



Promising Practices

On the human rights-based approach in German development cooperation. Education: Setting participation in motion for education in Peru

Background

Since 2002, Peru has been developing towards a democratic, decentralised state and has accorded substantial competence in education policy to the regional and local levels. However, comparisons show that learning achievements of Peruvian primary school students are still the second worst in the region. Teachers usually do not have sufficient methodological and substantive knowledge to adequately teach. They lack the necessary intercultural competence to address the socio-cultural aspects relevant to their students. As compared to urban areas, rural schools are particularly deficient in number and quality and mainly cater to boys.

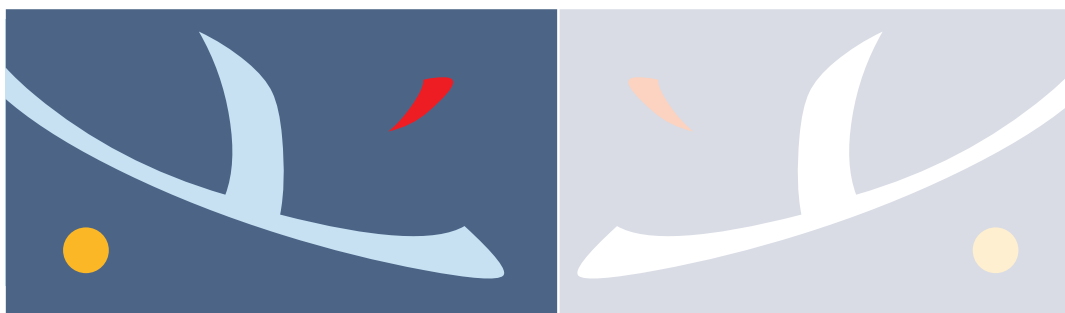
The Programme for Primary Education (PROEDUCA) was implemented by former GTZ (now Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH) between 2002 and 2007. Former GTZ supported the Peruvian Ministry of Education (MoE) in improving the formation of teachers and in establishing a demand-driven and decentralised educational administration. It worked with the central government, regional and local authorities and actively engaged civil society in the process. The programme's objective read: Teachers execute their educational mandate professionally and thereby facilitate efficient and effective learning processes in primary schools.

The programme had three pillars:

- assurance of quality education,
- effective education management, and
- effective and inclusive education policy at all levels.

Human rights framework

Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) – which was ratified by Peru in 1978 – establishes 'the right of everyone to education'. Article 14 obliges states to introduce compulsory primary education free of charge for all and issue respective action plans. Education has to be available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable. In that sense, education must be physically accessible and economically affordable to all, especially the most vulnerable persons and groups, in law and in fact. Acceptability relates to the form and substance of education, including curricula and teaching methods. They have to be of good quality, but also relevant to, and culturally appropriate for, students and, to a certain degree, parents. Adaptability implies that education has to be flexible so it can adapt to the needs of changing societies and communities and respond to the needs of students within their diverse social and cultural settings. Human rights standards are complemented with cross-cutting human rights principles: non-discrimination and equality of opportunities, participation and empowerment, transparency and accountability.



Towards a human rights-based approach

Over the past two decades, the Peruvian government has undertaken successful efforts to increase access to primary education. According to the MDG monitor, it has achieved a 99% enrolment ratio in primary education (both sexes), with 84.5% reaching grade 5 (figures as of 2009). Having said this, poverty, living in rural areas, the female sex, language and ethnic origin remain factors which exclude children from access to schools. Illiteracy is far more wide-spread among women, and at secondary schools the drop-out rate for girls is higher than for boys. Unmarried pregnant girls are denied access to catholic schools and teacher formation institutes. Overall, discrimination against women is multiple: for example, the highest rate of illiteracy is found amongst poor, rural, indigenous women whose mother tongue is not Spanish.

A focus on bilingual teaching, intercultural issues and gender was thus the best entry point for improving access to and the quality of the education system. The programme concentrated on the formation and training of teachers: It revised teaching materials, screening them for gender-based and ethnically discriminatory elements. To enable teachers to work with the revised materials, PROEDUCA trained them on dealing with bilingualism and interculturality and elaborated a profile for trainers at teacher formation institutes.

Process

PROEDUCA worked nationally and on the different regional and local levels, focussing on enhancing participation and making it work for education. The programme assisted partner regions in establishing regional participatory committees composed of education experts and representatives of state and non-governmental institutions. The committees developed regional education plans that were later on discussed with representatives of civil

society, parents, teachers and students as well as representatives of governmental institutions. Results were fed back into the education plans, taking into account regional particularities and needs of minorities.

Today, the functions of the participatory committees have evolved from participation in educational plans to holding school administrations to account: the committees monitor the implementation of regional education plans, and, partly, also national education policies through a previously agreed set of monitoring criteria and instruments. The participatory processes thus grew into increased accountability, a key variable to improve the educational system.

PROEDUCA also supported enhanced accountability at teacher formation institutes, and collaborated in the development of a number of monitoring and evaluation instruments. These instruments take into account intercultural and gender aspects. Students shared in the development of these instruments – to evaluate the performance of all stakeholders and to record the changes achieved. Together with the Ministry of Education, PROEDUCA worked on instruments to evaluate the management at teaching institutes. One such instrument is used to diagnose and evaluate school management systems and capacities. It enables students, teachers and administrative staff at educational institutions to participate in evaluations of administration and management and to understand the results.

At the same time, the programme strengthened the capacities of regional governments to better fulfil their duties. This included training, planning of regional projects and the elaboration of specific criteria as a basis for ensuring a quality system for teacher training and formation by the regional offices of the Ministry of Education. The quality system introduced is transparent and adapted to regional needs. Teacher formation institutes have evaluated it which will help to ensure and further improve the quality of teacher formation in Peru.

Impact

Participation has increased in many ways on different levels. Women are more involved at the decision-making level in educational institutions, and more teacher formation institutes are trying to attract men as prospective teachers for pre-primary and primary education. More parents are aware of the importance of letting girls and boys complete school. Issues such as HIV/AIDS, sex education and hygiene, and sexual abuse at teaching institutes are included in curricula. Education programmes are designed in a culturally adequate manner, practice-oriented and free from discriminatory elements, making education more acceptable and accessible at the same time. The intercultural teaching materials developed by PROEDUCA are being used nationally and internationally.

Finally, the participatory processes around the regional education plans have not only demonstrated that education systems can fit local needs but have also improved communication between state and civil society players at the regional level. The PROEDUCA experience served as a model for a large number of other administrative regions (departamentos) in Peru and other countries in Latin America.

With regard to the teacher formation institutes, a process has been initiated for increased and better participation in terms of quality for staff and students. Management has become more efficient, transparent, effective and accountable. Together with students, staff and management of the institutes set annual goals and monitor their achievement through accessible systems. Information on decisions regarding the allocation of resources, on teaching goals and respective results are now more transparent and management decisions have thus become comprehensible. From these processes flowed engagement in local politics: for example, the regional participatory committees of Madre de Diós and Piura reported on the monitoring process, its progress and challenges and made proposals for its improvement. The reports were made public and handed over to the regional government.

What locally adapted education systems had set in motion was fed in to the National Education Plan, developed under the auspices of the National Education Council and other educational institutions. Basic features of the National Education Plan included access to educational institutions without discrimination, their availability and the design of educational content of high quality that takes account of gender and inter-cultural issues.



Teacher with pupils.



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*Meeting of the committee.
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Challenges

It is a long-term process to implement a new way of thinking and acting within the education system. It is a challenge for teachers and education officials to put the human rights-based approach to education into practice: Legal and administrative parameters still need to be adapted and, most importantly, the political vision and discourse with respect to the rights of indigenous peoples need to change. Many teachers and education officials still hold quite biased interpretations of social reality, and traditional and religious conceptions still shape their views – issues, such as the discrimination of girls and women are thus seen through a very different lens.

In addition, the structure of the diploma remains a challenge: The more actors are part of the steering structure of the diploma, the clumsier and less flexible it gets.

Lessons learned

Active participation of formerly excluded and marginalised groups and the improvement of transparency and accountability mechanisms can contribute to significant progress in the realisation of the right to education for under-privileged children and youth. However, these gains need time beyond a programme framework of a couple of years and continued support and backstopping in order to institutionalise the processes that were set in motion. The related institutional and personal learning processes are extremely complex and varied. Therefore, experts experienced in accompanying such complex learning processes in a development context should be available in the long run in order for changes to be sustainable.

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