This report presents the highlights of the presentations and the discussions that took place during this seminar. This document has been elaborated from audio recordings, written and graphic material that was provided by the presenters.

A summary of each presentation is listed below, followed by the questions and answers that took place after each one.

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1 See the List of Participants at the end of the Document
Presentation 1

Teacher-related policies: the need to produce evidence for policy purposes

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Disclaimer: all the views expressed in this presentation are personal opinions and do not convey any institutional view.

Starting point: There are specific information needs for the teacher-related policies in Peru that are not met. We do not know much about teachers even though they are key agents in educational systems. What teachers do is probably the single most important aspect that defines children’s educational experience.

Educational experience as social interaction: The importance teachers have is embedded in the fact that education is a social experience, where human interaction is at the centre. In this experience teachers play the role of facilitators, they have a direct link with students.

What do we know about teachers and teaching? As a central part of this experience, teachers require specific and systematic information to be assessed. Further than considering them as inputs (number of teachers, proportion of female teachers, number of teacher positions, salaries, formal certifications, etc), we do not know much about them (teachers as agents). We do not know who they are, what they do, what they know, what they are able to do, and most importantly, what are the conditions under which they work (institutional arrangements). The data available is produced mainly as side information in assessments of a student’s performance. Therefore, teacher information is not systematic and leads to common sense findings.

For the past decades, teacher recruitment policies in Peru have been welfare policies rather than educational policies. They have provided limited economical stimuli to the profession, increasing the numbers of teachers, but have left aside the quality of education and the improvement of the profession. This is why it is important to point out how teachers perceive themselves. What are the expectations of the teachers?

What about performance? We do not produce information on teacher performance regularly because of the political debate on accountability. This debate stresses out the contrapositions among control, autonomy and professional independence of teachers. However, while stressing that teaching is part of the civil service (accountable), there have been some efforts such as the 2007 National Assessment of Teachers. This assessment intended to be a census and measure teachers’ cognitive skills. However, it did not represent a significant contribution for improving teachers’ performance. Nobody knew what to do with the results, mainly because the assessment did not ask the right questions. Assessments are not a political issue, but tools for improving teacher performance.

Final remarks: The lack of flexibility in the educational policy in Peru has had several effects regarding teachers. Educational policy is made without taking them into account
(salaries are the most important item in public investment in education), and sometimes against them.

What about educational policy with teachers? To achieve this, it is necessary to have dialogue, a mutual understanding, respect and rules. If teachers and teaching are not properly addressed by educational policies then we can not talk about quality of education. For this to happen we need a comprehensive approach and evidence.

**Discussion**

*Is the government obligated to hire teachers after their finish their studies?*
In Peru this does not happen.

*What about the participation of the community? (which is directly affected by culture)*
Teachers have to reach out to the community and to parents. Communities should be involved at local and national levels.

*Is there any mechanism in Peru in which government leaves some of the teachers’ professional development responsibilities to the teachers’ unions?*
No, nowadays this does not happen in Peru because of the kind of agenda of the unions. The last government tried to create a professional association of teachers for these purposes, the Colegio Profesional. However, the same people that handle the unions took over this association when it was created. This is why there is not a professional association in Peru.

*In the past years, there has been a great push in Peru for teacher accompaniment, this means, to implement a different methodology to foster education accomplishments.*
This is true, but it has not being done because of a political will, but because of an occupation necessity. As there is a surplus of teachers in Peru, then, there is the necessity of occupying them. The teacher accompaniment is a strategy to employ the teachers.

*What are your recommendations to address improving the quality of education, while at the same time ensuring that the economic security of teachers is not threatened?*
Why do they have to have this economic security, when 80 per cent of the country does not? The problem is not the tenure, but how to create an arrangement that is coherent according to the social and political context. This goes beyond education; it refers to how the social structure has been functioning for the past three decades.
**Presentation 2**

*Challenges in education in the process of decentralization in Bolivia*

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**Bolivia as a diverse country:** Bolivia is a diverse country, culturally, geographically and socially speaking. This diversity affects the perceptions of Bolivians on themselves and on education.

**Decentralization of education in Bolivia:** Regarding education, the decentralization in Bolivia began in 1994 when the Law of Popular Participation (LPP in Spanish) was promulgated. By this Act, the state transferred to municipalities the resources and powers regarding the construction of schools, maintenance and provision of inputs. However, it was not until 2005 that the departmental autonomy was enhanced by the election through popular vote of the prefects (governors today). The Education Reform Act 155 (LRE in Spanish), was issued in the same year as the LPP, and was complementary to it although it did not arise so from the beginning. There is unanimity about the progress in education in Bolivia since the LRE and the LPP were promulgated.

**The centralism remains:** The power of decision on important issues such as educational, administrative and financial management remains today at the central level. There are things that can not be done from the central level. In a centralized context, neither the LRE nor the LPP have been able to engage the responsibility of local authorities to ensure the evolution and quality of educational services.

For instance, with decentralization some powers have been transferred to the municipal level. However, there has been no power transferred to control neither teachers nor principals. There is no local authority having power over them, no supervision, except that of the parents. This authority vacuum renders the quality of education very low.

**The expectations of decentralization:** The expectations of the population regarding the process of decentralization in Bolivia respond to structural changes (population growth, urbanization, globalization, etc) and to a growing demand for educational services. The expectations are even bigger for ethnic groups. For example, the decolonization of education is one of their objectives, as well as intracultural, intercultural and multilingual education.

However, to achieve effective decentralization, we need to take into account several things. For example, a clear differentiation between deconcentration and decentralization would allow sufficient autonomy at the subnational level to ensure the effectiveness of educational services at the local level.

In addition, provincial governments must assume the responsibilities transferred to them, particularly regarding the management of education: human resources and financial sector investments, monitoring and supervision at the departmental, municipal and school
levels. Moreover, the quality of teacher training and incentives to improve the quality of teaching are challenges that must be addressed at the departmental level.

As for the central level, it should safeguard whether decisions on educational policies correct inequalities or not, it should take care of macro-financial decisions, and should be responsible for national supervision and measuring the quality of education at all levels. Finally we need a dialogue among government departments, organizations of teachers and parent organizations, in an attempt to achieve a better education.

Discussion

Ambassador of Bolivia, Edgar José Torrez Mosqueira: The new law for autonomies will be approved in July this year; however it is questionable because it is highly politicized. In terms of education, it faces the leftist group that manages the movement of association of teachers. The government seeks to decentralize education at the departmental level. However, there is not an easy battle to win because of the power of this group.

How about the teacher development issues?
Teacher training is a complicated issue for several reasons. First, it does not follow any national program. Second, it is difficult to perform at a central level, and it requires local actions. Third, it should rely on institutions or people with experience.

Teachers need to be convinced of the decentralization. A dialogue is needed to identify the benefits for all.
At the local level teachers may be involved in a certain dynamic. However, the scenario changes at the federal level; it is more difficult.

If the teacher training schools are state institutions, then why is there no mechanism to manage the number of teachers and monitor their hiring by the government?
This kind of control over teachers’ schools is being sought since the reform of 1994. For example, at that time they came to the conclusion that Bolivia needed only eight colleges to produce teachers who will cover future needs. However, pressure from trade unions has been so strong that the current government has set up six to seven rural normal schools.

In some countries, decentralization is not seen as a viable option and centralism is strengthened. However, when challenged on communication mechanisms to collect the special needs of local schools, it is found that there are no institutional mechanisms, but rather corruption.
This is a problem between deconcentration and decentralization. We must seek decentralization.
Quality of education and economic growth: Economic growth literature has emphasized the importance of human capital accumulation. Countries around the world have looked to improve the quality of its human capital to promote economic growth. As human capital is achieved through education, recent research has stressed that to achieve economic growth, it is more important to focus on quality of education, rather than on the enrolment.

At the micro level, the quality of education also has positive effects on individuals. Better education has a positive return of higher cognitive skills applicable in the labor market. Moreover, impacts of quality go beyond pure economic outcomes. There is a general positive relationship between education and other aspects relying on cognitive skills, such as good health practices.

Education quality in Peru according to assessments of student performance: Peru participated in Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2000 and again in 2009. The results put Peru at the bottom of countries that took the test. This had an important impact in public opinion because Peru is below the level it is expected to be according its income level.

Peru’s problem is not concentrated on poor achievers; it is a systematic problem affected by structural factors. For instance, top achievers in Peru perform at levels similar to the median performer in Korea. Furthermore, comparing Peru and Korea on the world scale, the top 80th percentile in Peru performs close to the median on the world distribution.

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) regional test for primary education Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (SERCE), Peru’s results were below most South American countries.

What explains the differences in student achievement? There is a strong correlation between socio economic conditions and education outcomes. School resources are also highly correlated to education outcomes, though it is hard to establish causality. In general, the impact of inputs is found to be small, both on developed and developing countries. Therefore, education research is moving aggressively to find the role of not observable characteristics such as effort, innate ability, etc.

Peruvian schools are more different that what should have been predicted by their socio economic conditions differences. We need a clear a set of standards and information of stakeholders.
Then, what is the most important item to address? Research has consistently found that teachers are the most important input in the education process. Nonetheless, it is extremely difficult to really pinpoint teacher quality based on observable characteristics. For example, experience seems to matter only at the beginning of the career, and certification procedures and extra degrees have very little to no impact in latest stages.

What to do?

1. Autonomy with support and information
   a. Good education results will come from the interaction of different stakeholders: students, teachers, principals, parents, local authorities, and local community.
   b. Parent associations and community support should have a clear mandate, involving dialogue on results of the students. May require strong leadership at the local level.
   c. Information dissemination and use could improve accountability at all levels.

2. Invest in teachers
   a. In teacher selection: teaching is not a preferred career of high school graduates.
   b. In training both pre-service and on-service, particularly hands-on training.
   c. Teacher and principal networks can clear positive effects to share good practices.

3. Evaluate and document good experiences
   a. Keep expanding the knowledge base, through rigorous evaluations, focusing more on program validity rather than “pilot” evaluation.

Discussion

Identifying best practices in good performing schools and the role of networking:
Most countries have systems and methods to identify well-performance schools for getting the best practices, teachers, etc and intervene in low-performance schools. However, for this to be successful, first, we have to have a good measure of the quality of schools; this might be achieved by improving the testing systems.

Regarding the role of school network strategies for increasing the quality of schools, I found them useful because it creates a set of standards and good practices that stimulate the quality in schools.
Governments are not talking to universities in a strategic way in terms of national needs for knowledge, research or working with communities. What would be a way of pushing the work of universities to address the problems identified?

Universities can participate in research and on the implementation of strategies. The test results provide a unique tool for improving education; they can identify the problems of the classroom. Universities can apply tests and then develop programs for preparing teachers to have an effective classroom impact. They can also participate in motivation among teachers. Universities must be dedicated to research and the generation of public goods.

Remarks on the importance of empiric evidence:
We have to insist on the need to generate systematic and solid information. However, we must be critical as not all the information is useful: we should put emphasis on the purpose of the measurement. All the analysis done is sound as it has statistical foundations. However, we must be careful when preparing and interpreting this type of analysis. We have to be sure to measure the right things to have the proper information to make changes in education that affect its quality in a positive way.
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