Beat: Politics

Education in Latin America

A matter of politics

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USPA NEWS - Three teachers from Brazil, Chile and Argentina have concluded that, due to the governments their countries have passed through, Latinamerican education fluctuates between success and failure. This information was taken from the colombian teachers' general convention which took place in Colombia.

Hugo Yasky (Argentina), Fatima Da Silva (Brazil) and Guillermo Scherping (Chile) affirm that opportunities and problems in terms of education, depend mainly on the political system of each country because it is based on the kind of government one country has, there will be -or won't-investment and support on education.

Guillermo Sherping, asserts that "you can conclude something based on objectives, and I believe that Latinamerican public systems must be connected to countries' development, as well as people's personal and intellectual growth, that is, to establish balance between what standardized proofs measure and what education for living means". However, he says in Chile those goals have gone downhill.

"What right-wing looks forward is to improve a merchandising model related to education, and what they conclude is that educational system in Chile has failed because parents choose schools wrongly and for helping them in their choices it is necessary to develop standardized proofs, so that they have something to guide them. We assure that municipalization is absolutely wrong, because it has lead to turn education into a private system and we have went from 85% of public registrations to 30%."

Moreover political condition in Chile is complicated, with the less popular government and left-wing making slow decisions to take a clear stance on a candidate and his/her platform. In spite of this most people are aware of injustice related to school system and that of privatization tendency there is no guarantee to overcome poverty.

"We need most citizens to win elections in order to get a government capable to do what has not been done during 20 years in Chile. The next president must settle a new educational institucionality and to develop a professional career for teachers, not for granting a privilege to them, but to establish better conditions for youth to be educated."

Argentina and Brasil: changes have been possible

According to Hugo Yasky, an argentinian school teacher, this country has had an incomparable advance since 2003. From the beginning of Néstor Kirchner's government, Gross Domestic Product (PIB in spanish) went from 3,4% to 6,5%; teachers get a basic wage -'dignity salary', is the name in Argentina- which estimates a monetary retribution that cannot be diminished and gets financial assistance from the government. Nowadays, teachers demand a financial complement to achieve 8 percentage points of GDP for education investment.

Another advance was the repeal of the Federal Education Law -strongly influenced by Chilean government- and on 2007, the approval of a National Education Law which establishes the obligatory nature of highschool, that education is a right and that it cannot be part of free trade agreements.

Yasky says that Kirchner's government "broke a political tradition which was deeply influenced by huge enterprises and that established their policies based on the commitments acquired with the World Bank Group as well as the Internacional Monetary Fund."

He also refers that Argentinian government, similarly to its political counterparts, "has a different ideological perspective but it is still looking for social and economical equality which allows to certain extent, autonomy to stop depending on the IMF which would imply to step back from social advances achieved the last years in this region."

Then again, there is Brazil where it is said that public education tend to make amends with citizens, due to the fact that there are 14 millions of illiterates. Professor Fatima Da Silva says that brazilian state is also promoting a policy of quota for african americans and indigenous people so that they can attend universities.

Fatima also maintains that former president, Luiz InÃ¡cio Lula da Silva, changed definitely educational system. For instance, Brazil went from 3,9% to 5,2% of GDP for education, and the expectation is to get 10%. "Different from what occurs in many Latinamerican countries, in Brazil 25% of taxes are invested on education," she says.

About political and social changes, she confirms that society assures government achievements with state policies that help everyone.

"Nowadays we see that even the richests won with Lula, but Brazil's wealth is distributed better. We have people eating better, having consumer goods, jobs, and those things change people lifes. The current government is doing its best to keep its objectives; actually, there is a slogan which says: 'a rich country, is a country without poverty'."

Fatima also assures that this kind of governors who tend to protect citizens, must keep ruling.

"I can say that in Latinamerica there are democratic governments such as in Brazil, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, El Salvador, Uruguay, which have something in common: they come from social struggles, they have diminished the gap between rich and poor, they see the importance of regional integration, and those are essential aspects for us. Having these governments is a huge achievement for any democracy."

If left-wing tendency is capable to remain standing and getting more politycal broadcast, there is a possibility to have improvements on every social and economic respect related to education, because only by its means the continent could have fair and even-handed societies.

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