

Vice Minister of Pedagogical Management

Martín Vegas: a way of doing Perú has been exhausted

Since the beginning, the current management of the Ministry of Education (MINEDU) has been committed to the agenda of the National Education Project (PEN in Spanish). This is a strategic commitment, a change of direction which means also a different style of doing politics in education, less patronizing with the public and with no addiction to applause. Martín Vegas, a lawyer and current Vice Minister of Pedagogical Management, identifies the key aspects of the political agenda of national education.



Julia Vicuña/Tarea

TAREA: *According to the census evaluation, we are facing results that are not optimal. After a decade of multiple actions of teacher training, training in communication and math, and the delivery of educational materials, the feeling is that if we keep doing this, the same bad results will continue. What changes should be done in the government's action in education?*

Martín Vega (MV): The results show stagnation in the learning achievements of children and an increase in inequality, which shows that a way of doing politics in education in Perú has been exhausted; many actions have been undertaken and many activities have been made, but only 13% of children get what they need in math and 30% in communication.

This situation marks a turning point and for us it has two parts: one concerns education policy, which the MINEDU and regional governments do, because they have an important responsibility, and the other has to do mainly with a social mobilization strategy, with a

INTERVIEW BY SEVERO CUBA AND JULIA VICUÑA

g politics in education in

commitment of various sectors to achieve common objectives in the sector.

With respect to educational policy, we have to work solving structural problems and, simultaneously, achieve concrete results, because for us this year the transformation in education contained in the PEN begins. It is necessary to show that there are things that are changing: the first was “the good start of school year” strategy, a sort of first shock, that is, to break bad habits such as lateness in the provision of texts, or lack of teachers in rural areas. Having everything ready the first day of school meant generating a different movement around the bureaucratic public apparatus, in Lima, in the regions, and so on. Now we have to do the same to improve students’ learnings during the school year. It is a time for quality for us.

TAREA: *The good start of school year is the first effort to make a difference and break the inertia. Indeed, in some regions it started on time, in some not, but what lessons does this first experience leave?*

M. V.: First, it’s great that the political will to make a change is expressed in very specific indicators; they are not all, true, but it is important that children begin classes happy and that the work will be measured by tangible and verifiable results.

Second, we demonstrated that it is possible that officials, procedures, budgets start working on the basis of objectives. We got 100% of the teachers’ contracts on time, but some teachers have not yet signed them due to delays at their Local Education Management Units (UGEL), so they will charge their March salary in April, but they began, they started working. On the other hand, by March 25, 83% of the money required for

school maintenance had been withdrawn.

This leaves a very interesting lesson: it is true that in rural areas it has been more difficult because teachers and principals, who are both teachers and principals - have been hired later, but comparing the regions that have reached almost 100% and 50%, the problem has nothing to do with either the distance or the weather. There are regions such as Puno and Apurimac in which classes could not begin, notwithstanding which teachers have managed to get paid and make the whole process. This means, and that is the lesson which we referred to, that even if there are extra educational problems, when a region is well organized, it can achieve that kind of things.

And regarding the issue of textbooks during the month of March, we have completed delivery in primary, information that has been verified by the UGEL. Many regions wondered how they would transport the books; we helped them realize they had the budget in their region to bring the books to schools. So, learning on management is increasing.

We have also learned that when there is clear communication with the community, the community gets involved.

I think with regard to participation in education, there was a kind of saturation because, although everybody contributed, nothing changed. Then, as it was very necessary to have a teacher and a text, a very interesting movement was created that we hope can be deployed even more.

TAREA: *We have recently seen a set of rules in El Peruano (official gazette), and between the focusing and*

the multigrade school proposal there is the issue of Marca Perú schools, which sounds like a mixture of Gastón Acurio and Magaly Solier. What is this concept?

M. V.: The first decision was simple: in Perú we are proud of our cuisine and our cinema. Can we be also proud of schools that do good things? We said “yes, it is possible” and that’s it. We designed a model of action of the school with four processes: curriculum development, strengthening institutional framework in each school, professional performance of teachers - everything done through activities - and support we call “decentralized management”.

In 2012, this Marca Perú model begins in 72 rural networks. We decided that the first schools of which we will be proud of would be one-teacher schools, multigrade schools, Quechua, Awajún and Aymara schools. In three years or less, these schools will be able to say they are “export models” for other schools of their regions.

TAREA: *You are placing intercultural and bilingual matters as central.*

M. V.: Yes. Even if things improve, and hopefully they will, the gaps can increase, and to close gaps we are investing 1 200 million soles in these schools, in a monolingual context as well as in multilingual contexts. This also implies the development of strategies in different languages, also very important challenge.

TAREA: *How many students does it involve?*

M. V.: We’re talking about 32 000 students in around 1000 schools of 72 networks. And the intervention has a pedagogic component, because the State has not had a pedagogic proposal in one-teacher and multigrade schools. This is a pedagogical proposal along with a management proposal: the school network will become a sort of big school, with a director dedicated only to educational leadership and an administrator who is responsible for dealing with all problems related to the specialty. In addition, they will have a resource center, as in civil society institutions. Then, there is a management and an important infrastructure component, which includes both the school and this resource center, and housing for teachers where necessary. This is a more comprehensive proposal.

TAREA: *Are we also talking about a “new teacher”?*

M. V.: Yes. It’s actually a chain, because in Perú and in the Ministry the idea that in-service training must be above all inter-learning strategies has grown increasingly; the need to create a learning community among teachers where they can go and learn from a school where there are ‘accompanying’ teachers, the most outstanding ones. But that initiative that has already started in the Ministry, learning from institutions such as TAREA and others, lacked the trainer ‘companions’, so that the chain was broken; ‘companions’ that do not really have much to advice are hired.

The strategy with teachers has three levels: the teacher in a more articulated logic of the learning community, the ‘companion’ as pedagogic consultant, and a trainer. And this year, from the results of the census evaluation, a point that perhaps may be controversial has appeared: we have seen that we have to get more results of this evaluation in pedagogical terms, because what we all know is usually “I’m in Level 2, 1 or -1”, but that does not help me when the time to act in my school comes, when the evaluation throws a lot of data in relation to what the most cognitive challenges are, and, therefore, what the challenges for teachers are. Thus, the support strategy for this year is focused on starting from those situations.

TAREA: *Which ones, for example?*

M. V.: What is happening is that children are using the most mechanical part of learning: at second grade, children should read half a page of a topic ‘close’ to them; and they can read it by spelling, but they can hardly respond when asked for the three main ideas of this little story. That is what the teacher does not teach students, and that is precisely why teachers are told: “Look, it is not so much spelling and syllables and see all these methods, but rather in a text children discover the three main ideas, ideas from which they can draw a conclusion, and that they can write in a small phrase, in a sentence, with their own words”. So the educational support will focus on how this transition occurs, the process of cognitive development.

TAREA: *In this part of the chain, do you need someone to form this ‘companion’, also from a pedagogical perspective, without having that mechanical emphasis...?*

M. V.: Sure, because teacher education has also been very mechanical. If they see a theory, they say, “Okay, recite the six steps of Piaget and Vygotsky’s eight steps”

or “use this methodology ...”, hence they cannot act. The teacher has prior learnings; cognitive conflicts should be also provoked in teachers, but in a way, we say, ‘well grounded’ to the situation of their children and with an important component.

In our case, for the Marca Perú strategy, along with network projects, we have pedagogical support projects that will collect evidence - case studies - of what works well, and that will allow us to move forward in extending these strategies to other areas.

TAREA: *Who will play the role of ‘companions’?*

M. V.: The first option is outstanding teachers who are in a classroom; that is why there is a decree to allow them to work on these projects. But another important quarry we are seeing is the Pedagogical Institutes, which are almost off, even though we made some changes on the issue of initial training. Our institutional goal for 2013 is to certify trainers, which also has to do with the jurisdiction of MINEDU; actually trainers are hired in the regions, and some do it well and others do it wrongly, because unfortunately, there are regions that use this mechanism to pay political favors and even family issues. Therefore it is urgent to have a national body for quality control. Thus, they will be told, not for this year but for the next: “You can select trainers according to your strategy, but we set the parameters and certification, and you select from the certified candidates”. And it also refers to the balance we’re finding between a decentralized management we believe in, and this element to ensure the guidance of the Ministry.

TAREA: *That means that from Marca Perú schools there will be an emphasis on specialist teachers in EBI (Intercultural Bilingual Education), for example. In many of those who are already working there will be a transformation, but there will also be new contracts, and here we talk about public teacher career policy. Minister Salas has announced that by the second half of the year we will have an improved proposal for public teaching career. What does this improvement refer to?*

M. V.: In this April, we will present the proposal so it can be applied in the second semester. The first point that must be resolved is the fact that the minority of teachers is in the Teacher Public Service Law and the majority is in the Law of Teachers. It is untrue that teachers are now in a meritocratic system. If we continued with the rate of incorporation into the Service as in the previous administration, we could take 20 years. Hence the first point for us is the strategy for a faster incorporation, and that involves finding the ‘bottlenecks’ of the Law that have made the teachers be out of the Service. There is one thing that will not be changed: if a teacher fails at the third evaluation, obviously that teacher cannot continue working. But what the Service lacks is that is not sufficiently attractive to teachers: as most were at levels 1 and 2, then a new scale to make the Law more attractive to teachers is urgent.

TAREA: *Does this include wage levels?*

M. V.: Absolutely, and it is likely that the percentage of teachers at each level is also changed. That is a point we have asked the National Council of Education, but still there is no answer. We are very interested in the opinion of the Council in this regard.

The other point is performance evaluation. Something interesting is that teachers themselves are now calling for a teacher evaluation. A few days ago the decree which created the Department of Teacher Development was published, and we are naming the director, professor Maria Amelia Palacios, whose first task will be to design and implement this model of assessment in which the component of performance should be crucial. There are the two, say, major changes.

TAREA: *The subject of teaching working time was a critical issue when discussing the Teacher Public Service and it has finally remained basically unchanged. There were even talks on a 40 hours working schedule.*

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M. V.: We are ‘drawing’ a number of scenarios, because that is one of the most budget implication and that is why we have also said that regarding teachers there is a legal issue, there is also concerns on how to restore

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a good 'deal' between society and teachers. The changes that are needed and we want to do for teachers, in line with the National Education Project, have a huge budget size, so that only the legitimacy of the teachers in the families will ensure the viability of the process. For now, I think that teachers in general have understood that message. For example SUTEP, who said they would make a strike in March and has decided not to, but rather join the campaign of the good start. Those are other important signs. We can see the issue technically, in budget terms, but when parents see that their taxes are used to improve the teacher's salary instead of having a road, it will be necessary to ensure that legitimacy.

TAREA: *Another aspect of management is the setting of educational decentralization. In the process of teacher training (initial and in service) and with the crisis of the ISP (Teacher training schools), with a history of Amauta centers, which were also deactivated, and the PER (Regional Education Projects), there should be policies in teacher education in regional areas, and here there is an effective role of the Ministry: how to build this system of teacher training that is mandated by the National Education Project, in this scenario of decentralization that we want to develop?*

M. V.: Firstly, to construct this system there has also been emergency measures and other substantive.

Regarding the emergency measures, we had to correct this absurd idea of mark 14 for admission. It was absurd because it treated the good and bad Teacher schools equally. What would a good ISP depend on in order to have students? Not its quality, but that their applicants get a mythical mark 14. That was the first point we have changed, but we are also monitoring the goals. The Ministry, in addition to the mark 14, also defines in which specialties are formed. We have established, for example, that in a given region IBE teachers are needed because there is a school of IBE, and the same in pre-school.

The second point that we are correcting urgently is the National Program of Permanent Education and Training (PRONAFCAP). We are giving priority to basic training, as the results show that learning was never successful. Perhaps some university did well, but the design of this program did not start from teaching practice, from the educational community as a place where the teacher participates, because only the teachers who had taken the census evaluation could

participate in the PRONAFCAP, which left all teachers from rural areas out of the program. This year we have to lay the foundation for lifelong learning system with regional governments, perhaps with logic similar to Amauta Centers, which means transferring the resources for implementation.

It is also necessary to know the teacher supply and demand in each region. In general, you can say "no more teachers are needed," but when you look at rural high school, for example, we realize that we need to expand; we have drawn attention to early education, and that means more than 25 000 new teachers which we do not have, in IBE, with mark 14, there have only been 20 or 30 teachers trained in these five years. Training is needed then, but we must see the role of the faculties of Education, because they have continued to function. And that is another absurdity of this measure: Teacher training schools were closed while the universities could continue training as they thought best, which did not really solve the problem. We are therefore in this dual path, and in April we will issue a regulation with guidelines for the construction of the training system.

TAREA: *With the universities there is the issue of autonomy, but could the Ministry have a more active role, for example, through the National System of Evaluation, Accreditation and Certification of Educational Quality (SINEACE)?*

M. V.: We could, first, through the SINEACE, which has a body linked to the ISP and another to the faculties of Education. But secondly, we decided to have a more proactive approach in the field of higher education, both in public and in private, which cannot be free will; obviously, it is not intervening universities involved - that is completely against what we want - but there has to be a more proactive role of the State. So the Law on Organization and Functions (LOF) of the Ministry of Education we have presented and which is in consultation, proposes the creation of a Vice Minister of Basic Education and another of higher education that will enable us to work with the Technological Institutes and the ISP, there will also be the Productive Technical Education, which is vital and has been totally abandoned, as well as other kind of relationships with universities, to raise - again without intervening them -, expectations and priorities of development and bring about change in these rules.

TAREA: *The school population has declined in public schools (in the case of Lima this is crucial), and it has*

increased greatly in the private sector, despite of which the same number of teachers remains. But where this phenomenon is being questioned is in the Alternative Basic Education (EBA in Spanish), because this was a promise to incorporate all those who were removed from education. What are you thinking in relation to the EBA?

M. V.: On the excess of teachers, those who are good should continue. On the subject of Lima, there are a thousand strategies that should be used, the simplest: if there are students who have learning difficulties, not because they have a disability but because they are behind, we should focus on these teachers to generate recovery strategies with these students, so we wouldn't lack teachers, because the results show that the situation is serious.

As for the Alternative Basic Education, in this year 2012 we intend to reorganize the whole issue of literacy, which we conceive it as adults having the right to access to the intermediate cycle of EBA, which would be like completing primary school. In the XXI century terms, for Perú, literacy is not a campaign of 3 or 6 months or one year. That has already been tested. In addition, surveys of the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI in Spanish) show that progress has been just 0.1% over the previous five years. Why is that? For indeed, as anyone who learns English, you can learn it in three months but if you don't use it you forget it. The same goes for these campaigns, if you don't practice, it does not work.

First, the decree by which the National Mobilization for Literacy (PRONAMA in Spanish) joins the Department of Literacy, as part of the Alternative Basic Education has been issued. We are prioritizing two population groups. First, all populations involved in social and educational programs, such as Marca Perú networks because these are people who have a demand for education. If they are involved in a program - hopefully more productive -, they will have a demand for better education that is leading to the comprehensive literacy we are talking about.

And the second is the Valley of the River Apurimac and Ene (VRAE in Spanish), critical area where we should prioritize literacy, with the same logic of a program that allow them do this intermediate level as equivalent to primary in EBA. The next logical step will be a result-based management for the entire EBA, but we're still working on it.

TAREA: *A peculiar situation, because in the case of the EBA, as in the EIB, we have no specialist teachers.*

M. V.: Yes.

TAREA: *It would be necessary to set up a specialty in teacher education.*

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M. V.: We are now working with La Cantuta, because it is the only university that has a degree on Alternative Basic Education. With them we will work a proposed curriculum that allows having a first group of teachers.

TAREA: *On the teacher's policy, it has been affirmed that there are many delays. Journalists such as Jaime de Althaus and former Vice Minister have pointed it out. From what we are discussing, there is rather a set of efforts that are trying to break the inertia. What can you say to those who believe so and make them aware that we are facing a process of transformation more profound without superficial advertising?*

M. V.: Here, we were talking about a mobilization for learning, because we have to change a body of opinion that has been installed. The previous administration said there were flagship schools, infrastructure, handing out laptops (not used though), and trained teachers (in something that is not useful). They were the numbers and figures which impacted. Now we have to say: "It is about making learnings of this type, not mechanical, but especially in the creation and implementation". For us, this current is critical, and what is going to convince the rest of this is when it starts to work. So in the General Teacher Development Direction we have created a specialized area in promoting teaching, so that MINEDU identifies and talks to all those networks, groups, organizations and teachers' pedagogical move-

ments. When we begin to see that there are teachers who work very well and more than they should, and that these classrooms and these children are learning, we could say yes, we can. There are schools that are already doing it. This will show where the policy is pointing at. I think people are entitled to some disbelief, but that will change as we go making more sectors in favor of this policy.

TAREA: *Is there an emphasis on diversity? Do Andean communities, of the Amazon, in the rural coast, African descendants appear?*

M. V.: We reinstated the Committee of Indigenous Organizations that has always worked in the Ministry of Education, where organizations of African descendants, Aymara, Quechua, and others are participating. This cultural perspective is for all students. Also on issues of diversity, fortunately, now the State is using result-based management. In the Ministry of Education, there is the Learning Education Program; we are designing the new PELA 2013 (Strategic Program for Learning Results) for the next four years, and here too, although there is a common 'chassis', which is the proposed Marca Perú, there will be different strategies. The other area that is very important to work in is the urban area: we are working on next year strategies for the urban population at risk, an important population. There are interesting actions, but we haven't solved the puzzle.

TAREA: *Based on the results of the ECE 2011 (Student Census Evaluation), there have not been achievements neither in public nor private schools...*

M. V.: Not only that: in Metropolitan Lima we have organized the results according to the human development index. In districts 1 and 2, which are those with lower HDI, public school is above private school.

TAREA: *However, the population thinks that public education is bad and private is good, although the latter is done in a garage. What will it be done from the Ministry to reverse this idea, and how will Marca Perú schools contribute to restore confidence in public schools?*

MV: These schools, which have started in rural and next year will reach urban areas, will be referents, unlike flagship schools, which were schools for a few and were pure infrastructure. Now we have these schools organized in networks that will radiate to all public

education in an area with these levels of quality. As this quality public education progresses, the balance which favors private education may change.

Also, something we have not prioritized originally and we have incorporated in the agenda is the regulation of private education. While the logic of Legislative Decree 882 pointed out that private schools are subjected to market laws, and not a State law, so to speak, there are children who are at risk. We see that we also have a strategy for private education, and we have to work on it because it is a very important issue. The funny thing is that those who have called for more action now that the Minister was at the House of Congress, were those of the Fujimori bloc regarding the textbooks. They said: "Why doesn't the Ministry have a quality control of textbooks?" And it did not have it because all regulation was subjected to market laws, and each school principal decides what to buy. They are asking us to look more closely. I think a new consensus will be generated: while private education has an important weight, the State must also meet a role, and not with the logic of bureaucratization.

TAREA: *This is not an authoritarian State, but rather a guarantor of a democratic culture in school. In this context there is a notion that is developed by the Ministry, which is this idea of the curriculum framework, the framework for good performance. The very word "framework" emphasizes its problematic character, in the good sense of the word, and less prescriptive. Does this also mean a break in the habit of curriculum as a recipe, as a prescription?*

M. V.: We have a National Curriculum Design (DCN in Spanish) of 500 pages intended to prescribe what a school should do from A to Z, and we will make an assessment on how it is used in every school. Our hypothesis is that it is underused, and then the DCN requires two processes: one, to be more a framework in the sense of saying, "Well, these are the learnings that define a Peruvian citizen," which will be...

TAREA: *Those of Marca Perú schools?*

M. V.: Yes, those which are already in Marca Perú schools; but at the same time, there is a much more accurate component that has to do with the progress maps. If I have to become a citizen with such skills at the end of high school, what do I have to do in third grade? And the DCN, in that sense, is very generic: it is very difficult to tell what a third grade child and one of

third grade of secondary should know. The wording is almost the same, because there are no precise indicators. The effort is to, with this curriculum framework, to learn in each grade, level or in each cycle, what a student should really have to reach, and we are beginning to do it with second grade. The first thing we are going to do is to divide it into five areas: Communication, Mathematics, Citizenship Education, Science and Technical and Production area. This will be easier for a parent of a second grade to say, "Very well, my child has to solve addition and subtraction up to two figures in everyday situations, and not have to learn up to a million or the multiplication table." Each grade will have this level of sizing capabilities to be achieved.

TAREA: *How do you expect to be remembered at the Ministry? What will be anchored?*

M. V.: We want to be judged, measured by the progress in rural areas and with children in these areas. That is fundamental. And the second would be that this new approach to the reflective teaching, to the critical, to the creative, becomes common sense in the population, because if we change the public demand things will keep going, and that has to do with the parents. But we're also betting on secondary students: if students have a voice to demand what is relevant and useful to them, then that path should be followed. 🗣️



Education changes, let's all change is a demonstration called by the Ministry of Education that seeks a profound transformation of education in Peru, with the active participation of the entire education community and civil society. The first challenge of this campaign was to ensure the successful start of the school year with teachers employed in all public schools; classrooms in good conditions, healthy and safe, and educational materials timely distributed.