

The education of youth and adults in Peru: Public Policies and Human Development

To reduce the educational inequalities in access and quality of education, it is necessary to overcome the deficit of political will. This article attempts to approach the public policy of Youth and Adults Education (YAE) in Peru, presents the important advances in matter of regulation (laws and agreements), proposes the challenges from the practice developed in relation to YAE, and supports educational approaches that link education with transformation and sustainable development.

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In the XXI century, many young and adult men and women from popular sectors of the country and the city, from Andean and Amazonian zones, are still excluded from the right to education and to expand their opportunities to live with dignity. Not having education limits their freedoms and opportunities and it is a factor of exclusion and accentuation of poverty and vulnerability of individuals and groups. The numbers show that the highest amount of people in this condition are women who never attended school or were forced to interrupt their years of schooling and, therefore, of realization of a fuller life.

Studies show that poverty is multidimensional and that it is associated with the lack of opportunities and deprivations that limit or reduce the options to choose the life that people have reason to value. One of such deprivations has to do with the ability to be educated, attend school, have the knowledge, skills and values that enable them to have a voice and ability to act in their societies with autonomy, decisiveness and competence to perform and develop in various fields of social, economic, political and cultural life.

Public policies attempt to face these realities and problems and to address its causes; are powerful tools if they are taken in an articulated manner by the authorities, policy makers and civil society at large, and count on studies and diagnoses that allow them to generate proposals and policies in line with identified realities and problems.

This article attempts to approach this public policy for education of young and adult people in Peru; it shows significant progress in terms of legislation (laws and agreements). At the same time, it highlights the poor development of these and their respective compliance. As the experts say in this matter, "a public policy is public policy when it is implemented".

The article is divided into four sections. The first one point out the definitions of human development and public policy, which is the basis for the analysis of the problems listed. The second section features information on the subjects of youth and adult education and current policies regarding this sector and the human group. In the third, some issues and challenges from the practice developed regarding the Youth Peer Education (YPE). Finally, in the fourth section we present some conclusions on the issue.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Human Development

Development is defined by Sen as the process of expanding the real freedoms enjoyed by individuals. This development requires the removal of major sources of deprivation of liberty that leaves individuals few options and limited opportunities to choose the life they have reason to value, including education.

From this perspective, the growth of gross domestic product (GDP) or income is an important mean to expand the freedoms of individuals, but it is not the only one: they also depend on other factors and causes, of the interconnections that may occur as well as of the social mechanisms that can ensure or increase the fundamental freedoms of individuals. Among these freedoms, which may be aim and mean, there are political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security. Each of these types of freedom contributes to improving the overall capacity of the person. The focus of this approach is on the individual and is measured by what is capable of being and doing and not for the things the person has.

Freedom as a capacity is crucial for the freedom of agency, for individual initiative and social effectiveness. The more freedom individuals have, the more opportunity for them to help themselves and influence their reality.

The capabilities and freedoms that Sen refers have an intrinsic relationship with education: education as an opportunity for the development of autonomy abilities, determination and emancipation. With freedom as ability, education serves to increase the capacity to live a meaningful life. From the perspective of capabilities, education not only has instrumental value but also intrinsic importance due to its causal relationship with freedom and ability. Education, regardless of their positive effect on the economy, results in freedom because they also have these other benefits:

- It contributes to live in a safer world. Illiteracy is itself a source of insecurity, since it exposes people to multiple risks whose nature cannot be predicted in advance, and impedes them from having sufficient capacity to influence their lives.
- Women are a group particularly attacked by illiteracy and insufficient education, which, together with the sex discrimination in almost all societies, make even more difficult to achieve the operations indicated previously. Education improves the self-esteem of women, the levels of welfare that their own families reach, and the ability to influence family decisions. Therefore, not only helps women to achieve more welfare, but also strengthens their ability to influence the world around them (which Sen calls agency).
- Health education plays an important role in enhancing freedom and welfare.
- Contributes to equality between different ethnic groups in a society because, similarly to the case of women, it improves not only the freedom of these groups to live better but also their agency, because it makes more likely for disadvantaged minorities to participate in the processes of decision-making or, at least, to have more means to vindication and complaint.

As Martha Nussbaum, another theoretical expert of the approach of capabilities, thinks, the aim of education is to cultivate humanity, and that means giving the citizen the instruments that allow an autonomous choice of their way of life (Nussbaum 1997). Being education the center for the liberation processes and expansion of capacities; it is a right of everyone to access and be part of educational quality processes relevant and consistent with their diverse cultural contexts at the appropriate time. No one should be left out of this right.

Public policies

Public policy is the most recent field of study and on which there is consensus and analytical frameworks that help its implementation. On this matter, Kauffer indicates that “public policies refer to the material or symbolic activities that manage public authorities.” In the same respect, Thoenig states that public policies refer to what governments decide to do or not. This is why they should be understood as a set of decisions and actions carried out by a government to solve problems.

Public policies are a set of decisions aimed at the distribution of certain assets or resources. A public policy is not a remote action, an isolated move. In the process are involved assets or resources that can affect or privilege certain individuals or groups.

Larwell (2000: 20) points out that public policy is a concatenation of activities, consistent decisions or measures at least in intent, and taken mainly by actors in the political-administrative system of a country in order to solve a collective problem. These acts lead to formalized acts of more or less coercive nature with the aim of modifying the behavior of “groups that are targets” which are supposedly at the origin of the problem to be solved.

Public policy can also be seen as tools to prevent problematic situations of public character (which are relevant to the whole population). The State, through its government apparatus and its links with the citizens, serves as a platform from which these policies are managed.

The design of a public policy is a complex process, with more or less similar stages, ranging from problem identification, research, results and options that must be selected for the establishment of policies in response to the problems, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This also occurs in complex contexts where there is not always agreement and certainty about the best alternative or outcome, there is tension between the actors who have different interests and in the best of situations they can participate and get involved in some stage of process.

THE EDUCATION OF YOUTH AND ADULTS EDUCATION (YAE)

Who conforms the YAE?

In Peru there are more than 8 million people with diverse learning needs, with educational backwardness, many of whom never attended school or only managed to finish primary school. This population has been unable to integrate in good condition to the development of economic, social and political life of the country and is excluded not only from the education system but of all forms of creation and communication of knowledge.

A study by DVV Internacional about the state of the situation of the right to education in Peru (2011) notes that the populations most affected by exclusion, which do not fully participate in society, are those that belong to rural and poor environments in extreme poverty, Quechua-speaking populations, Amazonian indigenous groups and migrants. On the other hand, it indicates that these groups come together in a set of external structural factors affecting people’s right to education, exacerbating inequalities and exclusion. Some of these factors are:

- *Poverty and rural living.* The INEI report from 2009 indicates that villagers in rural areas not only have the highest poverty rate, but are on average almost four times poorer than the poor in urban areas. If we relate this with the subject of education we find that access to education, schooling levels achieved and demonstrated performance levels at school are associated with poverty and extreme poverty. In 2009, the 55% of poor population and 71% of extremely poor people older than 15 years old only managed to study some years of primary education or no education. The poor and extreme poor population who achieved some years of secondary education are 37.7% and 26.9% respectively. Only the 6.8% of poor population and 2.0% of the extremely poor attained some higher education. The poor have an average of 6.8 years of approved studies and the extremely poor had 5.4 years; both averages are lesser than the non-poor, which reaches 10.2 years. These facts confirm that in poor and extremely poor rural

areas people's education is seriously affected by their living conditions.

- *Ethnic and linguistic diversity.* According to national census (2007), in Peru there are 1786 indigenous communities located in 11 departments. Only in the Peruvian Amazon there are 13 language families comprising 60 ethnic groups. However, this ethnic and linguistic diversity, with a huge potential, also raises issues that have to do with the right of people to a quality education. According to the same national census of 2007, the 50.6% of the indigenous population is between 15 and 64 years (168 369), a range that corresponds precisely to the education of youth and adults. Of this population, the 19.4% reported not knowing how to read or write. The illiteracy rate is higher in women (28.1%) than men (11.8%). There are problems of coverage, educative offer and quality. The public education services in rural areas for the population over 15 years are few. There are literacy programs and very few are of alternative basic education. The centers of Technical-Productive Education are also absent. Heterogeneity and diversity are not addressed; a cultural model and Spanish as the official language are imposed; the educational proposals address homogeneous and universal education policies, but not multicultural and diversified policies.
- *Migration.* The lack of employment, violence and high expectations regarding the destinations are also the main causes of the persistence of internal migration inside the country. In all cases, the desire of migrants is to improve their welfare.

To summarize, it can be said that among the most important and generalizable characteristics of these people and excluded groups are: heterogeneous and unevenly attended populations; poor and extremely poor populations, exposed to discrimination due to their socio-cultural status, struggling to meet their basic needs; precarious formal employees or employees in the informal sector of large cities as domestic workers, waiters or street vendors, among others; low levels of schooling, experiences of school failure in contrast to their experience of struggle and success in order to survive and support their families; without motivation for formal education, with rigid work schedules; with

an ancestral communal work experience and solidarity with others, more or less organized; limited exercise of citizenship and participation in the political organization of the country.

Policies, standards and agreements on YAE

Public policies are not immune to national and international social, political, economic and cultural processes: they are built and are influenced or conditioned by these internal and external processes. In this regard, it is important to note some of these processes and how they have influenced decisions and policy options for the education of youth and adults.

Major stages that comprise the YAE

- 1 First period, on the second half of the twentieth century (1960 and 1970), development and consolidation of YAE. In Peru, as part of the process led by Juan Velasco Alvarado, through the enactment of the General Law of Education, adult education was taken to enterprises, agricultural cooperatives, mines and fishing companies and it was attempted to settle permanent education. The state leads the process of education of adults (EA) and is an actor of decisive importance. This phase includes intensive campaigns and programs of literacy and progress is made towards visions involving education for life or training for community development.

Popular Education influences these processes and progresses on adult education with an unschooled focus and linking educational activities to approach on basic education. It is a period of creativity that expands the YAE protocols and strengthens its institutions.

- 2 Second period, from the decade of 1980 and especially the decade of 1990: implementation of neoliberal policies; loss of priority of the YAE. Period of change and decrease of the role of the State, of tax cuts and a conception of social issues subordinated to economics. Changes in the way that the poor or exclu-

ded are attended are registered; targeted social policies are put up and emergency plans translate into a poverty approach directed to their contention, seeking to reduce the problems and risks that poverty implies to market societies, rather than human development of vulnerable subjects. Educational reforms introduced in this period move the “center of gravity” of education from academic motivation and status of public good of the produced knowledge towards economic motivations that aim to encourage the competitiveness of the industrialized nations, the market value and the imposition of development models.

3 In this context, the YAE is not seen as a priority. The political center is placed on children and teenagers; the false opposition between educating children or adults is installed. From the decade of 1990, the institutionality of the YAE begins to weaken until almost disappear, as is the case of other countries in the region. The ministry loses execution functions and limitates itself to the field of technical consulting or the formulation of education policies. It is an involution of the government policy.

International conferences and its opinions are relevant records of the progress and guidelines of YAE. The Delors Report (1996) opened a perspective towards human development and personal growth. CONFINTEA V (1997) raised the problem of illiteracy and its consequences. It placed in the debate the emergence of young and introduced hard issues such as multiculturalism and gender. Another important actor is the cooperation, which promotes literacy and basic education in the countries.

To summarize, currently in most countries of the region the right to education is considered in the Constitution, and Peru follows the same line. It is considered in the Constitution and in the laws and policies: “Education is a fundamental human right, enshrined in the Constitution of the country pursuant to the Education Act No. 28044 and other laws and related standards.” It also states that the right to education is a shared responsibility between the state and civil society as a whole. However, the responsibility for its compliance lies in the State.

The right to education is interpreted from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, where education is defined in the context of the universal, indivisible and interdependent rights destined to ensure human dignity. This makes that education has the status of an enforceable right in the systems of national and international justice, in so far as it is inscribed in laws and other legal acts that have their fulfillment secured as duty of the State through public policy. The right to education is set as a legal principle for all.

In 2003 in Peru, it was created an alternative Education Act, which aimed to adult’s education, and a Bureau of Alternative Education, where the programs of Basic Education for adults, the National Literacy Program and the Community Education were placed.

The Peruvian YAE persists in compensatory, educated policies supported in the category of lag. The legal framework alone does not ensure key dimensions of the right to education, such as gratuity, compulsory nature, quality, pertinence of an educational offer appropriate for various socio-cultural contexts, flexibility in schedules, topics and methods, and financing.

As it can be seen, the education of young people and adults has been marginalized for decades not only at home but in all Latin America. Since the “Education for All” World Conference (Jomtien, 1990), efforts are increasing to shorten these gaps and raise the level of equality. With the enactment of the General Law of Education (No. 28044), the challenge of ensuring an equitable education for all has been accepted. Article 3 states the following:


“ [...] education is a fundamental right of the individual and the society. The State guarantees the exercise of the right to a comprehensive and quality education for all and the universalization of basic education. Society has the responsibility of contributing to education and the right to participate in its development”.

In the subsequent article, it is noted that education is a public service, and when it is provided by the State is free at all levels and modalities.

CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS

- The education of young and adults is a fundamental human right. The States have the obligation of ensuring that any and all citizens enjoy this right equally and without discrimination.

- The education of young and adults is crucial for overcoming poverty and for addressing the alimentary, energetic, environmental and financial global crisis.
- The YAE should be a type of education that is necessarily and systematically articulated with comprehensive social policies at the national level, development programs, the labor market and its demands.
- Conceive the YAE as part of the policies to overcome poverty, discrimination and exclusion, and make it be a part of the development policies.
- What must be avoided is to keep making it a poor education for the poor, as it has been and still is until now.
- It must be deepened in the development of intersectoral public policies, with equality and inclusion that enable to reduce educational inequalities regarding access and quality (oEI 2010). To avoid the duplicity of actions and the wide dispersion of these, as well as the emphasis (compensatory and remedial) given in them.
- The deficit of political will must be overcome. The visibility of the YAE within the educational system is urgent as well as for it have an organic expression in coordination with other sectoral policies, to have skilled personnel, with funding that addresses equitably the diversity of problems, especially in rural populations, native communities, women and migrants.
- The education for youth and adults, including literacy must be clearly prioritized within international contexts and national state policies. Goals 3 and 4 of Education For All (EFA), related to the learning of young people and adults, can no longer be ignored.
- The literacy policies must be clearly articulated within a context of the right to education and learning throughout life, and must be linked to other intersectoral actions and policies. Literacy and learning throughout life are essential elements of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). States and international agencies must commit with the training of teachers and qualified professionals in the field of education of youth and adults, and ensure proper working conditions.
- It must be bet on educational approaches that link education with transformation and sustainable de-

velopment. Various experiences have noticed that approaches such as Popular Education, with its methodology, its vision of citizenship and articulation of learning with the environment have given vitality to literacy and education of the young and adult, as well as the recovery of a sustainable and intercultural perspective as the "good life", which links education to life and other types of development. 

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