and Strategies for Education : A World Bank Review*. Washington, D.C. : The World Bank.

WORLD BANK (1993). *Human Resources in Latin America and the Caribbean : Priorities and Action*. Washington, D.C. : The World Bank.