

Education in Latin América

Simon Schwartzman

DOCUMENTO
DE TRABALHO
7/89

Núcleo de Pesquisas sobre Ensino Superior e
Departamento de Ciência Política - FFLCH

NUPES

Núcleo de Pesquisas
sobre Ensino Superior

Universidade de São Paulo

Education in Latin America

Simon Schwartzman

NUPES

e

Departamento de Ciência Política da
Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas

Núcleo de Pesquisas sobre Ensino Superior da
Universidade de São Paulo

EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA*

Simon Schwartzman

Education in Latin America tends to be of poor quality, strongly stratified in socioeconomic terms, and resistant to improvement. The challenge to anyone concerned with this field is to understand not only these limitations, but also why so many attempts at educational reform and educational improvement fail. Even when the answer seems obvious – when there is not enough money, projects are ill conceived, administrators are corrupt and unmotivated – there is still the question of why Latin American societies are so frequently unable to muster the resources, competence, motivation and seriousness of purpose which of the “Latina culture” is no wholly incorrect, but is too vague, can easily lead racist arguments, and in any case does not account for the fact that there are enough counter examples of achievement and success, both in Europe and Latin America, to place any kind of generalized cultural or racial explanation to rest.

The proper answer, I believe, should be historical and comparative. The establishment of national systems of education in Europe, as Margaret Archer has shown, was the outcome of the interplay between different kinds of educational movements in society – be they linguistic, religious or economically motivated – and the gradual building up the national states, with different outcomes according to the relative strength of the parts involved¹. We can assume that the same happened in Latin America, and the characteristics of the region’s educational systems should also to be understood as resulting from of the ways by which State and Society related to each other in the organization of the region’s nation states. In the following, I will look into the Brazilian case with some detail in order to substantiate what, for me, is the central feature of the region’s national education systems: namely, that Latin American national systems of education emerged without a corresponding demand from significant groups in society, and some times against them; and because of that, they remained

* Lecture given at the School of Education, University of California at Los Angeles, February 23, 1989.

¹ Margaret Archer, *Social Origins of Educational Systems*, London, Sage Publications, 1979.

limited in size, and without the internal drive which is essential for quality². If I look back at my own work on the establishment of scientific traditions and higher education in Brazil, I can see it as an effort to understand and spell out this pattern, as well as its consequences for the learning institutions in the region.

My starting point, as a political scientist, was not directly related to questions of science or education. Writing in the early seventies, I asked myself why political life in Brazil, and by extension in most Latin America, did not conform to the standard theories which explain political outcomes by the interplay of class or class-like interest groups. Why was there so little collective action and that which some political scientists used to call “public regardness” on part of society, in spite of dire needs; and why was the public sector, the State, so powerful and at the same time so incompetent or unwilling to establish long-range policies, or even to stabilize itself on time?

The answer I came up with can be briefly summarized like this³. The standard Weberian-like interpretation of political modernization of Western societies assumed interplay between an emerging bourgeoisie and centralized political system, resulting in different forms of legal-rational political domination. This process of state rationalization occurred together with a general breakdown of traditional patterns of social interaction and labor relations, replaced by modern forms of class interactions and market rationality.

In Latin America, however – and I dare say, in most non-Western societies – modernization also occurred, but along very different lines. It is not that they lacked the ingredients that were present in Europe – a rising bourgeoisie, a centralized State, a growing proletariat, educated elites of different kinds. They existed, but in different proportions, and combined in dissimilar ways. Because the way these societies were formed – in the absence of feudal and aristocratic traditions, and the presence of complex and fairly rationalized colonial administrations and their successors – capitalism was always dependent on mercantilism.

² For a comparative overview of social demands for basic education in Latin America, see Germán W. Rama, “Estrutura e movimentos sociais no desenvolvimento da Educação Popular”, in Germán W. Rama, ed., *Mudanças Educacionais na América Latina – situações e condições*, Fortaleza, Universidade Federal do Ceará, 1983, 13-121.

³ The full argument is presented in *Bases do Autoritarismo Brasileiro*, Rio de Janeiro, Editora Campus, 1982.

Administrative centers and “non-Western” cities were established independently of industries or the typical European urban corporations, leading to population concentration and the emergence of “dangerous classes” around the centers of power and wealth.

Following the Weberian tradition, I have tried to characterize the alternatives for political action and interaction in such societies in terms of dominance of a pattern of political patrimonialism, or neo-patrimonialism, over contract-based interactions. For Weber, patrimonialism was a term reserved for the interpretation of political domination in traditional societies. It was the ideal-typical antithesis of feudalism, which implied an element of social contract which patrimonialism lacked. Weber talked also about “bureaucratic patrimonialism”, a concept akin to Marx’s notion of “Asiatic societies”, which tried to account for the peculiarities of large imperial societies which did not follow the European patterns of social and political modernization which later became accepted as standard. What neither Marx nor Weber did was to follow the path of these societies into modern times, and see how they incorporated several rational features of contemporary civilization – huge bureaucracies, modern weapons systems of mass communication, modern science and technology – without bringing in its elements of contract and individualization, landmarks of the bourgeois revolution. Or, in other words, how they became *rational* without being legal⁴.

Centralized patrimonialism was dominant in Brazil since its beginnings as a Portuguese colony. But, like any centralized system, it had to deal with centrifugal forces. Localism and isolation, on one hand; and a competitive pattern of social and political organization which was closer to the European experience of entrepreneurial capitalism, and centered mostly around the region of São Paulo⁵. The product of this interaction can be described, as some authors have done, in terms of “conservative modernization”, or modernization from above, which is very different from describing it as “traditional”, “underdeveloped” or culturally peculiar in some way. It would be impossible to spell out here all the implications of this condition. We can get some of its flavor, however, if we remember that Brazil never had a

⁴ It would be necessary to distinguish between rationality incorporated by patrimonial regimes and the kind of full-fledged formal rationalization carried on, most typically, by the Prussian state. As described by Ringer, “The demand for legality was directly against the purely personal government of eighteenth-century princelings who still regarded their territories and subjects as their private property. It reflected the burgher’s search for a certain security in private life, and justified the official’s view of his calling”. In other countries, this call for legality was part of a broader demand for political constitution; in Germany, however, while it curbed the powers of unsystematic and arbitrary government, “it did not limit the scope of bureaucratic, systematic absolutism, and it did not imply any sort of popular participation in government”. F. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins*, Harvard, 1969, 114-115.

⁵ There is a large body of literature on the Brazilian colonial past stressing the peculiar settlement patterns in the old capitancy of São Vicente, far away from the colonial administrative centers, and responsible for the epic explorations of Brazil’s hinterland in the search for gold and precious stones, the “bandeiras”.

nobility worth of this designation, the Catholic Church has been almost always submissive to the civilian authorities, the rich have always depended on the favors of the government, and the poor, of its eventual magnanimity. The point is not that, in Brazil, the state has been everything, and society, nothing; but that their relationship was one of either of submission or distrust, and most often both. The consequence was the combination of a heavy, powerful but usually inefficient and incompetent bureaucracy, and a weak, scared, and often rebellious and treacherous civil society.

I started my research on the development of the scientific community in Brazil with these ideas on the background, but without any preconceived notion on how they would relate with the new subject. At the end, I realized not only that they were closely related, but that it would be impossible to understand how institutions of science and higher education could emerge and develop the way they did without having a proper grasp of the country's broader pattern of social and political modernization.

In fact, Brazilian institutions of science and higher education were, from the beginning, part of peculiar project of modernization from above which started in Portugal at the end of the 18th Century, and was transplanted to Brazil after independence. It was a deliberate effort to free the Old Portuguese Empire from the grips of Catholic restoration and conservatism, and get the benefits brought about by the spreading industrial revolution, without, however, any major incorporation of new sectors in the ruling circles, or any major social and economic change. Throughout Western Europe, the political modernization responded to pressures from raising social groups, and was mediated by different sorts of professional corporations – lawyers, the military, engineers, university professors, scientists – which were responsible for the progressive rationalization and institutionalization of the new political order. Portugal, however, as well as Spain, did not participate in the great religious and cultural upheavals which marked the end of European middle ages, and never developed the strong professional, academic or religious corporations which were present in different degrees in societies such as Britain, France or the German states. Those learning institutions which did exist – like the old Spanish universities in Latin America, or the whole Jesuit

establishment, from the Indian settlements to their schools and seminars – were taken as the enemy to be fought by the modernizing elites.

Brazilian enlightened elites, like their counterparts in other Latin American countries, entered the 19th century admiring and copying the French opposition to all forms of corporatist arrangements and privileges, above all those of the Church and of the traditional universities⁶. The independence wars in Latin America were not, however, the French Revolution, and the Catholic Church was able to survive and keep much of its influence in the Continent until the present day. But they were strong enough to give raise to different versions of the Napoleonic system of higher education in most countries, and to take away from the Church most of its role as the educator of modern elites. When, in Brazil, the first professional schools were created in the early 19th Century, they were meant to be institutions for training cadres for the public service – for the military forces, the engineering corps, the hospitals and the handling of legal affairs – and lacked both the professional and the university traditions which were the building blocks upon which the modernization of Western university systems took place⁷. They also lacked the pressures for performance and competence which would be required in conditions of intense competition for social mobility. Latin American enlightened elites were able to speak French, to travel Europe and handle French concepts, including their democratic and rationalist ideals; their societies, however, remained restricted to the limits of their economies, based on a few export products, large pockets of traditional or decadent settlements, one or two major administrative and export centers, and, in the case of Brazil, a slavery system which lasted almost to the end of the 19th Century. The consequence of this double jeopardy was the generalized lack of intellectual and institutional vigour which characterized most of the scientific and higher education institutions in the region throughout the 19th Century.

The dawn of the 20th Century meant for Brazil the beginning of Republican decentralization, the end of slavery, the intensification of European migration to São Paulo and other southern states, and significant changes in the country's scientific and higher education institutions. Middle sectors started to emerge and demand more educational opportunities; there was a concrete challenge to be met by the central authorities through the

⁶ For a survey of enlightenment ideas in colonial Latin América, see Roberto Boaventura, "Leituras de Raynal e a ilustração na América Latina", *Estudos Avançados*, São Paulo, 2, 3, 1988, 40-51. For Brazil, see Eduardo Frieiro, *O Diabo na Livraria do Cônego*, São Paulo, Itatiaia/Edusp, 1957.

⁷ There was nothing similar, for instance, to the Dons which, in England, were able to redefine their roles and those of their institutions in English society, and thus find them a new place and relevance in their society, even if not quite like they intended. Cf. Sheldon Rothblatt, *The Revolution of the Dons*, Cambridge University Press, 1969.

use of modern science, the infectious diseases which raged in the country's main cities and ports, leading to the creation of several research centers in Tropical medicine. A new pragmatic and modernizing mentality emerged among the industrial and agricultural elites in the São Paulo region, which gained political supremacy with the Republic and created their own scientific and teaching institutions.

Intellectual and political competition among elites in the old Republican period was not between tradition vs. modernity, or capitalist pragmatism vs. feudal aristocracy, but between two strands of enlightenment and modernization; one based on the control of the State administration, believing in the strength of positive ideas and in the redeeming role of illustrated elites; the other based on expanding private economy, believing more in the strength of money and entrepreneurship, the practical usefulness of technical knowledge, and the value of political decentralization. This is of course an oversimplification, which does not take into account, for instance, those who were not enlightened in any of these senses. However, it should be enough to make our main point, namely that neither side carried the values and motivations which would allow for the emergence of consolidated institutions for scientific research and higher learning. The Brazilian first universities would only emerge in the 1930's, as well as the first outline of a national system of basic and secondary education.

Between 1889 and the 1930's the Brazilian central government grew in size and relative weight, organized and modernized its armed forces, and took increasing responsibilities in the handling of the country's economy. For the military, the engineers and many intellectuals in the main cities, there was an obvious contradiction between this tendency and the political arrangement which placed so much power in the hands of regional oligarchies of the large states of São Paulo, Minas Gerais and Rio Grande do Sul. This was also the period in which the State of São Paulo grew and modernized more than any other region in the country. In the late 1930's it was already responsible for 40% of the country's total industrial production, and was the main producer and exporter of agricultural goods. Population in the state went from 2.3 to 5.8 million, and the state capital went from 240 to 887 thousand in the same period. A significant part of this modernization and growth is related with the arrival of large numbers of immigrants from Italy, Portugal, Spain, Japan,

German, Russia and other countries. 4.2 million immigrants entered Brazil between 1880 and the 1930's, half of those to São Paulo. Another 3.1 million came to São Paulo from other Brazilian states in the same period⁸. This kind of development did not require a university or basic research institutes, but could make use of good engineers, better knowledge about industrial processes and agricultural production, and generated enough money to pay for the professional skills of medical doctors and competent lawyers. Immigrants from Europe and Japan brought with them traditions of popular education and the urge to keep their identity through the study of their original language and culture, adding an element of grass-roots education which Brazil had not seen before.

The confrontation between the two modernizing tendencies was unavoidable, and it came about with the establishment of the Vargas regime in 1930, which was to last until 1945: on one hand, the Republican positivists, Napoleonic in inspiration, and fascinated with the authoritarian regimes which, on the left or on the right, seemed to represent the future of Europe; on the other, the Republican federalists with their territorial basis in the São Paulo region. Again, however, this was not Europe. The Vargas regime had to build its support among local oligarchies in then country's poorer regions which have always been clients to the central government, while the Paulistas seemed at times to personify the conservative reaction against the modernizing drives of the center.

It would be impossible, and beside the point, to try to account for all the intricacies and complexities of the power play which took place in Brazil in those years. For our purpose, it is enough to point out that the central government's fascination with European totalitarianism was not enough to allow for the development of significant fascist movements and organizations, but included an alliance with the conservative and militant Catholic Church, which founded a renewed space in Brazilian politics after several decades of political insurrection in 1932, decided to give up political confrontation for the control of public offices, and to look instead for pragmatic accommodations with those sectors in the central government dealing with economic and financial matters.

This political scenario had direct consequences for the country's learning institutions. The first legislation allowing for the establishment of a national university in Rio de Janeiro came out in 1931, written by Francisco Campos, the country's first Minister of Education and the man who masterminded the political alliance between Getúlio Vargas and the Catholic

⁸ Fundação Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, *Séries Estatísticas Retrospectivas*, Rio de Janeiro, vol. 1 (fascimile edition of *Anuário Estatístico do Brasil*, ano V, (1939/1940), 1941).

Church⁹. In 1934 the Ministry of Education was placed in the hands of Gustavo Capanema, with a mandate to carry on the educational orientations of the Church. His ambitious national plan for education included the materialization of the National University in Rio de Janeiro, which was to be staffed with the conservative Catholics from France and Italy, and to be controlled by the Ministry through minute regulations of all its administrative and teaching activities; the creation of nationally supervised systems of secondary education with emphasis in Latin and the humanities, adapted from Italy, as the only channel for university education; the establishment of a nation-wide system of four years primary education, to be carried out by the states according to the federal legislation, with mandatory religious and civic courses; a network of technical and vocational schools at the secondary level, for the teaching of engineering, chemistry and related topics.

Such an ambitious plan could not be developed in the vacuum. The project for a National University faced opposition from the São Paulo elites, who wanted to create their own university, and from the left wing of the Vargas coalition, which also organized their own institution, the Universidade do Distrito Federal in Rio de Janeiro. The U.D.F. emerged under the auspices of the Rio de Janeiro government, and brought together most of the outstanding liberal intellectuals and academics from Rio and other regions in the country, identified with the causes of progress, modernization, opposition to fascism and conservative Catholicism. As the government turned openly to the right in 1935, the university's first unit, the Faculdade de Ciências, came under intervention, and was closed a few years later. The University of São Paulo, established in 1934, was from the beginning too strong to be destroyed or subdued. It brought together all the state's "faculties" in the liberal professions and a few research institutes, and was centered in a newly created school of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters, fully staffed by European professors – physicists and mathematicians from Italy, biologists and chemists from Germany, historians, geographers and social scientists from France. In the end, the project for a national university failed in its ambitious, but led to a tradition of administrative centralization and formalism in academic matters which still plagues Brazilian higher education. The attempt to maintain a strictly confessional university under public auspices also failed, since the marriage between Church and the State was an affair of convenience, never of conviction. In the forties the Catholic Church returned to its privatist tradition, and created its first Pontifical University in Rio de Janeiro. The University of São Paulo suffered through the Vargas years in its relations with the Federal

⁹ What follows is based on S. Schwartzman, Helena M. Bousquet Bomeny and Vanda Maria Ribeiro Costa, *Tempos de Capanema*, Editora Paz e Terra / Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1984.

government and their representatives in the state, but gave rise to Brazil's only major public alternative to the Federal system, which is today the largest and by far the best university in the country.

At the other extreme, the Federal government's policy for basic education was mostly restrictive. The development of community schools in foreign languages among European and Japanese immigrants from São Paulo down to the South was perceived with suspicion by the government, and, when Brazil finally joined the allies in Second World War, teaching in other languages besides Portuguese was forbidden and forcefully suppressed. A pedagogic movement towards universal education, which was known as the "movement for new education" and received inspiration, among others, from John Dewey in the United States, was perceived with deep suspicion by the Church, and its initiatives thwarted after 1935. The Ministry of Education engaged in a bitter dispute with industrialists about the control of technical education, which resulted in some kind of Salomonic decision, with the creation of two parallel systems. The federal government went as far as to hire specialists in Switzerland for their first technical schools, an experience which was mostly a disaster; in the meantime, the industrialists developed their own network of technical schools which still provides them with the skilled labor they need.

Classic secondary education has always been limited to a few public gymnasiums or "colleges" in the main cities, and in a series of Catholic institutions for boys and girls, which together catered to the children of the richest families and of high-ranking politicians and civil servants, a situation not deeply affected by the Capanema legislation. At the same time, a series of less academic institutions started to emerge, including a fairly large number of four year "escolas de comércio" (schools of commerce), leading to three year "cursos de contabilidade" (accounting), which did not qualify for university admission. It was impossible to maintain for long the monopoly of university education for the graduates of the traditional secondary schools, and on time all recipients of school certificates corresponding to 11 years of education were formally allowed to apply to the university's entrance examinations. In fact, however, these examinations tested for the kinds of knowledge only the best traditional schools could provide.

Fifty years later, Brazil is a much larger and complex society, with an education system several times bigger, and in many ways very different from that of the 1930's. And yet, as population expanded, social mobility increased and the educational system had to face the incorporation of new social groups, it could only count on the institutions established in the past.

Public elementary (7-11)¹⁰ education expanded everywhere, and access to first grade is finally becoming universal; but quality is very uneven, and wastage through desertion and failure is staggering. In general, schools are much better in the regions with a strong immigrant and capitalist tradition than in the rest of the country, including Rio de Janeiro. Although lack of resources is still a serious concern, the main difficulties with the Brazilian basic education are its inability to keep students from lower socioeconomic strata at school after the first year or two, the lack of community involvement and support for the local schools, and the formality and the emptiness of the curricula¹¹. Part of the explanation for these difficulties, I believe, is related to the tradition of perceiving education a service to be provided from "above", the state, rather than something to be acquired from "below", society. For the lower strata, this service is often not only inaccessible, but also incomprehensible. The large state networks of public schools developed into huge bureaucracies, with hundreds of thousands of teachers, administrators and supervisors, which are often used as an instrument of political patronage, and resist any attempts to build up local motivation and involvement with matters of education. No significant improvement of basic education in the country seems feasible without a major effort to return the initiative to the local communities, and to break down its bureaucratized and overly politicized bureaucracies.

¹⁰ For several years now Brazil has a mandatory 8 years cycle of basic education (7-15), and a three year secondary cycle. In practice, the cutting line between the first four years of the primary cycle and gymnasium for the following four was maintained, among other things by the fact that only teachers for the 5-8 periods are required to have university degrees.

¹¹ "Las dos terceras partes del aumento de la matrícula primaria registrado entre 1960 y 1970 [en América Latina] se deben al crecimiento vegetativo y al aumento de la eficiencia interna, mientras que sólo un tercio de dicho aumento responde a la incorporación de nuevos grupos sociales. Esta comprobación pone de relieve la existencia de dos problemas centrales en torno al sistema educativo en su nivel básico: el problema de la incorporación de nuevos grupos sociales y el problema de la retención de los ya incorporados". J. C. Tedesco, "Elementos para un diagnóstico del sistema educativo tradicional en América Latina", in, Germán W. Rama, *Mudanças Educacionais na América Latina – situações e condições*, Universidade Federal do Ceará, 1983, 85-121, p. 92. Data is taken from Luís Ratinoff and Máximo Jeria, *Estado de la educación en América Latina y Prioridades de desarrollo*, BID, Departamento de Planes Y Programas, División de Políticas Sectoriales, March, 1979 (mimeo).

The crucial problems of secondary education are its permanence as a screening device to higher education, its loss of meaning as a place for general education¹², and the absence of education alternatives to the traditional curriculum. Latin disappeared, geography and history were replaced by social studies, French became elective, and the 15-18 secondary schools became mostly a cramming course for university entrance examinations. The small elite public secondary schools (such as the Pedro II in Rio de Janeiro, or the Colégio Estadual in Minas Gerais) lost their prestige and quality, and secondary education became mostly a private affair, leading to an extremely regressive selective mechanism for the country's public universities. Attempts to develop vocational education at a secondary level failed almost completely, probably because they meant in practice a dead end on the road to the universities.

Problems of higher education can be described in terms of exacerbated credentialism, extreme qualitative inequality and the lack of differentiation¹³. Public higher education remained divided around the Federal and the São Paulo systems, the first more bureaucratized, with relatively little research, the second with one small research university, Campinas, a large agglomeration of unrelated professional "faculties", The Universidade do Estado de São Paulo (UNESP), and the country's largest and best public university, USP.

The main cleavage, however, is not between the federal and the state systems, but between the public and the growing private higher education institutions. Demand for education gained speed in the sixties and seventies, and today 75% of higher education students (more than 90% in São Paulo) are in private institutions. We know very little about what these institutions do, and why people are willing to pay for the courses they provide. Their quality is usually poor, but we suspect that this is just as well for a large part of their students, more interested in their diploma than in good quality courses they would find hard to follow any case.

Credentialism is not a Brazilian exclusivity, but it has been intensified by the extraordinary wage differentials which exist between educated and non educated labor market. It would be reasonable to expect that, as the number of diplomas increase much

¹² "La peculiaridad de América Latina consiste en que la cultura escolar comienza cuando ella ha adquirido las características de una cultura empobrecida, obsoleta y relativamente aislada, en cuanto sus pautas conservan plenamente su sentido sólo dentro del ámbito de la escuela. En consecuencia, los modelos culturales que se ofrecen a las masas de población que recién se incorporan al sistema no serían siquiera totalmente representativos de los modelos dominantes culturalmente vigentes". J. C. Tedesco, "Elementos para un diagnóstico del sistema educativo tradicional en América Latina", in, Germán W. Rama, *Mudanzas Educativas na América Latina – situações e condições*, Universidade Federal do Ceará, 1983, 85-121, p.100.

¹³ Cf. S. Schwartzman, "Brazil: Opportunity and Crisis in Higher Education", *Higher Education*, 17, 1 (99-119)

quicker than the number of well-paying jobs, this gap would tend to close, reducing the demand for education at the lowest paying careers. However, wage differentials are kept high by a complex combination of legislation and employment practices, mostly in the public service, and the general expectation is that they could be kept high by the organized collective action of professional groups. The consequence is that, the lower the salaries get, the more emphasis is placed on the formal and credential features of the higher education system, at the expense of its contents. This is a direct inheritance from the tradition of the state centralization, and is a powerful obstacle to a presumably more effective tactic, which would be to try to increase salaries through the improvement of skills and productivity.

A similar mechanism operates with the network of the higher education institutions. They are highly stratified in terms of quality and earning opportunities for graduates, but are kept nominally unified within a single national model, with strong opposition to any suggestions that differentiation should be acknowledged and acted upon, providing different sectors and types of institution with the education more adapted to their demands and possibilities.

In brief, I believe that the central problems of education in Brazil, and by extension of many Latin American countries, are related to a condition of extreme inequality and lack of quality under the guise of equality for all, maintained as such by huge bureaucratic and over-politicized structures which defeat most attempts at effective reform. The route to change, if there is any, is to open the way for substantive improvement in quality through the recognition of actual differences and the breakdown of bureaucratic monopolies at all levels. The explanation of the current situation is at least partly to be found in the relative early emergence of large state structures, heirs of the old mercantilist and colonial administration, which preempted and co-opted society's drivers for self-reliance and initiative, in education as well as in other matters.

I think I would be naïve, to believe that all the problems would be solved if the public systems were just closed down, and education turned over to pressures from the market. Karl Polanyi showed long ago that markets only go well defined institutional settings, a lesson which could only be forgotten at our own peril. Latin American education is already

privatized to a large extent, a condition which does not seem to be improving it in any significant way. What we need is effective social policies under society's close supervision – but this may be already asking too much.