

ESPINOZA, G. Antonio, 2013, *Education and the State in Modern Peru: Primary Schooling in Lima, 1821-c. 1921*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan. 296 pp.

This book, in addition to focusing on Lima, contributes to an understanding of the vicissitudes of the Peruvian educational system as a whole. The author uses the available information to discuss the size and patterns of enrollment; he then goes on to review the principal ideas and debates regarding educational policies and the activities of various agents (the central government, local governments, elites, parents, and the Catholic church); later, he focuses on three central agents (teachers, parents, and local communities) and reconstructs the key elements of both the prescribed curriculum and the "hidden" curriculum, which he analyzes using information about curriculum areas taught in schools, as well as regulations and examples of physical abuse and potential asymmetries in the treatment of students according to their social condition; finally, he discusses the first years (post-1905) of the *Estado Docente* ("teaching state") or, rather, what would go on to become the national educational system in Peru.

In dealing with these issues, the author constructs a complex image of the formation of the educational system, which is explained through analyses of the interaction among diverse agents in highly variable contexts (from the guano boom to the creation of a teacher's association in 1885 which, among other things, promoted the centralization of the educational function of the state). This manner of approaching the topic not only aids in the relegation of simplistic ideas about the development of the educational system but also sheds light on the construction of the state apparatus. Consequently, the relevance of this study goes beyond the historical period to which it refers, given that it describes a nascent process of expansion of the educational system and the configuration of the state apparatus; it should not be forgotten that the central government currently has a presence in 1,600 localities through police stations and in more than 30,000 through schools.

The book begins with the statement of a central fact: during the last century, an image was constructed that established an equivalence between public education and education managed and controlled centrally by the national government. Though the problematic process of decentralization begun in the 21st century may have changed this image, the identity constructed in the process that led to the 1905 legal reforms seems to continue intact. The text argues that the development of a centralized system was linked to the disparities in resources and agendas that prevailed in previously existing local schemes, which avoided promoting identification with the national community (at least until 1879), as well as the influence of patronage and clientelism in the management of resources. At the same time, this process was marked by characteristics of Peruvian society such as social hierarchies, exclusion, privileges, and overt discrimination. Except for episodic

liberal manifestations, educational policies were aimed more at the preservation of traditional social stratification than at promoting development or personal liberties. Thus the expansion of access to education, including maintaining its fundamentally conservative character, depended on the resources and actions of the central government and particular local agents, which were resisted by traditional power sectors through mechanisms of discrimination or pressure to ensure that education would be employed to "civilize" the traditionally excluded sectors of the population and "keep them in their place." This was also evident in the fact that there were very few efforts to establish lay education. Thus, it should come as no surprise that the author affirms that, in the cases he was able to review, the school "encouraged authoritarianism, intolerance, discipline based on fear, and the expectation of reward according to the degree of individual conformity" (p. 200).

Subsidies for municipal education also served as a mechanism of control and subjection of local authorities by the agents that controlled the principal source of financial resources. While these were not formal mechanisms of control, the subsidies were useful in the creation of alliances with local agents to achieve more centralized control. Nevertheless, this mechanism was insufficient, given that local authorities could use these resources for their own ends since hiring and the control of promotions and salaries remained in their hands and could be used in accordance with their own patronage and clientelistic networks. Thus, the principal tensions among agents were not associated with educational or pedagogic problems but rather with issues that were fundamentally political and related to the management of resources such as hiring and firing of teachers, the location of schools (which clients would be favored by the "patron"), and the amounts of money transferred (*loc. cit.*). Thus, not only did patronage and clientelistic networks fail to clash with the expansion of the state but rather they were part of this expansion (*loc. cit.*), which was manifested in a variety of ways, including the role of teachers in electoral processes (p. 117).

Going beyond the text itself, the process described allows us to identify a pattern of access to public resources in which the goal of actions is to assure advantages and privileges. Thus, any concern about guaranteeing access or learning to individuals becomes a secondary goal unless another local actor gains sufficient influence to turn this around. This situation is facilitated by traditional conceptions of education that see it as a system of teaching and, therefore, centered on the operation of the apparatus of teaching and the actions of teachers: **learning and the interests of students simply do not define the operation of the system.** Similarly, it be of little surprise that an educational system managed this way does not have supervisory bodies whose purpose is to verify that substantive objectives are being met and that efforts in this direction end up being transformed into something

else (e.g., the Units of Educational Supervision of the 1980s and today, the Units of Local Educational Management) or simply resisted (like the recently created Superintendency of University Education).

Espinoza's book stands out for the richness of the historiographic material and the reconstructions of significant events on both the national and local levels. Nevertheless, in important discussions of the book's central arguments, a more intense dialogue with other social disciplines is wanting. This would have provided a more refined conceptual framework for understanding the processes that are at the center of the study. The lack of any reference to Margaret Archer's *Social Origins of Educational Systems* (London: Sage, 1979), a key study on the development of educational systems, results in historiographic material that is not linked to fundamental conceptual categories regarding agency and the process of creation and stabilization of institutions or social arrangements. This absence, however, does not detract from a text that should be read not only by those interested in the historical period it covers, but also those concerned about current problems (such as, for example, problems of centralization and decentralization or of private participation in education). This approach, related to a different context, can help reduce the ideological or emotional charges present in some contemporary debates.

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