

2. Experimenting with educational development: international actors and the promotion of private schooling in vulnerable contexts

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INTRODUCTION

International actors, including international organizations (IOs), private foundations and international consultancy firms, play an important role in promoting education reform and related education policy transfer dynamics. Existing research on global education policy shows that the presence of international actors is particularly intense and visible in low-income countries as well as in countries that are vulnerable for economic, political and/or humanitarian reasons. As in a zero-sum game, the presence of international agencies—and their human, material, discursive and communications resources—aims to compensate for the financial gaps and the administrative restrictions that the governments of vulnerable countries face in core policy domains. Nonetheless, as we argue in this chapter, international actors do not only operate in contexts of fragility for humanitarian reasons, or to cover governmental needs. For many international actors, situations and contexts of vulnerability are privileged moments and spaces to promote their preferred policy reform approaches, and to experiment with “innovative” policy solutions that would be difficult to implement in more stable and plural political systems and/or in less needy societies (Gauri, 1998).

In this chapter, we analyze the role and impact of international actors in educational reform processes by focusing on the way these

actors promote pro-private education solutions, such as vouchers schemes, charter schools, or school-based management, with a focus on vulnerable contexts. Specifically, the chapter identifies which international players have been more present in the promotion of the education privatization agenda, and analyzes the policy mechanisms they have wielded to further a controversial agenda in contexts of vulnerability.

To achieve these objectives, the chapter is structured in five main parts. In the first part, we briefly describe the main theories of policy transfer, looking in particular at the role of international organizations and other international actors in the promotion of policy transfer. In the second part, we reflect on the pathways of global education privatization to show that international players are especially active in the promotion of education privatization in contexts of social, political and economic vulnerability (in contrast to more developed societies, where education privatization is a more endogenous phenomenon that can be better explained by the role and presence of local actors and domestic institutions). In the next two sections, we present in more detail the two paths toward education privatization in which international players have been especially prominent, namely the expansion of low-fee private schools in low-income countries, and the promotion of pro-private sector solutions in contexts of emergency (including natural catastrophes and political conflicts). To conclude the chapter, we discuss our main findings.

THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ACTORS IN POLICY TRANSFER DYNAMICS

Currently, a dense network of international players interacts to promote their views and preferred policy solutions worldwide. Indeed, international organizations usually have both the economic and material leverage to promote educational agendas internationally, as well as the technical capacity (including the skills to generate and organize internationally compatible data) to promote policy transfer, borrowing and lending. Nonetheless, existing research does not necessarily agree on the specific mechanisms that international actors activate in policy change and policy transfer dynamics. Here, it is relevant to distinguish between

different theories of policy transfer (namely, rationalism, neo-institutionalism, international political economy and constructivism), and pay attention to the specific role that these theories attribute to international actors and to IOs in particular.

Rationalism assumes that national policy-makers, either pressured for or desirous of reform, will look for and adopt what they see as appropriate and effective policies from other countries or international organizations. It is supposed that some policies travel internationally—or become global reform models—because there is enough evidence to show that the policies in question “work” or, in other words, produce positive outcomes in specific domains.

Rationalism therefore assumes that IOs operate as *forums* of policy ideas in which member states voluntarily participate. In the context of IOs, countries exchange about best practices and learn from the most successful international policies and experiences. So, the role of IOs would be that of facilitators and honest brokers of evidence-based practices. However, rationalism is insufficient for understanding the global dissemination of education reform models for which empirical evidence is inadequate. The policies we focus on in this chapter highlight this dilemma. Universal voucher schemes or charter schools have been extensively criticized for their uneven and even negative impacts in terms of equity. Nonetheless, criticism and lack of positive evidence have not prevented them from continuing to be internationally promoted by influential international organizations.

Neo-institutionalism responds to rationalist assumptions by stating that legitimacy—instead of functional efficiency or empirical evidence—is the major driving force of policy transfer and policy adoption dynamics. In this theory, to increase their legitimacy and ensure their persistence in power, governments embrace rules, norms, and routines that are widely valued in their organizational environment, independently of whether they “work” or not (Dobbins and Knill, 2009). According to neo-institutionalism, education models spread as part of the diffusion of a culturally embedded model of the modern nation-state. Thus, public–private partnerships (PPPs) and other pro-private sector policies circulate globally through the force of an imagined Western modernity and the corresponding desire for developing country governments to show and feel they are constructing a “modern nation-state.” In this sense, neo-institutionalist scholars would argue that many developing

countries are implementing private-sector-friendly policies that are not necessarily matched to their institutional legacy or needs or resources.

For neo-institutionalists, IOs are not as neutral policy actors as rationalists assume. IOs have their own agendas and actively disseminate global norms—understood as those “standards of behavior” that fit better with the Western system of political organization—in relevant policy fields such as education (Meyer, Ramirez, and Soysal, 1992).

International political economy (IPE) focuses on generally conflicting political and economic interactions between key policy actors who are key drivers of policy transfer and adoption. For IPE scholars, the global economy is the main driver of the multiple transformations manifested in different policy sectors, including education (Dale, 2000), and the main reason why particular reform models end up globalizing. In an increasingly globalized economy, the creation of new market opportunities becomes a state priority. From this perspective, education privatization reforms can be a functional state response to a globally expanding private education industry (Verger, Steiner-Khamsi, and Lubienski, 2017). In addition, economic liberalization, fiscal crises and increased demand for public services can lead governments to outsource public services, including education (Carnoy, 2016).

According to this view, IOs are conceptualized as key transmitters of instrumental, cost-effective and market-oriented views of education and educational reform to national contexts. Furthermore, IOs are far from acting as honest brokers. They tend to promote their preferred policy models and solutions, which are more ideological than pragmatic, in a coercive and top-down way (Dale, 1999). For instance, international development banks and international aid agencies have the capacity to oblige countries to take on particular education policies through conditionality to credit and/or economic donations.

Finally, from a *critical constructivist* perspective, IOs capacity of influence does not rely only on hard forms of power. It relies mainly on the legitimacy of the rational-legal authority that IOs represent, as well as on their control over information, data and technical expertise (Finnemore, 1996). According to Barnett and Finnemore (2004), IOs exercise power by organizing three types of apparently apolitical and technical actions. They are: first, classifying the world, for instance,

by categorizing countries according to their level of performance in international evaluations such as TIMSS or PISA and, accordingly, pressuring governments to introduce education reforms; second, fixing meanings in the social world by, for instance, defining “educational quality” both explicitly and indirectly by means of indicators and benchmarks; and third, articulating and disseminating new norms, principles and beliefs by anointing “good” or “best” practices in educational development.

Nonetheless, beyond this theoretical distinction, in real situations, IOs and other types of international actors are involved in more than one type of policy mechanism according to context and to the IOs’ mandate and organizational culture.

THE GLOBALIZATION OF EDUCATION PRIVATIZATION: MAIN TRAJECTORIES AND POLICY CONFIGURATIONS

Recently, the authors of this chapter conducted a literature review on the political economy of education privatization (see Verger, Fontdevila, and Zancajo 2016, 2017). In this review we analyzed the main drivers and factors behind pro-market and pro-private schooling reforms worldwide. The review allowed us to identify and to systematize six different *paths toward education privatization*, which we define as ideal types, in a Weberian sense, that contribute to systematizing and clustering real cases of educational privatization, although they do not necessarily correspond directly to empirical situations.¹ The main characteristics of these trajectories and the countries where these trajectories have been more prevalent can be consulted in Table 2.1.

¹ The original study followed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology, which consists in a review of the existent studies on a topic based on explicit, accountable and replicable methods (Gough, Thomas and Oliver, 2012). The main objective of this research methodology is to obtain an analytical synthesis of the existing literature that allows to answer the research questions that guide the study. Following the steps advanced by specialized literature, 227 studies were selected, reviewed and systematized after being screened against quality and relevance criteria. The documents were collected from a combination of sources including electronic databases, grey literature and specialized journals and websites.

Table 2.1 *Different paths toward education privatization*

Path	Countries	Origin	Description	Policy outcomes
1. Education privatization as a State sector reform	Chile, United Kingdom (esp. England and Wales)	1980s	Drastic privatization process as part of a structural state reform adopted on ideological grounds by governments explicitly committed to neoliberalism, and consolidated by subsequent center-left administrations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Per capita funding and other mechanisms of school competition. – Liberalization of the education provision sector. – School choice policies.
2. Education privatization in social-democratic welfare states	Sweden: early 1990s; Denmark: mid-2000s; Norway: early 2000s; Finland: late 1990s		Introduction of a wide range of market reforms, framed as part of a necessary modernization of the welfare state, and largely encouraged by social-democratic forces as a means to respond to middle-class demand for diversification.	<p><i>Internal diversity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sweden: ambitious voucher program and liberalization of the education sector. – Denmark: pro-school choice legislation. – Norway: authorization of subsidies to private schools. – Finland: major market reforms prevented by good results in PISA.
3. Scaling up privatization	United States of America, Colombia, Canada	1980s	Advancement of the privatization agenda through an incremental and uneven process, through the accumulation of low-scale reforms involving limited change, and with the key contribution of non-state actors organized in loose coalitions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Authorization of new forms of provision and management including charter schools. – Adoption of targeted, non-universal voucher programs (means-tested or special needs schemes).
4. De facto privatization in low-income countries	Malawi, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, Liberia, India, Pakistan, Peru	2000s	Proliferation of low-fee private schools, originally set up by local entrepreneurs as a response to demand-side forces, increasingly encouraged by the international development community and supported by corporate and philanthropic groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Growing presence of low-fee private schools driven by profit and targeted to poor families. – Emergence of chains of LFPS operating on economies of scale. – Incorporation on LFPS in public-private partnerships.

Table 2.1 (continued)

Path	Countries	Origin	Description	Policy outcomes
5. Historical public-private partnerships	The Netherlands: beginning of the 20th century; Belgium: late 1960s; Spain: early 1980s		Establishment of PPPs during the educational expansion of the 20th century, given the historical role of faith-based institutions in the delivery of social services, and as a means to achieve a State-Church compromise and to avoid conflict among different confessions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public subsidies for private schools within long-term contracts in the form of PPPs. More recently, adoption of endo-privatization reforms (school autonomy policies, new public management reforms, etc).
6. Privatization by way of disaster	New Orleans: 2005; Haiti: 2010; Central America (El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras): early 1990s		Rapid advancement of education privatization catalyzed by situations of emergency (natural disasters, violent conflicts), framed by privatization advocates as an opportunity and in a situation of democratic void a involving a redistribution of power.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Orleans: rise of charter schools, decentralization, maximized school choice. Haiti: consolidation and expansion of the central role private provision through public subsidies. Central America: spread of school-based management programs.

In most cases, our review shows that education privatization tends to respond to endogenous logics and to the role of domestic political actors, national coalitions and domestic institutions, among other local contingencies (see paths 1, 2, 3 and 5 in Table 1). Nonetheless, our review also shows that international players have been especially active (and successful) in the promotion of education privatization in the most vulnerable countries (see paths 4 and 6 in Table 1). Specifically, we found that international actors played key roles as drivers of education privatization in two main settings. First, in a broad range of low-income countries where a diffuse network of international agencies is promoting the expansion of so-called low-fee private schools; and second, in contexts of emergency and humanitarian crises where international agencies of a different nature have advanced pro-school choice and pro-private sector reforms, taking advantage of the disaster situation and the reconstruction urgency. In the next two sections, we present both paths in more detail.

PRIVATIZATION BY DEFAULT IN LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES AND THE EXPANSION OF LFPS

Privatization by default is defined as an increasing involvement of private actors in the provision of basic education through a bottom-up process that doesn't necessarily involve state intervention. In other words, education privatization is not due to the active role of governments promoting privatization through, for instance, market-oriented policies, but is rather the result of private entrepreneurship in education and of families' demand for private schooling. In many low-income countries, the privatization by default phenomenon mainly materializes through the expansion of the so-called low-fee private schools (LFPS).

According to existing literature, the expansion of LFPS in low-income countries,² particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and

² It is difficult to estimate the real dimension of LFPSs because frequently these schools are not registered and don't appear in official statistics (Härmä, 2011; Härmä and Adefisayo, 2013; Srivastava, 2008).

South Asia,³ is explained by very diverse factors. The first and most obvious factor of LFPS is that these schools are more affordable for poorest families than conventional private schools. Nonetheless, in some contexts, LFPS are not economically accessible for the poorest social groups (Ashley et al., 2014; Härmä and Rose, 2012), or attract those families among the poor that have a higher level of education and/or more expectations for their children (Akyeampong and Rolleston, 2013; Fennell and Malik, 2012; Härmä and Adefisayo, 2013). In the case of some sub-Saharan African countries, where school fees in state schools have been abolished in the last years, LFPS have become an emerging option for those that want to avoid over-crowded classrooms in public schools or want to distinguish themselves from new entrants in the public education system (i.e., most socioeconomic disadvantaged or less skilled families) (Härmä, 2010). In other cases, the fact that state schools in rural areas are under-resourced or poorly resourced in comparison with public schools in populated areas (Mehrotra and Panchamukhi, 2007) feeds the social perception that private schools are better than public schools (Akyeampong and Rolleston, 2013). Finally, the fact that on occasion public education excludes or does not recognize the preferences and demands of some ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities also explains the expansion of LFPS among some social groups (Sarangapani and Winch, 2010; Walford, 2013).

Initially LFPS emerged as a quite spontaneous phenomenon at the margins of national governments' action (Walford, 2015). However, more recently, key international actors have actively promoted them. In recent years the role of international actors—including IOs, transnational corporations, private foundations or international policy entrepreneurs—in promoting and supporting LFPS has been crucial to global growth of LFPS. The most common argument of advocates is that, in the face of state failure, private alternatives are the most straightforward way to reach global development goals on education (Baum, 2012).

The World Bank has been one of the most active IOs in promoting LFPS in low-income countries. In fact, the World Bank

³ According to the existing literature LFPSs are growing phenomenon in countries like Malawi, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, India, Pakistan and Peru.

2020 Education Sector Strategy identified LFPS as a potential private partner in the provision of education in southern countries, and in particular as a desirable school option for socio-economically vulnerable students (Verger and Bonal, 2012; World Bank, 2011). In fact, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the World Bank agency in charge of lending to the private sector, has been actively financing the expansion of for-profit private schools—investing up to \$162.28 million in private education providers between 2011 and 2015. In addition, IFC’s activity in this area is increasingly targeting lower and lower-middle populations and focusing on large school chains rather than individual operators (Smith and Baker, 2017). The clearest example of IFC’s support to the LFPS sector is the \$10 million equity investment in the LFPS chain Bridge International Academies, approved in mid-2013 with the explicit aim of stimulating its expansion in Kenya and other countries (IFC, 2013). The IFC has also started to include LFPS sector representatives in their international summits as a way to engage them in its international networks of investors and international consultancies. To be sure, the recently published *World Development Report 2018* suggests that the World Bank could be turning to a less enthusiastic or more cautious approach on private provision. The publication draws attention to the limited evidence on the private sector’s quality advantage as well as to the multiple risks entailed by private education expansion (World Bank, 2017). However, it is unclear to what extent such a shift at a discursive level will have a direct impact on lending practices—especially given a well-documented disconnect and lack of coordination or alignment between the IFC and the education sector in the World Bank (Mundy and Menashy, 2014).

For their part, some bilateral aid agencies have also been quite active in supporting the expansion of LFPS in the global south. Aid agencies from Australia, Canada, the United States and the UK are supporting LFPS as a way to reach the most vulnerable sectors of the population, those often excluded from the education system in low-income countries. The education strategy of DFID for low-income countries, as in the case of the World Bank, conceives LFPS as way of “expanding access and educational outcomes for poor children” (DFID, 2013: 19). DFID is funding, among others, the Developing Effective Private Education Nigeria Program to promote private-sector participation in the education market, or the

Punjab Schools Reform Roadmap in Pakistan to provide vouchers to out-of-school children to attend LFPS. DFID is also supporting LFPS chains like Bridge International Academies (BIA) and works closely with market advocates such as James Tooley,⁴ who regularly participate in the events on educational reform and private schooling organized by it (Junemann, Ball, and Santori, 2016).

Several multinational corporations are also involved in the expansion of LFPS in low-income countries. For example, Pearson PLC is actively promoting LFPS through the Pearson Affordable Learning Fund (PALF). Although one of the main arguments stated by Pearson to promote LFPS globally is the achievement of the EFA goals, it also believes these schools can become highly profitable investments. In an interview to the BBC in 2012, the chairman of PALF, Michael Barber, highlighted the profitable dimension of LFPS “It is absolutely for-profit. But get this right—it is important to demonstrate profit because we want other investors to come in” (Barber, as cited in Riep, 2014: 264).

It is important to note the relevance and the power of international networks, beyond the role of individual actors, in the global expansion of LFPS. International actors (IOs, aid agencies, private foundation among others) meet regularly in international summits, conferences or other types of international events that have become strategic in the promotion of LFPS (Junemann, Ball, and Santori, 2016). These meetings foster the establishment of relationships of trust between different actors, from education providers to funders and investors, to establish durable networks of collaboration and, ultimately, to close business deals. Nonetheless, the role of these types of meetings is also important from a more symbolic point of view because these spaces contribute to establishing an international and shared discourse about the desirability of education private sector involvement in low-income contexts (Santori, Ball, and Junemann, 2015).

Finally, it is important to point out that international LFPS promoters have begun advocating for the establishment of some

⁴ James Tooley is one of the most active promoters of LFPS at global level. Tooley, who is director of the E.G. West Centre at Newcastle University, has developed an extensive empirical research about the role of private schools in India and Nigeria. Despite its academic profile, Tooley has become one of the leading international advocates of LFPS.

forms of PPPs between national governments and LFPS. According to LFPS advocates, PPP solutions such as vouchers schemes could be a way to expand the role of private schools in education and to overcome the economic barriers of the poorest families in accessing these schools (Dahal and Nguyen, 2014). Nonetheless, as Srivastava (2014) points out, the establishment of PPP agreements between low-income countries' governments and the private sector entails important risks. According to her, especially PPPs with large private school providers are risky because these providers "operate with vested interests against those of the public, can lead to more complicated regulatory frameworks not less, and that they have the potential of becoming 'abusive' if the stronger partner dominates" (Srivastava, 2014: 2). In fact, the cost-effectiveness, scalability and sustainability of PPPs are increasingly called into question. A randomized impact evaluation of the Partnership Schools for Liberia,⁵ for instance, suggests that while there are some (modest) learning gains associated with the delegation of public schools to private LFPS contractors, these are at least partially explained by increased spending per child and by staffing selection practices that had significant negative side-effects on government schools (Romero, Sandefur, and Sandholtz, 2017).

PRIVATIZATION IN CONTEXTS OF EMERGENCY

Processes of *privatization by way of catastrophe* constitute a second path toward privatization in which international actors play a particularly relevant role. The urgency of humanitarian crises tends to shift power and policy relationships, with the result that local stakeholders tend to be marginalized in favor of external agents. Contexts of disaster thus provide international actors (including multilateral banks and aid agencies, global foundations and international consultants) with an opportunity to step into domestic

⁵ The Partnership Schools for Liberia (PSL) is a large-scale PPP program launched in September 2016 that establishes the outsourcing of 93 government schools to a range of private contractors. The program relies heavily on well-know LFPS chains including Bridge International Academies and Omega Schools, and is in fact very much modeled on the BIA experience in other countries (Verger, Steiner-Khamsi, and Lubienski, 2017).

reform processes as legitimate partners. In a way, the situation of democratic void (i.e., a lack of scope for a public and open debate), which is related to a sense of urgency, converts disasters in an un-scrutinized space particularly favorable to the influence of international actors. As recalled by Edwards (2015), contexts affected by conflict are susceptible to becoming “blind spots” where certain reforms are tested “and then promoted by international organizations that must ‘sell’ policies to sustain their *raison d’être*” (Edwards, 2015: 411).

This vulnerability to external action is especially obvious in low-income countries, where catastrophes and conflicts exacerbate the (already) difficult economic situation of governments. In these contexts, international agencies enjoy high levels of discretion in promoting policy agendas. Low-income countries are particularly susceptible to the influence of development institutions, whose funding power and technical support can steer education reforms. In recent decades, many of the agencies operating within these contexts (development banks in particular) have embraced a pro-market or pro-private sector agenda—and have been able to impose this reform approach in post-conflict or post-catastrophe situations.

Importantly, the role of international actors is instrumental not only for the adoption of particular policy solutions, but also for their legitimization and consolidation in the long run. To a great extent, experimental interventions in catastrophe settings have an “amplification effect” in the sense that the interventions end up traveling to and affecting a larger geographical area than the original site of the catastrophe. In this sense, emergency situations frequently work as testing grounds where external actors can experiment with radical solutions that, later on, could be scaled up and transferred to other locations as best practices with a “proven record” of success.

The education reform implemented in El Salvador during a post-war period exemplifies the high degree of influence of IOs in contexts of crisis—and its role in promoting a managerial reform agenda internationally. The civil war between 1980 and 1992 served as the basis for a system-wide reform during the post-war period, and allowed for the direct intervention of different international agencies and, especially, the World Bank. There, the World Bank was instrumental in establishing the Program of Education with

Community Participation (EDUCO)⁶, a school-based management (SBM) program which emphasizes community accountability for teacher performance by requiring parents to hire and fire teachers on one-year contracts, thus relying heavily on unpaid parent labor (Edwards, 2015; Edwards and Klees, 2012). The program promotes the participation of non-state actors in the educational system, and introduces some basic market mechanisms in education that mainly fall within the category of endogenous privatization (see Ball and Youdell, 2008).

Significantly, the first World Bank loan to support the EDUCO program was agreed upon in 1991—before the Peace Accords of January 1992 and consequently before there was a real chance for the reform to be openly discussed with more traditional education stakeholders. The leverage exerted by the World Bank over Salvadorian education policy continued throughout the 1990s through a series of conditionalities attached to the disbursement of loan tranches that secured the expansion and consolidation of EDUCO (Edwards 2013, 2015). Overall, the combination of the World Bank financial and technical support contributed crucially to the growth and consolidation of the program, which over the last decades has come to account for slightly more than half of rural public schools in El Salvador (Gillies, Crouch, and Flórez, 2010).

The “amplification” impact of disaster-induced reforms is particularly apparent in the Salvadorian case. The EDUCO model was seen as key opportunity to experiment with decentralization arrangements in education—at the time, deemed by the World Bank as a highly effective and efficient approach to educational provision—and it was scaled up accordingly. This experiment was in fact a crucial step prior to the global promotion of SBM programs. During the 1990s and 2000s, the World Bank promoted the community management model through a series of technical support initiatives, workshops and publications. In fact, SBM programs spread within Central America during the 1990s, frequently inspired by the EDUCO program. This was the case of the Program of Autonomous Schools (PEA) in Nicaragua, the National Program of Self-Management for

⁶ Acronym for the program’s name in Spanish.

Education Development (PRONADE) in Guatemala, or the Honduran Project of Community Education (PROHECO) in Honduras.⁷ All of them received substantial support from development banks and aid agencies, especially the World Bank (Ganimian, 2016). Ultimately, the SBM programmatic idea gained a sort of “global status,” being recognized as good practice by other IOs like UNESCO and, more recently, the Global Partnership for Education. In fact, the model inspired educational reforms in a variety of contexts beyond the Latin American region, including Nepal and Uganda (Edwards, 2015, 2016)—even despite the lack of conclusive evidence on the effectiveness of SBM reforms (Gertler, Patrinos, and Rubio-Codina, 2007; Santibañez, 2006).

Another illustrative example of these transfer dynamics can be found in Haiti, which is an extreme case of reliance on the private sector that was subsequently consolidated, encouraged by prominent international actors in a context of emergency. The devastation resulting from the earthquake that struck the country in January 2010 resulted in the consolidation of the country’s historical dependence on private education provision (including for basic education)—a phenomenon that, so far, had occurred *de facto* rather than as a result of purposive interventions. In view of the need to reconstruct a virtually destroyed system, and given the government’s limited administrative and financial capacity, a range of international organizations weighed in—approaching the central role of private schools not as a problem to be remedied, but as the basis upon which the new system should be articulated (O’Keefe, 2013).

This was notably the case of the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), selected as the main partner of the Haitian government for the reconstruction of the education system. Through the financial support provided under the form of grants, the IADB was granted a privileged position and a high degree of influence on the education reform plan implemented by the Haitian government—and, presumably, would have played a key role in its pro-market orientation. The reconstruction plan put forward by the IADB was in fact based on the provision of subsidies to the private sector, conditional on certain requirements regarding infrastructure, teacher

⁷ Acronyms for the programs’ names in Spanish.

training and free tuition. In addition, the commitment to market logic was substantiated by the collaboration of the IADB with Paul Vallas, a prominent US advocate of pro-market education reforms (cf. Verger, Fontdevila, and Zancajo, 2016). The diagnostic report authored by this policy entrepreneur turned to the market reforms implemented in Chile and New Orleans as a model for the reconstruction of the Haitian system, and proposed an education expansion strategy based on a combination of school subsidies and an accountability system enabling closure of academically and financially struggling schools (Atasay and Delavan, 2012; Vallas and Pankovits, 2010).

CONCLUSIONS

Education reforms are the result of a combination of different drivers and the intervention of a diverse range of actors. This chapter has shown how international actors, including international development banks, international aid agencies and private foundations play an important role in the promotion and adoption of pro-market and privatization reforms in education, especially in contexts of vulnerability. Of the six paths towards privatization summarized at the beginning of this chapter, there are two paths in which international influence is essential for understanding the advance of education privatization reforms, namely privatization by default and privatization by way of catastrophe. These forms of educational privatization foster market-oriented solutions in developing countries as a way to achieve educational expansion and other development goals. In both cases, IOs have played a significant role privileging education privatization options and consequently dis-incentivizing direct state provision in education in low-income contexts.

The *privatization by default* path is mainly characterized by the expansion of LFPS. International actors of a very different nature have played an important role in legitimizing and expanding this relatively new kind of private schooling that targets poor families. Although the first wave of LFPS was essentially a local and bottom-up phenomenon, IOs and bilateral agencies have now begun to adopt LFPS as an integral part of their more recent education development strategies. These agencies conceive LFPS as a key ally

in the global development agenda, and as feasible instrument to achieve globally agreed education goals, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, in low-income countries. In the context of this path towards privatization, international actors have become relevant in two main stages of the policy process. First, during the stage of agenda-setting and policy selection, international actors are portraying LFPS as a desirable solution for expanding basic education in low-income countries, but also as a way of meeting the needs of minority groups, who are often excluded from state education systems. Second, at the stage of implementation, international actors contribute to the expansion of LFPS by financing LFPS chains directly or by promoting Southern governments adopting PPP arrangements with these types of chains through different funding products.

In the case of *privatization by way of catastrophe*, international actors are also a key component in the “catalyzing effect” that episodes of crisis represent in terms of accelerating the advancement of privatization reforms. Disaster-induced privatization reforms bring to the fore not only the central role of international organizations, but also the diversity of channels through which these organizations may impact in local processes of educational reform. As described in the chapter, the influence of international actors in privatization-by-disaster episodes rests on different degrees of coercion, and is channeled through the dissemination of norms or recommendations but also through imposition mechanisms (cf. Dale, 1999). However, the relative importance of these mechanisms and the associated sources of influence may vary in different moments of the policy process. During the stage of policy adoption, the leverage exerted by international organizations relies largely on their material and financing power. However, the consolidation and expansion of policy programs is very much the product of the international actors’ ideational capacity to impose a narrative on educational reform and improvement.

Overall, taking into account the role of international actors is essential to understand the adoption of education privatization reforms, especially in low-income countries and in countries affected by crises of a different nature. In these contexts, the presence of international actors has been essential to promote privatization policies not only as a desirable option but also as the most effective way to address the structural needs that these

countries face in the educational domain due to issues of scarcity of resources and administrative capacity. Humanitarian, economic, pragmatic and ideological reasons usually interact in the context of external intervention processes. However, we have also seen that for several IOs, vulnerable countries are settings where to experiment with disruptive policy approaches that would face greater contestation in more stable political and institutional systems.

Of all the theories of policy transfer presented in this chapter, international political economy approaches would have further explanatory power in understanding the dissemination and expansion of private-sector solutions in vulnerable contexts. The main role of international organizations in these contexts goes beyond that of a neutral knowledge broker, or a simple disseminator of global norms. In most cases reviewed in this chapter, coercive and imposition dynamics on behalf of IOs, mainly via financing mechanisms, have been identified. However, it is also true that international organizations do not simply impose private solutions via lending or funding conditionality. As critical constructivism theory would have expected, the international actors identified also spend time and resources in persuading different types of stakeholders, including national governments, about the desirability of adopting pro-private sector solutions, and in the organization of public and networking events where to frame, promote and legitimate their policy messages for a broader audience.

Ultimately, the policy dynamics shown in this chapter underline the multi-layered dynamics behind the advance of privatization in education, and the need for further research on the shifting power relations between actors operating at different scales. This type of research could contribute to a better understanding of which circumstances most readily lend themselves to external influence, and how global and local policy agendas constitute and affect each other.

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