

EDUCATIONAL POLICY: Alternatives and Political Contexts*

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- TEORIA Y PRAXIS DE LA EDUCACION SUPERIOR VENEZOLANA. By ORLANDO ALBORNOZ. (Caracas: Ediciones de la Facultad de Humanidades y Educación, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1979. Pp. 172.)
- SISTEMA EDUCATIVO DOMINICANO: DIAGNOSTICO Y PERSPECTIVAS. By JORGE MAX FERNÁNDEZ. (Santo Domingo: Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo, 1980. Pp. 182.)
- POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN CHILE, 1964–1976. By KATHLEEN B. FISCHER. (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center, 1979. Pp. 174. \$14.95.)
- LOS NUEVOS PROFESIONALES: EDUCACION UNIVERSITARIA DE TRABAJADORES; CHILE, UTE, 1968–1973. By ENRIQUE KIRBERG. (Guadalajara: Instituto de Estudios Sociales, Universidad de Guadalajara, 1981. Pp. 506.)
- LA EDUCACION EN EL PRIMER AÑO DE LA REVOLUCION POPULAR SANDINISTA. By MINISTERIO DE EDUCACION, REPUBLICA DE NICARAGUA. (Managua: Ministerio de Educación, 1980. Pp. 238.)
- EIGHT YEARS OF THEIR LIVES: THROUGH SCHOOLING TO THE LABOUR MARKET IN CHILE. By ERNESTO SCHIEFELBEIN and JOSEPH FARRELL. (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 1982. Pp. 207. \$12.00.)
- THE STATE, EDUCATION, AND SOCIAL CLASS IN MEXICO, 1880–1928. By MARY KAY VAUGHAN. (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1982. Pp. 316. \$22.50.)

Profound dissatisfaction marks most contemporary thinking about educational policy in Latin America. This view reflects a generalized dissatisfaction, at least in much of the academic world, with the overall pace and direction of national development. In education as in so many other fields, the optimism that characterized modernization theory in the 1950s and 1960s has given way to more somber analyses of the

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status quo and the prospects for change. There is a feeling, at one extreme, that educational performance cannot be advanced significantly through improved policy-making unless there are basic, even revolutionary, changes in dominant development models. This extreme, however, does not characterize most works written about Latin American educational policy because those who hold such perspectives more naturally direct their attention to other concerns. So while one is decreasingly likely to encounter (outside of official government or highly partisan publications) the blithe optimism that envisions properly devised educational policies almost magically lifting societies out of profound development problems, neither is one left with hopeless visions of educational policy as utterly impotent. This essay therefore focuses on alternative educational policies. Some are tied to particular political contexts, others are constrained by them, and still others represent attempts to steer useful paths through those constraints.

One of the historically great debates in political theory concerns the degree to which education shapes politics and society or politics and society shape education. At least since Plato, a classic view has taken education as an independent variable upon which a polity's well-being depends. Derivatives of this view have filtered down to the present. Modernization theory has tended to view education as an ideal, if not the ideal, road to development. Illustratively, measures of educational policy (for example, percentages of age cohorts enrolled at different school levels, of GNP or national budgets devoted to education, or of illiteracy) are indices of development. The presumption has been that educational policy matters, that it is possible to devise policies for development. For some believers, quantitative change alone has been a sure sign of success, as more youngsters from more social classes reap the benefits of education. For others, progress is not so automatic. Qualitative policies have to be carefully formulated, and once formulated, several roads to development open simultaneously. On the political road, historically excluded groups mobilize and increase their demands for a better society. Meanwhile, changes in political socialization force traditional mentalities to give way to modern outlooks and the creation of civic cultures. In a mutually reinforcing fashion, the political economy modernizes through increased incorporation of ideas and goods into the modern world system and through expansion of the base of both skilled workers and the national market.

Diametrically opposed is the view that educational policy per se provides little leverage for development. The idea, which is often tied to notions of dependent development, holds that education reflects society much more than it changes society. Educational policy is basically the dependent variable. The political context may be the independent variable, although in Marxist or neo-Marxist analyses that context itself de-

depends on economic conditions. In contrast to modernization theory, the idea here is that development determines human resources much more than the other way around. If educational policy is not simply a dependent variable, it is more likely to be part of the problem than part of the solution. Educational policy logically serves to exclude certain groups, to include others in only limited ways, to stratify socially, to provide credentials invidiously, to rationalize the class structure, and so forth. It fortifies the ruling class or at least reflects the class alignment that is manifest in any given society. Therefore, fundamental changes in educational policy are feasible only in the context of much more sweeping changes.¹ It then comes as no surprise that leftists are often divided over whether to support “progressive” educational policies as being inherently good and possibly conducive to accelerated change, or to resist them as being falsely gratifying and coopting. Naturally, discrediting the possibilities of autonomous educational change is not exclusively a Marxist perspective. It may also, for example, be associated with political conservatism.

Analysts and policymakers need not fully subscribe to one extreme or other. Neo-Marxists can reasonably argue that the possibilities of change through autonomous educational policy change are heavily constrained but not nil. Modernization theorists can invest considerable effort in educational policies while realizing that powerful constraints exist. So it is that most of the literature on educational policy, including the sample considered here, falls somewhere along a spectrum stripped of either extreme, leaving at least some room for educational policy to have a positive impact.

However they order the relationship between education and politics, Latin Americanists have generally avoided that peculiar North American sin of pretending that education is somehow above or otherwise removed from the political arena. To be sure, Latin American policymakers have often portrayed their educational programs as based solely on technical and professional expertise or as tied to scientific laws of progress. Most analysts, however, have emphasized the politicized nature of education, whether in serving or altering existing power relations. Politics may be a vehicle for educational change or an obstacle to it or both. But it is not irrelevant.

The political contexts covered in the works reviewed here vary enormously. Levels of development range from the near-bottom in Latin America, in Nicaragua, to the near-top, in Chile. Five separate nations are considered, but Chile alone presents three very distinct political contexts since 1964 and Mexico adds two more between 1880 and 1928. Thus, the regimes discussed range from positivist authoritarian (Mexico's Porfiriato) to “bourgeois” democratic (Venezuela since 1958 and Chile under the Christian Democrats, or DC) to more revolutionary

(Sandinista Nicaragua, Mexico early in this century, or Chile under the Unidad Popular, or UP), to bureaucratic authoritarian (Chile under the junta). This range includes regimes that have faithfully placed a high priority on education as a key engine of development (the Sandinistas, Chile under the DC) and others that have apparently accorded education a lesser policy priority (the Porfiriato, the Dominican Republic today, and Chile for contrasting reasons under both the UP and the junta). The inherent difficulties of making such political comparisons are multiplied when extreme heterogeneity characterizes the approaches used to discuss policy alternatives.

Like most works on Latin American educational policy, those considered here generally include some elements of three types of analysis. One is empirical analysis of the present or past situation, another is normative analysis of what ought to be, and a third is policy analysis aimed at seeking ways of getting from the first to the second. Because I chose to focus on works forwarding policy alternatives, five of the seven works are explicitly prescriptive. The other two (the works by Fischer and by Vaughan) concentrate on policies forwarded by different political forces in times of great turmoil, so that readers again encounter alternative policies; the authors' own preferences are not as prominently presented as in the other works, but some orientations are conveyed. This essay will discuss the most prescriptive works first, finishing with the Fischer and Vaughan volumes.

It might be possible to order the authors' policy prescriptions on a political spectrum. If so, that spectrum would run from somewhere on the Marxist left (as in the Nicaraguan work and those by Kirberg and Vaughan) to somewhere within the tenets of moderate reform (as in Albornoz, Schiefelbein and Farrell). In other words, the mainstream of academic thinking is largely covered—although not the mainstream of official policy-making (which is much better incorporated through the various authors' analyses of governmental policies). It is striking that all the authors push for social change. In this sense, all are liberal or radical as opposed to conservative. Many are pointedly critical of undue U.S. influences (Albornoz, Fernández, Kirberg, Vaughan). Most striking of all, each work views improved educational policy and genuine development in terms of greater equality. Each work evaluates educational policy largely on the basis of how it serves the masses, whether in enrollment figures by social class, literacy rates, consciousness-raising, or extension services. Each rejects "top-down" elitist models that hold quality education for the most privileged to be indirectly the benefactor of all. Several works (the Nicaraguan publication, Fernández, Kirberg, and probably Fischer and Vaughan) promote the idea that truly progressive alternative policies must be based on drastically expanded participation.² Even the work by Albornoz, which could be the subtlest on this point and which

most criticizes the political left, does so on the grounds that the left's radical rhetoric often obscures the inegalitarian effects of the policies it espouses. Even the work that comes closest to being self-consciously nonpartisan (Schiefelbein and Farrell's) proclaims in its opening sentence, "The central theme of this book is equality" (p. 9).

All this leaves considerable space between those claiming to champion a nearly egalitarian society (such as the Nicaraguan publication) and those "merely" concerned with narrowing great gaps (such as Schiefelbein and Farrell). Similarly, there is wide variation from micro to macro policy approaches. But in contrast with the frequent incrementalist orientations that dominate discussions of U.S. educational policy, most alternatives proposed in the Latin American policy literature are rather grand in nature. As usual, this divergence reflects not only contrasting beliefs concerning effective policy-making but also contrasting views on the intolerability of the status quo. In any event, the emphasis here on equality, as well as on alternative policies to foster it, is especially noteworthy at a time when comparative education literature has cast increased doubt on the efficacy of policies based primarily on quantitative expansion. This emphasis is also noteworthy at a time when many Latin Americanists find increasing evidence for distress over the inegalitarian legacies of recent decades.³

Notwithstanding similarities among the books under consideration, important differences contribute to the difficulty of evaluating them. The authors come from diverse professional backgrounds, ranging from the ivory tower to planning positions to the rectorship. They hold different ideologies and some very different goals as authors. Most of the criticisms that could be made would relate to these considerations. Most relate to factors limiting the scholarly impact of these works, whereas several authors are more concerned with policy impact. Moreover, access to data varies widely. Schiefelbein and Farrell deserve great credit for generating a wonderful data base in Chile's secondary school students, but they had more to work with in Chile than existed in the Dominican Republic, where Fernández reported that data were insufficient even for a basic *diagnóstico* of secondary education. Furthermore, except for the Kirberg and Vaughan works, all are relatively brief, reflecting limits in both breadth and depth. Finally, a frank assessment is that the education literature has not generally held its own in the social sciences, whether in Latin America or elsewhere. Seen in this light, several of the works considered here are substantial contributions.

To start at a prescriptive extreme, *La educación en el primer año* is an official account of the educational policies launched by the Sandinista regime in 1979–80. It was written "collectively" by workers at the education ministry, an approach that unfortunately did not preclude repetition across the various chapters. There is a useful introduction by Minister

Carlos Tunnermann Bernheim, himself an eminent scholar. All Sandinista policies are seen in the context of the change from the Somoza dictatorship to the revolutionary regime. Specifically, the rationale for each policy is explained within the broader revolutionary rationale and is contrasted to previous policies of neglect and elitism. In this connection, the book makes an official diagnóstico of the educational situation at the turn of the decade. Educational policy is tied to regime type: under Somoza, it logically helped reproduce a disgraceful status quo, but under the Sandinistas, it will help blaze the way toward a new society.

Parallels with the Cuban Revolution and its early faith in the power of educational policy to transform society are obvious.⁴ A New Education should breed a New Nicaragua, indeed a New Man. The literacy campaign, described as the major program in the revolution's first year, drew on a "People's Army" of one hundred and twenty thousand that covered the countryside. Not just the results but the policy process itself produced revolutionary benefits, as people helped people and all deepened their consciousness. Fittingly, 1980 was the "Year of Literacy." Beyond just the literacy campaign, the idea has been to see educational policy in broad terms including book publishing, nutrition, and development in general.

Within the formal school system, the revolution's educational policies can be divided into quantitative and qualitative aspects. Expansion is aimed at bringing the benefits of education to a much wider social class of students than Somoza ever cared to reach. Similarly, expansion applies to the teaching corps and plant facilities. Qualitatively, policy shifts involve curriculum, textbooks, and the redeployment of personnel from the previous regime. Another interesting dimension involves the "rationalization" of education and the establishment of a "Uniforme Escolar Unico" to further egalitarianism and solidarity. Fourteen private schools were immediately nationalized, while twenty others reportedly asked for the same fate. A virtual abolition of private education would also follow the Cuban model, but this particular Sandinista document remains vague on ultimate goals and timetables. Meanwhile, the revolution pledges to impose limits on tuition charges at private schools and the major private university (no mention is made of Nicaragua's other private universities), while committing itself to free education in public institutions from preschool through the university.

If the aim of a document on early educational policies is revolutionary—to proclaim intentions, advertise initiatives, and mobilize support—this work is probably successful. It bursts with energy, and its self-confidence is at least partly contagious; more importantly, most readers will be moved by the plight of those emerging from decades of Somoza's educational policies. In addition, the document details particular programs and includes data from which comparisons can be made with

previous policies. One appendix lists Nicaragua's education officials and a second lists by countries the donations to the education ministry from 193 sources. An obvious limitation of any document produced after only one year is that it gives little measure of policy implementation or of elaborations and modifications during the ensuing tumultuous period.

By intellectual standards, however, this book is disappointing. Of course, many revolutionary ventures do not lend themselves readily to reflective scholarly critiques. But even short of this or of any consideration of opponents' views or of any conflict between freedom and policies aimed at revolutionary unity, one might have hoped for some acknowledgment of the policy dilemmas that arise even within a definitive revolutionary value set. Instead, optimism descends into a narrow attitude that promotes "correct" policies without any attention to alternatives. (This is not to say that no alternatives have been debated within the revolutionary leadership but rather that none were reported in the public document.) The only signal of caution is the document's acknowledgment that not all changes can come overnight while a nation is still in crisis. There is no consideration of how to allocate very scarce resources, of how educational investment ought to rank as an early priority versus other needs, or of any Marxist alternative focusing first on economic change. If officials have any qualms about quickly expanding university enrollments while lower levels of education remain woeful, they give them no expression. Nor do they discuss the possible value of somehow preserving private education (which represents roughly half the secondary enrollments) while the regime remains financially strapped. To take one further example, the reader searches in vain for any discussion of the potentially negative effects of foreign funds, whether from Cuba, Europe, or international organizations.⁵ In short, the purposes of such works lie more along revolutionary than scholarly lines.

Outside Nicaragua, few Latin American political contexts appear compatible with radical educational policy.⁶ More commonly, supporters of major change either remain marginal to the policy process or seek feasible alternatives. Jorge Fernández favors the latter path for the Dominican Republic in *Sistema educativo dominicano: diagnóstico y perspectivas*. This feasibility approach pointedly denounces the notion that educational policy inevitably flows from the exigencies of dependent capitalism or that all alternatives are so "ultimately connected" that it is useless to push for less than a whole package (p. 110). Yet the work also denounces the tendency to ignore the political-economic context. Thus, educational policy is not the key element in determining development, but it can help diminish inequalities and foreign domination and can help promote social change, economic growth, and a healthy nationalism. Clearly, the major purpose of this work is prescriptive. Reality is surveyed only insofar as necessary in part one, "Diagnóstico del sistema

educativo," in order to understand the dimensions of the educational crisis addressed in part two, "Elementos de una estrategia." Rather than being a research work per se, this book draws appropriately on studies done by others (including the AID and the education ministry) to set the stage for its proposals.

Prudence is a central concern of this approach to policy change. Fernández presents alternatives as suggestions to stimulate debate, not as sure solutions. Given its autonomy, higher education is considered "a separate world" (p. 155) and is analyzed only in an appendix, where policy alternatives are not even suggested. Fernández does point out, however, that there are trade-offs between expanding higher and secondary education. Similarly, he is sensitive to cost feasibility in noting that several of the qualitative improvements he suggests, as in salaries and facilities, could work against the quest for expansion of a system with dreadfully low coverage. While private education has become one of the "great debated themes" and there are powerful arguments against as well as for it, the financial reality is that private education will be necessary as long as the state is unprepared to assume the burden. In other words, policy change is constrained by the degree to which present policy fits political reality and consumer mentalities.

A common problem with this approach is that it is difficult to reconcile the quest for feasibility with the recognition of political reality, to see how the political climate can be made receptive to major policy changes. If educational quality is hurt by horrible salaries, libraries, physical facilities, and low educational shares of the budget or GNP (even compared to sister republics), what can change all this? One suggestion by Fernández is based on an apparent sketch of an interest-group model of Dominican politics, which holds that the state responds to pressure. Pressure has been stronger in military and health areas than in educational policy. When pressure increased concerning the latter, some concessions were promised, but few were implemented. A useful route would therefore be to step up pressure and widen participation. But this suggestion becomes contingent on hopes for a "comprehensive renovation of our way of thinking and acting about education," on generating a favorable national environment (p. 93). Here Fernández cites the Nicaraguan case, yet that may only point up the difficulty of radically changing societal consciousness in nonrevolutionary settings.

However feasible Fernández's policies may or may not be, they are not incremental. He calls for a "total change of emphasis" that would avoid heavy reliance on more-developed-country models (p. 127). Much more money must be spent on salaries. An interrelated set of policies should move away from the formal school structure. Education should be seen in a broad cultural context, it should be more closely tied to employment, and there should be greater emphasis on adult education.

In an intriguing juxtaposition, Fernández would limit the excessively centralized bureaucracy while trying to fortify and rationalize it. Thus, he calls for institutional diversification, deformalization, and regionalization but also for clear task hierarchies and fixed-reward criteria to replace feudal parcelling-out and favoritism. All in all, *Sistema educativo dominicano* is a good representative of a reformism associated with much of the work on educational alternatives in Latin America.⁷ Indeed, the book cites and explicitly places itself in the context of relevant works.

If most reformist approaches would find their natural political support on the left, such is not the case with Orlando Albornoz's suggestions for higher education policy in Venezuela in *Teoría y praxis de la educación superior venezolana*. On the contrary, a great attraction of Albornoz's work is that it defies easy stereotypes. One of his starting points for policy research is that intellectuals should analyze realities and alternatives free from political pressures, but he argues effectively that those pressures are just as weighty in leftist universities as in the more conservative state apparatus. Another starting point is that too many academic macro analyses call only for comprehensive change and therefore fail to stimulate action; however dependent fundamental educational reform is on societal reform, much good can be done by rationalizing the present system. Finally, Albornoz asserts, the Venezuelan government too often plunges into policies without necessary reflection. As an intellectual and a democrat, Albornoz proclaims his readiness to collaborate with party and government officials.

Limitations are freely acknowledged by the author. The book is a series of essays given at various conferences from 1974 to 1978 and therefore not only lacks the coherence that Albornoz has generated in certain other works but also is necessarily somewhat dated, now that the oil boom has turned to an oil glut.⁸ Some of the essays were prepared under time constraints and represent "only a batch of analytical reflections" intended to stimulate policy discussions rather than to be definitive conclusions based on adequate empirical research (p. 147). Moreover, Albornoz points to certain factors that may bias his perspective. But many such limitations would apply more damagingly to other authors on educational policy who often do not acknowledge them. More significant are the many worthwhile aspects of this work. It is skeptical, unpredictable, witty, and provocative without being irresponsible or easily dismissed. It separates rhetoric from self-interest and contextualized choice from ideal preferences, as in its discussions of private or foreign versus domestic public educational institutions. Finally, Albornoz is unusually qualified to analyze Venezuelan higher education in the contexts of international education as well as Venezuelan primary and secondary education.

Venezuelan educational policy is understood in the context of a development model based on the export of natural resources (mainly oil)

and the import of socially produced resources. Accordingly, Venezuela lacks an adequate infrastructure and pursues fiscal rather than true socioeconomic development. Oil does not lead to a productive system capable of providing meaningful employment for university graduates, so these graduates turn instead to service jobs. In fact, oil has aggravated Venezuela's classist development model. This model has led to great support for private education serving the privileged modernization elite, while public education flounders. Democratic development, for all its positive aspects, has created major problems for policy reform. Autonomous public universities are run by political groups engaged as fully in corruption, favoritism, and ideological persecution as the national political parties to which they are tied. Worst of all, university professors have become a powerful pressure group, winning selfish, unwarranted material concessions.

Albornoz's most potent policy recommendations are aimed at weakening this professional "caste" that is so overcompensated in salary and benefits that "there is no job more desirable," a situation that he describes as "extraordinary" in international terms (pp. 41, 43). Despite their leftist rhetoric, professors have joined with other professionals to form a new privileged class that drains scarce resources from the needy. According to Albornoz, policy reversal should involve salary differentials among professors and thus eliminate the unwarranted paradox of "socialist higher education" and rewards unconnected to production "in a capitalist society" (p. 131). One drastic suggestion that might chill many a reader is that professors receive only what they could earn on the open market. Albornoz also recommends that the widely idealized category of "exclusive time" service be abolished because it protects those who have no demonstrable worth outside the ivory tower. Benefits, promotions, and *reivindicaciones* should no longer be automatic but carefully monitored.

Parameters should be placed on Venezuela's "brain gain" from repressive sister republics and more resources should be invested in training Venezuelan professors. To crack down on "political tribalism," Albornoz would have professors barred from certain administrative positions (p. 146). This policy is one of several that could be adapted from the U.S. university system, which Albornoz labels the "most efficient and desirable" in the world (p. 115). At the same time, he favors greatly expanding the planning role of the national education ministry; and he is wary of many policies unduly tied to foreign models, which might block Venezuela's own educational development. In particular, he is no fan of what is probably the most widely publicized Latin American plan to send university undergraduates abroad—Venezuela's Gran Mariscal de Ayacucho scholarships.

Perhaps the most novel feature about this policy package is that

while some of its measures would increase expenditures, many would yield savings. This feature enhances its political feasibility and the chances of investing more heavily in those policies found to be worthwhile. Albornoz believes that educational expansion without reorientation will continue to promote inequalities rather than redistribution or productive development.

An entirely different policy view is represented by the other book on higher education, *Los nuevos profesionales: educación universitaria de trabajadores*, one of three books on Chile. The author, Enrique Kirberg, was rector of the Universidad Técnica del Estado (UTE), a communist stronghold in the years prior to the 1973 military coup. Kirberg's prime purpose is to describe a historic experiment, which he has formulated so that it may serve as an alternative policy model. Great power emanates from this experiment, recounted with compelling conviction and feeling, not sentimentally abused, by an author who himself suffered two years of military imprisonment. During his imprisonment, Kirberg began sorting out his ideas for this book, which he completed while holding a position at Columbia University. The product is remarkably well documented, considering the difficulty of gathering data on the precoup period from afar. It should interest not only those specializing in educational policy and Chileanists, but also those interested in organized labor.

The book's power would have been even greater had it not been diluted with material that is relevant but is covered more thoroughly elsewhere (such as Chile's university reform and the history of the Latin American university). But the main disappointment here, as in the book on Nicaragua, is the lack of critical reflection. Even the most praiseworthy experiments make some errors or at least confront certain critical dilemmas. Are there any problems in making higher education policy a priority item when one is especially concerned with workers and deprived groups? Are Latin American students really such a positive force for reformist policies? How does one reconcile allegiance to university autonomy with revolutionary solidarity? Such complexity is not part of this work. The UP and the UTE emerge unscathed, and Frei's government is also characterized almost unidimensionally, but in a negative light that largely ignores its record of educational efforts. This approach not only degenerates into good guys versus bad guys but also ignores the complexity of Chile's political alliances.

The relationship between educational policy and political context is depicted as close but not fixed. Thus, UTE policies are seen in the context of UP government policies, but those same reformist policies are seen to have begun in the face of DC government opposition. However radical the policies espoused here, the approach explicitly rejects the revolutionary doctrine (associated with extreme leftist groups in the uni-

versity) that educational reform must await the political revolution, after which it will happen naturally. In Kirberg's view, the university can help make the revolution, help remold the political context, even assume a vanguard role.

Although Kirberg does not specify which policies are feasible within which political contexts, he does provide a strong record of the policies that the UTE tried and suggests that they will continue to echo in Latin America. In fact, many of the policies have long been championed by advocates in several nations. These policies include abolition of aptitude tests for admission, extensive student participation, experiments in raising class consciousness, and other measures pointedly in contrast with U.S. models. Yet without doubt, the major UTE policy experiment lay in widening contracts with workers. Technical courses of short duration, offered at suitable hours, are good examples. Unfortunately, Kirberg does not address critics who regard such options as coopting measures that merely provide symbolic satisfaction for underprivileged groups. Until 1966 Chile had never witnessed an official *convenio* between a university and a labor organization. Consequently, the UTE convenios with the Central Unión de Trabajadores (CUT) and this first-hand report of them merit considerable attention by scholars and policy-makers alike. The number of workers enrolled at the UTE reportedly tripled from less than ten thousand to more than thirty thousand in five years, while quotas reportedly helped boost the ratio of children of workers to the overall student body from roughly 1:20 to almost 1:3. For workers unqualified for the direct quotas, special *escuelas de nivelación* were created that allowed study and work to proceed simultaneously. Nor did the UTE simply lure workers to the campus. By the time of the coup, it had thirty-seven on-site programs involving forty-five hundred students. The enormity of the UTE's undertaking during Kirberg's administration is starkly underscored by an epilogue that sketches the junta's counterrevolutionary policies for higher education.

Kirberg's committed, personal discourse contrasts sharply with the approach to educational policy taken by Ernesto Schiefelbein and Joseph Farrell in *Eight Years of Their Lives: Through Schooling to the Labour Market in Chile*. The emphasis switches from Chilean higher education to primary and secondary education; more strikingly, partisan politics and sweeping revolutionary change give way to empirical social science aimed at improving specific policies, almost regardless of their political context. Indeed, *Eight Years'* micro approach is unusual within the Latin American literature on educational policy. Extremely well grounded in the literature on empirical evaluation of educational policy, this work should immediately attain international prominence. It is at once a magnificent and self-consciously limited contribution.

This micro approach to policy reform is based on perhaps the first

large-scale longitudinal study of a school population in a less developed country. Indeed, amid all the current debate about U.S. educational policy, many have noted how inadequately cross-sectional data inform policy choices and how desperately longitudinal studies are needed. Schiefelbein and Farrell focused on thirty-five hundred students attending their last primary grade in 1970 and followed their progress through school and into the work force. (The authors acknowledge that their starting point effectively eliminates half the population, which sets crucial parameters on the whole policy consideration of equality.) Methodologies are carefully elaborated, including problems and possible data biases, as are procedures for continually gauging results over a seven-year period. Unlike many others, this survey measures not only the years of schooling attained but also educational quality and jobs obtained; and unlike most education-to-work evaluations, this study includes females. The array of measures are especially important because many analysts have doubted that expanded inputs such as expenditures produce meaningful results.

The micro approach seeks “policy levers” that help promote equality in determining who finishes school, how much is learned, and what jobs are obtained. It seeks feasible, low-cost options, the “judo trick” of using limited force to achieve major results. Therefore, while acknowledging the heavy impact of socioeconomic status (SES), the micro approach rejects the exaggerated importance often ascribed to it in other studies and in policy debates, ascriptions that contribute to the crippling mentality that little can be done without fundamental socioeconomic change. The findings here support instead those studies that argue that SES is a less potent predictor of outcomes in less developed countries than in more developed countries. Moreover, the effects of SES decline the further a student progresses, thus placing a public-policy premium on early interventions. Inequality, dependency, poverty, and other factors define the problem; they do not fully determine the policy options.

Because political and economic feasibility is crucial to this approach, so are conclusions concerning which policies do *not* produce observable results. Like the Albornoz work, *Eight Years* suggests opportunities for savings, potentially allowing for greater emphasis where it counts. Among the vulnerable factors that are not demonstrating their worth are some in-service teacher-training programs, some vocational programs, and small class size, the latter factor sustaining empirical policy results from research in diverse nations. All of this information serves to enhance interest in those policy levers that have shown results. A major lever is the provision of textbooks, which is not only extremely cost-effective but appears to have its greatest effect on lower SES students. Another is the SES balance within classrooms; while educational

policymakers cannot determine an individual's socioeconomic status, they can adjust social mixes. Other variables involve teacher quality and many other factors. But it is important to note that the effects of any policy lever seem to vary according to such factors as urban-rural mixes, the student's current educational level, and which results are measured (for example, educational quality or jobs obtained).

The emphasis on policy leverage also produces basic social science knowledge of the school system, sorting and stratification, and the job market. In particular, it produces striking findings about social mobility in Chile. For all its value, however, the micro approach to policy has inherent limitations. Conceptual breadth must be restricted and the proliferation of procedures and of results of test after test discourages readers. Some consideration might have been given to possible trade-offs between the pursuit of equality and other development goals. But the major limitation of this approach is its nonpartisan color, which substitutes policy for politics in the broader sense. Some readers will severely criticize Schiefelbein and Farrell for this. My own view is that it is a limitation, not a fault—especially in view of the fact that one of the authors continues to live and do useful work in Chile. I would not want all the literature on educational policy to accept politics as given, but I would encourage some works to do so, particularly if they can then propose desirable changes that are feasible within democratic settings. In any case, one must remain aware of how micro policy results may well have been conditioned largely by the political, economic, and psychological climate of hope, mobility, and expansion created under the DC and UP and then reversed under the junta.

Until now, for all the differences among the various policy approaches considered, one similarity is that policy alternatives have been forwarded by the authors. In contrast, the policy alternatives found in Kathleen Fischer's *Political Ideology and Educational Reform* are rooted in the changes that have been championed since 1964 by Chile's three successive and very distinct regimes. Fischer's basic assumption is that policy flows from political context. Although the influence of ideology on politics is the central research question that Fischer pursues, she concludes that political power struggles intervene. In fact, ideology was one of the major ingredients of the political contexts that shaped policies. Nevertheless, the contrasting ideologies and policy proposals focusing on secondary education are lucidly presented and documented here. Rather than breaking new ground for the literature on Chilean politics or educational development, this work successfully places its findings on policy within those literatures. It draws largely on secondary sources but also utilizes primary documents and interviews. If the work is much stronger on policy formation than on implementation, this outcome is largely understandable given the need to keep its scope manageable and

given the abrupt changes of course caused by political events. In contrasting the policies of the three regimes, Fischer's work coincides with an impressive literature being produced inside Chile on education specifically and on other policies more generally.⁹ In this connection, my own feeling is that Fischer is too uncritical of UP and especially DC educational policies. However much one supports such policies, there is always room for hindsight. She does present some criticism through the views of opposition groups, an effective approach that might have been expanded.

DC educational policy reform rested on a powerful ideology of change that fused religious, humanistic, and modernizing beliefs. It also rested on a strong political base, electoral power, a wide consensus for change, broad executive powers, legislative strength, and restrained opposition from conservatives who feared worse. There were, however, interesting rivalries among technicians, reformers, ministry officials, teachers' unions, students, and other such groups. Whatever its roots, educational reform was pushed with a resolve unmatched before or since in Chilean history. (This finding is substantiated by Schiefelbein and Farrell, but it is antithetical to Kirberg's views.) Drawing on modernization theory, DC policymakers accorded education a major role in development, believing that it could stimulate everything from production to tolerance, cooperation, and aesthetics for the purpose of bringing individuals spiritually and materially into a fast-changing society and thus allowing them to realize their full individual potentials.

Accordingly, DC policies involved both growth and reform. The impressive growth of secondary and higher education enrollment rates, adult education, and teacher training is well known. The share of the Chilean GNP devoted to education jumped from 2.7 percent in 1965 to 4.9 percent in 1968, before slipping to 4.5 percent in 1970. (More information is needed on how the well-known political and economic problems of the last DC years affected educational policy.) Less often do observers appreciate the scope of the DC's incredible qualitative changes in educational policy. School structure was reorganized, the stratifying points were postponed (shown to be critical by Schiefelbein and Farrell), and guidance services proliferated. Nonformal education received tremendous boosts. Over three thousand literacy centers opened, and adult programs based on Paulo Freire's radical *conscientização* blossomed. A national apprenticeship system for teenagers offered a program of three years of work-study culminating in school degrees and improved job skills.

Yet leftist critics could still see all these changes as too little, too coopting, and too hierarchically based. Such criticisms clearly fit general UP critiques of DC policies; however, UP educational reforms were not nearly as impressive as DC reforms for two reasons. One reason was

ideological. Several UP factions were wedded to the view that education was dependent on prior structural reforms in society. Others believed that educational reform did not deserve nearly as high a priority as economic reform. Still others argued that greater political mobilization and strength were prerequisites for fundamental changes in educational policy. The last argument relates to the second major reason for the lack of greater UP policy changes in education: as in so many policy fields, the UP was impotent not only because of internal splits and economic crises, but also because opposition groups controlled the legislature and much of the powerful nongovernmental apparatus.

Despite these restraining factors, a UP educational policy package did emerge (further exploration of debates within the UP would be useful). Expansion continued or accelerated at all levels, and so did many reforms, especially those involving unorthodox approaches to schooling. A major shift from DC policy occurred as mobilized lower-class groups increasingly pushed aside professional planners in formulating policy. Other initiatives were hotly debated but not fully formulated by September 1973, such as the issue of the National Unified School, which constituted a grave threat to private education. As in Kirberg's account, the scope of precoup activity is underscored by recounting the breadth of the junta's counterrevolution in educational policy. Junta policy can be viewed in a broad political context including official ideology, but obviously, Fischer's work can only point to early trends that have since been superseded by other events and works. Consequently, her analysis of junta policy does not command the same attention as her accounts of UP and DC policies.

Another effort to relate ideology and political reality to educational policy is found in Mary Kay Vaughan's *The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico, 1880–1928*. She focuses on two regimes: the Porfiriato and the early revolutionary regime. Political contexts, reflected by dominant thought (not necessarily similar to rhetoric), condition policy. Consequently, political contexts are well elaborated here, along with their socioeconomic underpinnings. Vaughan's work contains so much detail that justice cannot be done to it by any brief consideration here. This is one of those rare pieces of research on education that can stand proudly within its discipline, history in this case. Its historiography appears very strong in its utilization of diverse primary and secondary sources. The work is probing and sophisticated. But as usual, even an appreciative reader could ask for more. My own list would include comparative references to the experiences of other nations (or how do we decide how "low" expenditures really are?) and to contemporary Mexico or at least to Mexico in the 1930s. During the 1930s, socialist educational policies do appear, as they do only sporadically in the period covered (for example, in the Yucatán). One wonders how much change Vaughan

would find even in the 1930s given her conclusion that “the economic base of society determines the nature of the school system” (p. 275). My general impression is that the account strains to emphasize continuities between the Porfiriato and the early revolutionary era, based on the limits imposed by dependent capitalism, while in fact offering considerable evidence of policy change, even some radical change, as well as continuity.

The close link between Porfirian rhetoric and policy can be understood largely by reference to the brutal frankness of its positivist development ideology (although positivism deserves more elaboration than it receives here). Stratification was taken to reflect individual and group capabilities, and progress was viewed as coming from leadership by the “best” coupled with either relative neglect or paternal uplifting of the masses. Educational policies were formulated to favor privileged, urban groups as well as to emulate European norms. Whatever the conservative content, Porfirian educational policy nonetheless represented some change. A major example can be seen in the efforts to build capitalism. On the other hand, the implementation of educational programs “was neither widespread nor particularly effective,” partly because educational policy was not a genuine development priority (p. 38).

If the Porfiriato’s policies come as little surprise, the same cannot be said of those of the revolution. Policy continuities between the two eras can be attributed chiefly to two factors. One is the now-familiar Marxist argument that educational change depends on broader changes and therefore should not be a high priority. But even more important than the radicalism of the revolution was its conservatism. Vaughan’s evidence supports those who have questioned to what extent a revolution really occurred in Mexico. The state remained tied to dependent capitalism, foreign models, inegalitarianism, and paternalism. Vaughan’s conclusions are elaborated in four chapters on different policies concerning “action pedagogy,” vocational education, textbooks, and cultural nationalism.

Much of the emphasis on continuity stems from Vaughan’s self-conscious effort to counter those histories of education, including Mexican education, that emphasize links between expansion on the one hand and mobility, economic development, and national integration on the other. In short, Vaughan’s study argues against modernization theory and its faith in educational policy. By focusing on such broad functions of educational policy as training personnel to sustain the economic status quo, maintaining status distinctions, and preserving political stability, one is likely to identify important continuities. The functions one imputes to educational policy depend very much on the level of one’s analysis.

In sum, the diverse literature on educational policy alternatives

can produce only limited consensus. Even that consensus withers if one focuses on feasible policies because of the fundamental trade-offs between the scope of reform and political feasibility. Yet the works reviewed here constitute more than further contributions to the "obstacles-to-reform" line so strong in literature on Latin American policy. They go well beyond the literature that treats policy as cripplingly dependent on levels of development to a realm that leaves room for political choice and for markedly different policies according to different political systems. In this sense, it is rewarding to read works grounded in political and other real-world contexts. They serve as antidotes to more sweeping, and therefore eye-catching, works in education and other policy fields. Such works compare many nations grouped into macro categories on the basis of quantitative indicators that can be standardized, but too often they tend to minimize the importance of politics and policy choice.¹⁰

The existence of some national political options within economic and other constraints does not imply that desired policy alternatives are feasible. Once established, certain political systems can restrict the range of policy choice as surely as economic scarcity can. To be relevant to the policy process, most proposed alternatives will have to be modest in scope or at least based on more politically sophisticated strategies than have been generally seen thus far. Charles Anderson has expressed well the general need for feasible policy alternatives: "To concentrate on strategies is to regard public policy as problem-solving and public choice rather than a 'product' of a political system." The status quo can be taken as neither inconsequential nor inevitable, "but as a difficulty to overcome through public effort that requires analysis. . . ." ¹¹ To date the challenge has been inadequately met in the literature on educational policy. The field has yet to produce anyone approaching an Albert Hirschman.

The literature on policy prescription should be more tied to political feasibility and also increasingly based on empirical research. Whatever one's orientation toward basic research, the fact is that the past and present have been laboratories for many educational alternatives. Policies have differed across nations and across time within nations; they have differed greatly between private and public educational institutions within given nations at any one time. There have been noteworthy experiments in nonformal education. All these efforts provide a substantial rationale for much more work on policy implementation and evaluation, even as work on policy formulation continues. An emphasis on implementation and evaluation should help inform the search for politically feasible policy alternatives. I doubt whether studies of educational policy will often produce great public policy impact when measured against the terrible enormity of the problems confronting Latin America, but precisely within such a context even "small" contributions are worth pursuing.

NOTES

1. For a useful overview of how some central debates between modernization and neo-Marxist thinkers play themselves out in the comparative education field, see, for example, Erwin H. Epstein, "Currents Left and Right: Ideology in Comparative Education," *Comparative Education Review* 27, no. 1 (1983): 3–28; see also the ensuing commentaries on pp. 30–45. Literature on education and development began to take great strides in the 1960s. See, for example, Philip J. Foster, *Education and Social Change in Ghana* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); and *Education and Political Development*, edited by James S. Coleman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965).
2. In general, the literature proposing practical policy alternatives needs to become more explicit in identifying the agents of change. Several works implicitly bet heavily on vague coalitions of progressive forces. In the works reviewed here, the principal agents appear to be: for the Nicaraguan publication, the revolution and its mass support (although with leadership); for Fernández, progressive policymakers energized by pressure groups; for Albornoz, responsible government officials standing up to pressure groups; for Kirberg, progressive students and others within the educational structure, backed by broad support beyond; for Schiefelbein and Farrell, planners and policymakers drawing on empirical research; for Fischer, a wide range of political processes, especially popular-democratic ones; for Vaughan, probably the activated masses, but her emphasis is on the lack of policy change.
3. See, for example, David Felix, "Income Distribution and the Quality of Life in Latin America: Patterns, Trends, and Policy Implications," *LARR* 18, no. 2 (1983): 3–33.
4. See, for example, Richard R. Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture in Cuba* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969).
5. The authors of this work are circumspect almost to the point of silence on the intriguing question of exporting the Sandinista's revolutionary educational model.
6. There are at least two fine accounts of the educational policy alternatives attempted during Peru's restricted and aborted revolution, post-1968. See Robert Drysdale and Robert Myers, "Continuity and Change: Peruvian Education," *The Peruvian Experiment*, edited by Abraham Lowenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 254–301; and Erwin H. Epstein, "Peasant Consciousness under Peruvian Military Rule," *Harvard Educational Review* 52, no. 3 (1982): 280–300.
7. Two of the most prominent books cited on behalf of radical alternatives in Latin American educational policy are Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974); and Iván Illich, *La sociedad desescolarizada* (Barcelona: Barral Editores, 1974). Another notable source is *Educational Alternatives in Latin America: Social Change and Social Stratification*, edited by Thomas LaBelle (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1975) or LaBelle's own *Non-Formal Education and Social Change in Latin America* (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1976).
8. See, for example, Albornoz's *Poder y liderazgo en la escuela primaria venezolana* (Caracas: Societas, 1974).
9. I am thinking principally, but not exclusively, of working papers published by the Programa Interdisciplinario de Investigaciones en Educación and by FLASCO in Santiago.
10. For an elaboration of this point, see Karen L. Remmer, "Evaluating the Policy Impact of Military Regimes in Latin America," *LARR* 13, no. 2 (1978): 39–54. I have tried, in several works on higher education, to explore the relation between policy and regime type; for example, "Comparing Authoritarian Regimes in Latin America: Insights from Higher Education Policy," *Comparative Politics* 14, no. 1 (1981): 31–52.
11. Charles W. Anderson, "System and Strategy in Comparative Policy Analysis: A Plea for Contextual and Experimental Knowledge," in *Perspectives on Public Policy Making*, edited by William Gwyn and George Edwards III (New Orleans: Tulane University Press, 1975), pp. 230–31.