



RESEARCH
brief Nr.3

INFLUENCE OF A CRITICAL PEDAGOGY GROUP IN SIX LATIN AMERICAN EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Latest information to the existing status of the project
Frugality as Value and Practice

by CFIA
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INTRODUCTION

In the last five decades of the 20th century and with nuances by country, states in Latin America have expanded the coverage of their public education systems and have been able to offer educational opportunities to more children in remote areas and vulnerable contexts. While increasing public spending for education, states have also sustained attempts to harmonize the education agenda and achieve universal coverage of primary or basic education, especially in rural, indigenous and impoverished urban areas. Despite these efforts, Latin American educational systems present average performance scores, clearly below countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Moreover, since 2014 Latin America has experienced a decrease in its economic growth rates which has resulted in a slowdown, stagnation or decline in the integrative capacity of education systems. This slowdown has a significant impact on coverage and quality of education across countries and most public systems are currently struggling with budget constraints and pressures to improve the coverage and quality of education.

Since the 60s the Group of Educators of Religious Origin with Critical Pedagogical Approaches (GEROCPA) emerged as a movement that promotes comprehensive, inclusive and high-quality education from, with and for communities in remote rural places throughout Latin America. While promoting education with social justice, it has acquired significant influence, scope and recognition within the national education systems. GEROCPA's incidence on the national public education system is observed specially in giving frugal responses to consultations of public policy makers. Furthermore, GEROCPA schools are seen as innovative centers that test new methods in resource-constrained settings, which has sometimes enabled governments to learn from those experiences and replicate them across the board as public education policy. The monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of GEROCPA schools have also allowed them to discard various failed policies.

The study explored the ways and channels through which GEROCPA has influenced the national educational systems in a resource-constrained context. It has been guided by the research questions: in what ways does this Group of Educators of Religious Origin with Critical Pedagogical Approaches (GEROCPA) exert influence in the national Latin American education systems? This research brief presents a summary of the findings.

WHO IS THIS BRIEF FOR

This research brief may interest fellow academics, policymakers, civil servants, international organizations, think-tanks and practitioners interested in educational policy.

THE RESEARCH METHOD

The study started with a comprehensive literature review and general scan of experts in the education system. Following a consulted selection process, the national researchers conducted 127 semi-structured interviews with key actors in the education sector, civil society, the research community, public policy-makers and key actors in the critical pedagogies' movement.

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THE STUDIED COUNTRIES



FINDINGS

FIVE CONCRETE AND SUSTAINED ACTIONS

The evidence suggests that GEROCPA has limited but critical influence in the education policies of Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, Peru, Dominican Republic and Venezuela. Its incidence is not homogeneous either geographically or temporarily and it varies among countries and within them, but it was possible to identify five concrete and sustained actions relatively common in the six countries under study that unveil the incidence of GEROCPA in the Latin American national education systems:

- Participating in public discussions such as those in the media or pedagogical and academic forums at universities and civil society organizations;
- Joining local, regional and national government spaces to discuss organic, sectorial laws and regulations associated with educational practice;
- Holding memberships in civil associations, federations and confederations related to education;
- Responding to the queries made by governments as an organization that implements educational policy;
- Creating good practices of school administration as models to imitate or replicate, labelled the “Showcase effect”.



Figure .1 Five concrete actions that shape the incidence of GEROCPA in the countries of the study.

4 MAIN CHARACTERISTICS

The key actors interviewed in the study acknowledge four main characteristics that constitute a platform from which GEROCPA can influence the education system. These work as channels to exert incidence on national policy:

1

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POSITIONALITY

A clear political stance to serve the poor and excluded from a critical pedagogical approach implies a positionality for the defense of the right to education and translates into co-managing this responsibility with the state in the margins of society.

2

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REPLICABILITY

GEROCPA has gained a reputation for its combination of frugality and innovation in education which is perceived across the national system as particularly suitable for precarious contexts. Its school management methods and pedagogical approach is regularly transferred to public and private schools in more or less formal ways.

3

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QUALITY OF EDUCATION

GEROCPA schools are usually perceived to perform better in educational achievement indicators than the average state-run schools. The positive assessment explicitly refers to compliance with the school calendar, the fulfillment of tasks by teachers, their collective training and the organization's constant escorting of pedagogical processes.

4

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RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STATE

A relative consolidation of financial agreements between GEROCPA and national states complements more or less organic forms of cooperation in the education arena. Although cooperation is rarely harmonious, the balance is restored when dealing with the educational deficiencies in the region and when the need for diverse cooperation to solve them becomes salient.



CONCLUSION

The study unveils GEROCPA's sustained effective actions to influence education policy and sketches the platform that enables its incidence in the national education systems of Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, Peru, Dominican Republic and Venezuela. It identified five concrete actions performed systematically to influence the six national education systems (see figure 1). Furthermore, the study unveiled four key characteristics that constitute a platform from which the group can exert incidence in the national education systems and promote critical education approaches. These are the clear political stance of the movement, the replicability of the model promoting innovation in resource constrained settings, the higher educational attainment indicators and the relatively organic forms of cooperation with the state.