

**PARAGUAY'S PUBLIC SPENDING ON EDUCATION AFTER
STROESSNER: INVEST MORE?**

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I, the undersigned Diana Galeano hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where proper acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language.

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Abstract

Public education was long neglected in Paraguay, until the last dictatorship ended and the democratic transition began with the government revising the constitution and setting education as a priority in 1992. Although the government expanded coverage and built more schools, infrastructure remains poor and educators largely lack academic knowledge. As a result, this thesis seeks to explore why the government has not increased the education budget to improve its educational system, despite the clear need. In order to address this question, the thesis collected and analyzed documents published on the Ministry of Education and Culture's official website. By conducting a thematic analysis of these materials, the thesis identified a number of predominant themes regarding public expenditure in education, namely in terms of quality of education and insufficient government expenditure. While the literature discussed in this thesis illustrates that the underinvestment in education can be attributed to structural problems that stem from the political and sociocultural history of Paraguay, the thematic analysis found that the MEC has been investing on improving quality education. It also, in turn, suggests a divergence not only between policymaking and policy problems as perceived by most Paraguayans, but also between the literature and the results on the ground.

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Introduction

Common wisdom dictates that education is the foundation of every society. However, when it comes to the topic of government support for schooling, most Paraguayans – and, indeed, the international community – readily complain that the public educational system in the country is backward, rather than progressing. Certainly, the Paraguayan educational system seems to be getting the worse grades relative to its neighbors. For one, even issues of coverage are worsening. A 2015 World Bank study based on data collected from a 2008 school census conducted in Paraguay found that, in terms of primary and secondary levels specifically, “school infrastructure in Paraguay appears to be wanting, and it tends to be less well developed than that of other Latin American countries” (Wodon 2015, 5-7, 20). And while the last decades have seen important investments leading to improvements in access and coverage of education, which are not having the intended or hoped results, such moves have certainly not translated into higher quality of education in Paraguay, especially in public primary and secondary school (Rivarola 2000; Rivarola 2006; Baird et al. 2009; Levy and Schady 2013, 197-198; Wodon 2015, 6-7; Sánchez 2015). Despite major investment then, quality of education does not appear to be a focus or priority, and is holding the country back.

In light of fact that Paraguay has been undergoing an arduous transition to democracy since 1989, when dictator Alfredo Stroessner was ousted after 35 years in power, the relevant literature on education as means for human development and as means for human capital sheds some light on the problem. Proponents of education as a human development argue that the sole opportunity to earn an education in itself constitutes already an achievement, provided that there is access to effective or quality education (Sen 1999, 76, 294; Nussbaum 2011). On the other hand, those in the education as means for human capital camp maintain that an individual’s education is more like an investment as opposed to spending, which will

lead to economic development and thereby to broader social wellbeing (Becker 1993; Hanushek 2005; Ansell 2008; Ansell and Lindvall 2013). Despite the achievement in the significant and impressive expansion in terms of education access in Paraguay, there are still arguably much bigger needs for improvement in terms of access of quality of education in the country (Wodon 2015; Baird et al. 2009). And it seems that the Paraguayan government has not made any advances in this respect, in spite of the local and international expertise highlighting the deep needs. It follows, then, that there is a gap in the existing research that stems from the interaction of the normative and the practical: while the benefits of education as human capital and education as human development seem to be well-established, there seems to be a puzzle as to why the Paraguayan government has not had any incentives to invest in quality education, which has not been addressed yet in a systematic manner.

This thesis therefore aims to fill this gap by trying to explain this disconnect. In order to do so, the thesis explores why the government has not increased the education budget to improve its educational system, despite the clear need. The methodology this thesis uses to answer this research question involved thematic analysis of a data body consisting of four key strategic documents published by the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Ministerio de Educacion y Cultura*, MEC), which were all retrieved from the MEC's official website: (1) the National Plan of Education 2024, which outlines the MEC's short, medium, and long-term strategy; (2) the Educational Agenda 2014-2018, which draws from the National Plan but outlines the education policy priorities in more detail for said period over the short and mid-term; (3) the Management Report for 2013-2014 and (4) the Management Report for 2015. Through a thematic analysis process the thesis identified four potential themes, but concentrated on the two most predominant themes related to the research question: one related to the discussing "quality education" and another focused on "insufficient government spending." Ultimately, the analysis of these two key themes reveals that even though the data

body demonstrates that MEC's strategic plans and Management Report for 2015 focus on quality of education, there is an acknowledgment that there is not enough public expenditure for the Plan and the Agenda to be realized successfully by the proposed end dates, which suggests a clear incompatibility between policy and problem.

In addition, this thesis will make a significant contribution to the existing discussion regarding the potential misallocation or mismanagement of government funds that sends mixed signals to scholars, researchers and Paraguayan citizens. A deeper knowledge about where and how to allocate budget resources in primary and secondary education will better position and inform public expenditure decisions. The reason this thesis focuses on public expenditure on education is because of the growing body of evidence that demonstrates the gains of investing in primary and secondary education rather than in tertiary education, especially in developing countries, according to the Education Strategy 2020 report by the World Bank Group (The World Bank 2011). Paraguay is a developing country, and as such, if its primary and secondary education system is on the brink of collapse both financially and in terms of performance, the tertiary education system will be jeopardized, and ultimately the country's future as a whole.¹

The thesis will follow the following structure. Chapter One provides a bird's eye view on the relevant literature about education as means for human development and education as human capital—and their relationship between regime change and democracy—as applicable approaches to the Paraguayan democratic transition and changing educational system. The broad structural problems brought about by the authoritarian regime and that linger today through its specter are then specified in Chapter Two, and then puts MEC's expenditure in perspective by first situating Paraguay's educational system within the Latin American region and then providing the general position of the public primary and secondary education. After

¹ A point to note, while rural and urban education exhibit different dynamics in terms of public expenditures, access to education, and learning outcomes, the thesis will focus on public primary and secondary education as a whole but will also refer to it using *public education* or *educational system* interchangeably

establishing the topic in the relevant literature and then narrowing it to Paraguay within the region, Chapter Three discusses how the thesis can look into how the MEC has discussed this issue and what it believes the solutions are, before describing the thematic analysis approach taken here to be used to analyze an appropriate data body for this thesis. This thematic analysis provides insight into potential themes in Paraguayan government discourse in order to interpret them and answer the question as to why the government does not spend on education by analyzing strategic documents and managerial reports produced by the MEC. Finally, Chapter Four interprets the two main themes and some of the most recurrent codes identified during the coding process. It further explains the association of those themes with the existing literature review and the current state of the educational system. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the implications of the analysis for policymaking and how the research conducted here could be expanded.

Chapter 1: Assessing the Literature on Education Policy in the Context of Paraguay

This chapter draws on two main strands of thought in the relevant literature that assesses (i) education as means for human development and (ii) education as means of human capital. It seeks to elucidate how the Paraguayan government has been addressing public expenditure in education in light of the apparent underinvestment in the sector. By doing so, this chapter will provide a better understanding on the government's potential motivations to invest in education during the last decades, an area that has not been fully explored yet despite its significance.

Education as Human Development

From a human development perspective, economic development is the product of many “social opportunities,” including the provision of education, that work together with other basic social opportunities (such as health) to constitute a person's “capability set,” which in turn becomes the person's ability to better themselves using their own potential (Sen 1999, 76, 294; Nussbaum 2011). In other words, the human development theory camp takes the idea of education as a tool to achieve one's potential, focusing on the choices individuals have rather than exclusively on the condition of the economy. Education as human development can be possible regardless of the aim: be it economic development or simply personal achievement and realization. These capabilities can be achieved provided that individuals are given the same opportunities to thrive even if this means through government intervention through the implementation of social policies, such as facilitating the creation of level playing field (Roemer 2009).

This view of development through education is particularly relevant to the context of education policy during the authoritarian past that afflicted Paraguay. Regime change has

played an essential role not only in all public policy dimensions but also in the mindsets and behaviors of citizens in Paraguay. For many decades, before the fall of the last authoritarian regime in 1989, order, hierarchy, obedience, discipline, persecution and repression characterized the approach to education, with education being used more as means of political indoctrination (since teachers were the transmitters of cultural values) rather than a way to boost student performance that would eventually lead to economic development (Rivarola 2000, 10-11; Elias and Chaparro 2008). Therefore, the authoritarian regime's education policy clashed with the human development premises that mainly embody the concepts of having choices and the freedom to choose and thus relate to political freedom and social justice (Srinivasan 2007). After 1989, however, it seems clear that the transition toward democracy and a transformed educational system has been challenged by the legacy of the dictatorial times.

Measuring Human Development

Despite any progress in terms of human development gained after the fall of Stroessner, the latest *Human Development Index Report 2015* published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) places Paraguay near the bottom of the list ranking 112 out of 188 countries (2015, 210). In measuring the individual's choices, the HDI seeks to explain how the average values of the dimensions of life expectancy, education, and income can paint a more complex picture in terms of human development. In the Human Development Index (HDI) ranking, Paraguay is positioned in the Medium Human Development group, just a few scores higher than Bolivia (120) and Guyana (124), making them the only three South American countries to be ranked in that category in all of South American countries—the lowest on the continent.

Schooling as Capital

In the context of social policy, education is widely believed to be conducive to economic growth, economic development, and national identity – especially in the case of developing countries (Becker 1993; Hanushek 2005; Ansell 2008; Ansell and Lindvall 2013). To put it another way, efficiently investing in the education of citizens will eventually yield in economic gains because as they become aware of their potential, they start looking after their own interests if given the opportunity to do so (Hanushek 2005). Certainly, Ansell (2008) celebrated the power of democratization and thus argued that the “level of democracy and the level of openness” of a country define “spending outcomes” in education (290-291). It is important to point out, however, that Paraguay has not been considered a country that particularly prioritized investment in social policies – such as public education – until 2003, when the government started allocating more resources to them according to a World Bank study (Cuesta and Suarez Becerra 2013, 165-166). For instance, the percentage of GDP spent on education in 2005 was 3.5% while in 2010 the percentage had increased to 4.4%, nearly a full percentage point – keeping in mind that the figures account not only for primary and secondary education but also for tertiary education.

Measuring Level of Democracy

In addition to this, others have suggested that an exploration of the interplay between political regime and public policy is crucial in the case of Paraguay. In their paper about the expansion of national primary education between 1870 and 1939, Ansell and Lindvall (2013) stretched their study to cover Latin America and indicated that during said period, “high illiteracy and weakly developed local primary education provision” characterized the region across any income distribution. In other words, they found, domestic political factors informed the development of primary education in Latin America and in other regions

(Ansell and Lindvall 2013, 518-520). Moving from general to more specific, Paraguay made an effort to start anew since its democratic transition began. However, it has not prioritized education policy in terms of government expenditure despite the importance of education as a contributing factor toward social progress (Ansell 2008). Indeed, Paraguay's (evolving) democracy is stagnating or falling behind according to some of the most well known international democracy measures and country rankings. For example, Polity IV categorizes Paraguay as a "democracy," but classifies Chile and Uruguay as the only "full democracies" in South America ("Polity IV Project: Home Page" 2016).

Likewise, in Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2015* annual report, Paraguay receives a status of "partly free" as opposed to "free" (2015, 25). In other words, and in using democracy and freedom interchangeably for practical purposes (Clark, Golder, and Golder 2012), Paraguay's democracy is still underdeveloped. In the same vein, the quality of democracy in Paraguay is also one of the lowest in the region (Chuaire and Scartascini 2014, 23). Indeed, Dr. Diego Abente, Paraguayan political scientist, politician, and former minister of justice and labor attempted to fill the gap in the literature in Paraguay regarding this issue. Using three variables of "levels of public support for the system," "quality of governance," and "socioeconomic performance," Abente's analysis (2007, 7-9) concluded that Paraguay once again lagged well behind its South American neighbors in terms of the quality of democracy.

The insights explored in this chapter reveal that the Paraguayan government seems unable or unwilling to recognize that education as a human capital investment and as means for human development leads to prosperity in terms of economic development and quality democracy. This failure, in turn, suggests that – despite its democratic transition – the underachievement of the educational system due to lack of public investment reflects some pervasive structural problems from the authoritarian past. Therefore, the next chapter will

detail the structural problems associated with Paraguay's history of dictatorship based on the literature to further understand such underperformance, and then overview some postauthoritarian issues as a result of that to understand what the Paraguayan education system faces and to provide the policy context in which the government is operating.

Chapter 2: Current State of Public Education

In order to work towards an understanding of the structural problems identified in Chapter One, this chapter will first overview the types of institutional challenges facing Paraguay's public education system post-dictatorship and then will situate public expenditure in education in light of those challenges.

Historical Context

A discussion of the structural problems facing the Paraguayan education system could potentially begin with a discussion of the colonial period. There was significant disinterest on the part of the Spanish Crown in Paraguay given that it was a resource poor region, which led to Paraguay's underdevelopment relative to other South American colonies—a condition that would pervade through much of Paraguayan history until the present day (Talesca 2015; Garay, 1897). While such a colonial legacy certainly has an effect, arguably the most crucial period in setting up the modern Paraguayan education system that faces the country today can be attributed to the 35 year reign of Alfredo Stroessner, the last dictator of Paraguay.

Alfredo Stroessner

Dictator Alfredo Stroessner ruled Paraguay from 1954 until 1989, when he was ousted in a coup d'état, indeed his regime being the last to succumb to democratic forces in South America. In fact, his military regime is considered to be the “most long-lasting in the Paraguayan and Latin American contemporary history” (Jones 2001, 1814). Stroessner had, until his fall, established a near indefinite state of siege thereby curtailing any opportunity for uprisings (Wood and DeLuca 2012, 89). Despite the state of siege, some democratic forces still challenged the regime but were put down by violent crackdowns (Ibid.). In this sense, it is important to highlight that, unlike other dictators in the region, Stroessner was not

overthrown as a result of societal demand for democracy, but rather as a result of a power struggle within his own political party leadership – specifically led by the second-in command in the army (Roett 2009; Mora 2003, 13). To put it bluntly, because the democratic transition was spearheaded through a top-down process, most of the “institutional and structural vestiges of the regime” still pervade to this day (Mora 2003, 13).

Nevertheless, the end of Stroessner’s dictatorship was a historical moment that not only marked a political, socioeconomic, and cultural revolution, but it also represented an important milestone for education reform and transformation that began as part of the democratic transition (Rivarola 2000, 7-8). However, the political transition also brought challenges associated with the long-deteriorated institutions that had created a weak educational system that was led for many decades by a MEC resistant to change (Rivarola 2000; Rivarola 2006). Although South American neighbors such as Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Chile had also been under authoritarian regimes, they had previously formed basic democratic institutions. Unlike Paraguay, their democratic transition was more “restorative” rather than building the groundwork of democracy from scratch (Rivarola 2000, 7-8).

Democratic Transition

Out of the necessity to transform institutions after the fall of Stroessner’s 35-year military dictatorship, two important events followed in 1992: the promulgation of a new National Constitution and the enacting of the Educational Reform. The Educational Reform was designed to primarily focus on the promotion of education as means to transform the socioeconomic and political sectors and thereby legitimize the new democracy (Rivarola 2006, 8). The Educational Reform eventually developed the very first *Plan Estratégico* (Strategic Plan) that outlined the government’s programs, its objectives, the implementation

roadmap, as well as the financial and human resources they would require for fruition (Rivarola 2000, 19).

Faced with countless problems to be addressed, the new Strategic Plan attempted to streamline these by identifying three main problems: quality, efficiency, and equity. Regarding the efforts to improve quality and efficiency, they have been targeted at curriculum revisions, textbook distributions, establishing more quality time in the classroom, and teacher training. As for equity, the initiatives were geared towards the delivery of bilingual education (Spanish and Guarani) to reach urban and rural areas more equally, and towards a shift on the focus and recognition from higher education to primary and secondary education. The first Strategic Plan, therefore, had already embraced the imperative need to address primary education as one of the most effective interventions in terms of future positive outcomes (Rivarola 2000, 25). However, since the beginning of the political transition, there still has been a deficit of an adequate educational system that served the needs of a democratic transition period, which is still ongoing (Rossi 2015, 32). This might be partly due to the sense of continuity of the authoritarian past that was pointed out above, which makes it unrealistic to expect institutions to change overnight – or even over a decade or more.

Public Expenditure on Education

Legal Framework

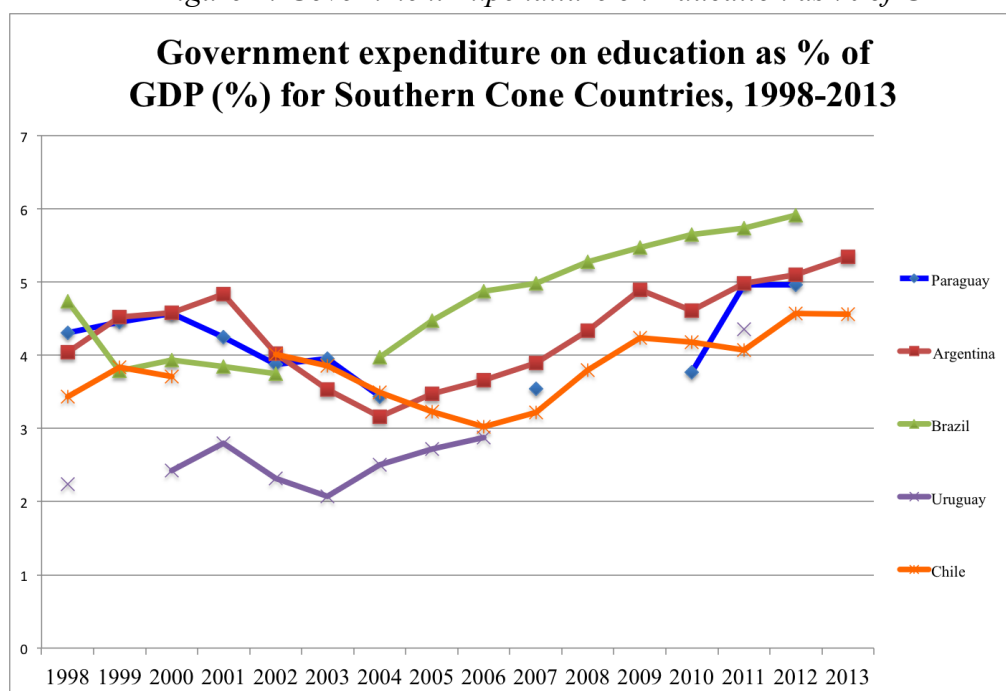
As indicated above, one of the main milestones that ensued after the fall of Stroessner, besides the Educational Reform, was the adoption of a new Constitution. Concerning education and culture, Chapter VII of the National Constitution of 1992 explicitly mandates that primary public school education be universal, mandatory, and free. Arguably more important, however, is that the National Constitution also stipulates that the financial

resources allocated to education should represent no less than 20% of the total budget assigned by the Central Administration, excluding loans and donations (“Constitución Del Paraguay, 1992” 2016). In 1998 these constitutional provisions were further supplemented when the Paraguayan Congress passed the General Law of Education, which regulates public and private education in more detail.

Public Expenditure on Education, Compared

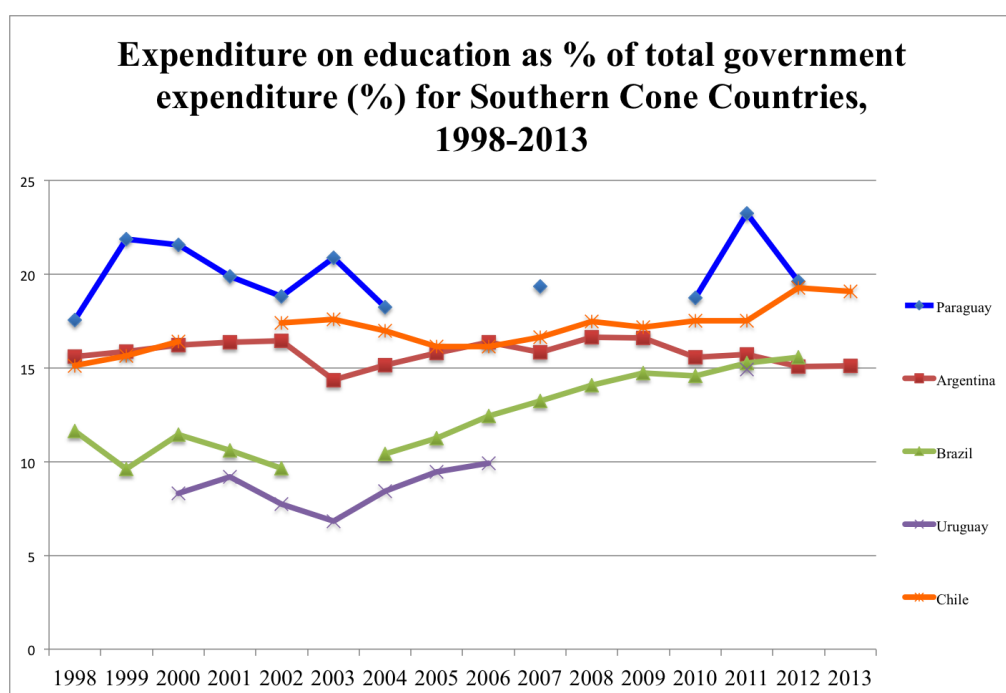
A comparative approach, showing other countries of the so-called Southern Cone (Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay) employing the extensively used World Bank DataBank, highlights Paraguay's public expenditure on education quite starkly (World Development Indicators 2016). Figure 1, which depicts the investments made by Paraguay and its neighbors over the years since 1998 until 2013 – a timeframe over which data are available for most countries and years. While Paraguay seemed to be catching up with a 4.9% of GDP in 2012 relative to previous years, it still lagged behind Brazil and Argentina, taking into consideration UNESCO’s minimum recommendation of at least 7% (Ultima Hora, 2016). Figure 2, on the other hand, depicts a slightly brighter picture of Paraguay’s expenditure on education. In terms of expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure, the country appeared to have been the top investor in the Southern Cone with 19.6% in 2012, using the same data underlying the Figure 1 time series. Thus, in comparison, Paraguay (and its neighbors) appears to spend as much as OECD countries spend on average in terms of percentage of GDP.

Figure 1: Government Expenditure on Education as % of GDP



Source: Graph generated based on data retrieved from the World Bank's World DataBank

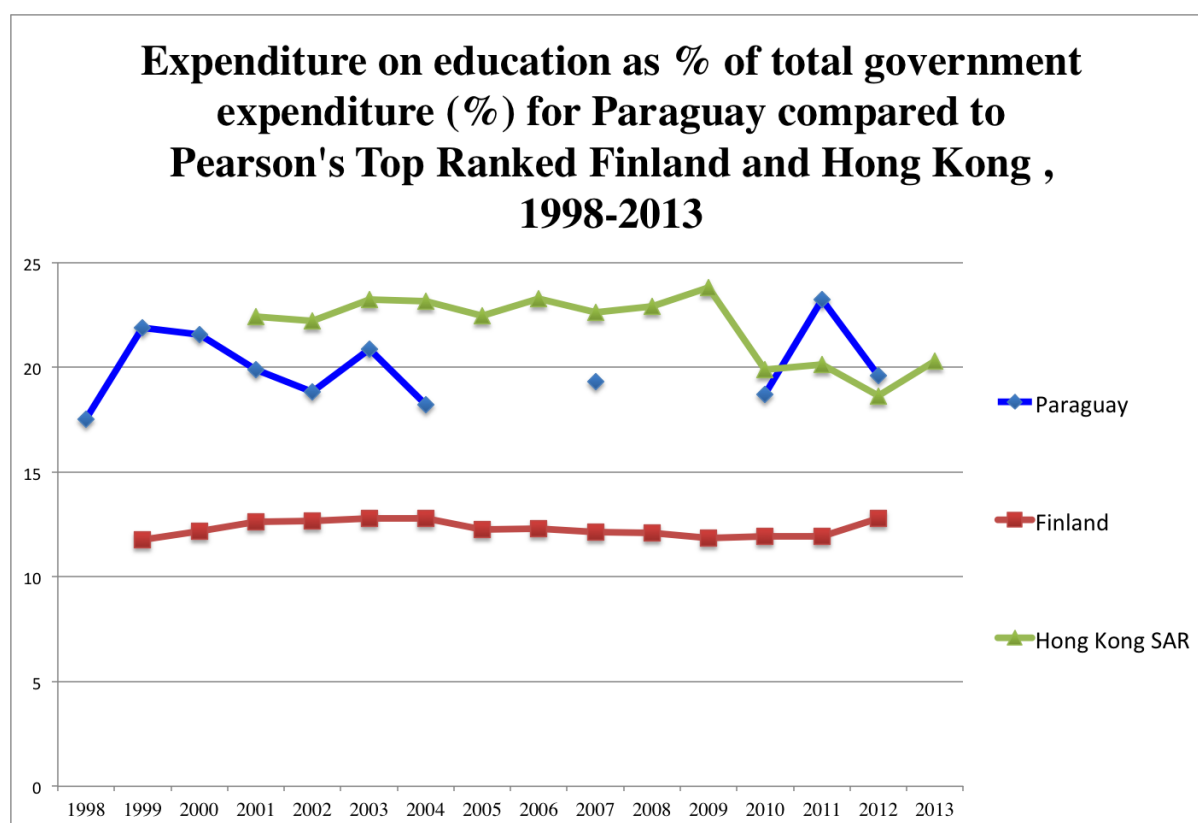
Figure 2: Expenditure on Education as % of total Government Expenditure



Source: Graph generated based on data retrieved from the World Bank's World DataBank

But this is perhaps misleading, given that it becomes evident that the outcomes are far from similar (Sanchez 2015). For instance, Finland, often considered the top or amongst the top education systems globally, invested 12.8% as a percentage of government expenditure in 2012, as displayed in Figure 3 (World Development Indicators 2016).² Consequently, the data in Figures 1 and 2 show increasing public expenditure and investment in education, while the literature presented above in Chapter One suggested that this investment has not been conducive to public policies in improving educational processes and outcomes. By focusing then only on total government expenditure, the question of how the resources are actually used and allocated is therefore overlooked.

Figure 3: Expenditure on Education as % of Total Government Expenditure Compared to Top 3 Educational Systems



² Based on Pearson's list of top education systems 2012: <http://thelearningcurve.pearson.com/index/index-comparison>

Public Expenditure Allocation

Regarding public spending distribution and outcomes, a growing body of research and evidence shows that while Latin America – and by extension Paraguay – has been successful in increasing access to basic education, mainly because of the regional wave of democratization since the 1990s, it has not been so effective in improving the quality of education (Rivarola 2000; Rivarola 2006; Baird et al. 2009; Levy and Schady 2013, 197-198; Wodon 2015, 6-7; Sánchez 2015;). This becomes especially evident if taking into account that current costs account for 90% of MEC's expenditures, which goes in line with the average expenditure on current costs since it is widely considered to be “the largest share of education spending” based on internationally comparable information (OECD 2014, 58). Although Paraguay has succeeded in extending education coverage largely due to construction of new schools, the World Bank has warned that the “Southern Cone countries will not achieve universal access to education (school enrollment and completion of sixth grade on time) before 2046,” with Paraguay being the slowest due to its “lowest educational ranking on the [Human Opportunities Index] HOI among its neighbors” (Cuesta and Suarez Becerra 2013, 199). Barely 30% of Paraguayan primary students in 2009, for example, progressed onto secondary schooling (Baird et al. 2009, 10). Likewise, rampant inequality makes matters worse given that “coverage increase” does not necessarily lead to “gains for the most disadvantaged” (Cuesta and Suarez 2013, 198).

Measuring Performance Outcomes

Although most international student performance evaluations are imperfect measures of quality given the low socioeconomic level of Paraguay relative to its neighbors, they are still useful in the face of lack of up-to-date data on Paraguay. At a minimum, national and international standardized test results help illustrate not only educational outcomes of

students, who are the ultimate beneficiaries, but also show that even within the Southern Cone, Paraguay is still doing worse than everybody else. However, the results of the 2006 Second Regional Comparative and Explicative Study (SERCE) of students from many Latin American countries, including Paraguay, showed that the country exhibits similar average rates of enrollment and attainment as its regional counterparts. Yet, in contrast with its Southern Cone neighbors, Paraguay displayed poorer student performance in general (Baird et al. 2009, 8-10). In addition, student performance seemed to have deteriorated gradually based on the results of the Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (TERCE) that was conducted in 2013, which revealed that Paraguayan students in “third and sixth grades primary school” performed below the regional average in “Mathematics, Reading and Writing (Language), plus Natural Sciences in the case of sixth grade” (Crónica 2015; OREALC/UNESCO 2015, 9-10). At the same time, national metrics of performance reveal similar negative trends. In terms of measuring academic performance among Paraguayan students, the National Evaluation System of the Educational Process (*Sistema Nacional de Evaluación del Proceso Educativo*, SNEPE) assesses primary and secondary students on various subjects every two years depending on the specific subjects as well as requests students and teachers to evaluate one another (Lafuente 2009; OREALC/UNESCO 2013). The results, however, seem to have yielded more negative rather than promising performance outcomes – as opposed to private schools (Baird et al. 2009, 16). Given these results, the MEC has very recently begun negotiations with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to be part of the PISA-D program, in hopefully advancing the quality of educational processes while also informing policymaking to improve student performance and pinpoint issues (“PISA Para El Desarrollo” 2015)

Quality of Teaching

International advisor on education Sir Ken Robinson strongly, and rightly emphasizes, "great education depends on great teaching" (Robinson and Aronica 2014, 74). However, teacher training in Paraguay has been found to be highly ineffective as the "lack of "academic knowledge and pedagogic skills" characterize not only the teaching profession itself, but also the very existing teacher training institutions operating in the country; a situation that leads to the correlation between the "poor quality of Paraguayan teachers" and consistently poor "student performance," as well as the obvious conclusion that the government has been failing to invest in teacher education (Rivarola 2006, 10; Baird et al. 2009, 8-10,17, 47). As of 2013, teacher profession has been assessed as "insufficient" with no positive prospects in sight (Wodon 2015, 7). Stroessner's regime saw a teaching deprofessionalization phenomenon caused by the "loss of prestige, negative consequences stemming from widespread partisanship, and the ever-decreasing salaries" (Rivarola 2000, 13; Rivarola 2006, 2-4). Moreover, another plausible dimension to the challenges that the teaching profession faces today in Paraguay is the feminization of the occupation. Teaching had become highly feminized, since teaching was the only activity within a male-dominated society that was available for women who wished to join the workforce, regardless of their socioeconomic status (Rossi 2015, 33-36). However, the gender composition of the teaching body has been experiencing a re-balancing between female and male teachers since the 1990s (Rivarola 2006, 10).

Infrastructure

Drawing from the most recent facts available, a 2015 World Bank study based on data collected from a 2008 school census conducted in Paraguay found that, in terms of primary and secondary levels specifically, "school infrastructure in Paraguay appears to be wanting,

and it tends to be less well developed than that of other Latin American countries” (Wodon 2015, 5-7, 20). In line with the widely held principle that proper – or at least necessary – school infrastructure allows for better learning outcomes, the study emphasizes the failure to meet even basic needs in terms of infrastructure due to decreasing public budget to education as a percentage of GDP (Wodon 2015, 21). The three main findings of the study relevant to this chapter are the following: (1) many public schools still lack basic infrastructure across the board, and that this is more severe in rural areas; (2) public spending for school construction and equipment for primary and secondary schools has reduced because more resources have been destined to tertiary education and other MEC building reparations instead; and (3) lack of classrooms affects most of the students, which is exacerbated by a misallocation of resources to build classrooms where is not actually needed (Wodon 2015). Such findings reflect today’s poor school infrastructure or unfinished constructions or reparations that have for years been forcing students to study under trees – during summer and wintertime, rain or shine (Cabral 2015; Aquino 2016)

This chapter highlighted the institutional and structural challenges that still permeate despite the collapse of Stroessner dictatorship and the subsequent adoption of a new National Constitution and Educational Reform. Given the bleak outlook revealed by the literature and the fabric of society in a transition to democracy as discussed above in the last two chapters, it is necessary to actually understand what the government in Paraguay is saying regarding these issues. How are they actually discussing the education crises facing the country, especially given all of the expertise, local and global, suggesting path dependencies that need to be broken or dealt with constructively? Do they even acknowledge these problems? Are they spending on quality of education and is that a priority? The next chapter will therefore detail the methodology used to unveil how the MEC is addressing these fundamental issues that seem to hinder public expenditure in education.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The previous chapter showed that the Paraguayan educational system is inefficient and leaves a lot to be desired in comparison to other Latin American countries (or globally), despite high levels of spending. However, this picture painted by international and Paraguayan scholars and researchers is only one side of the story. To-date, it does not appear that any study has specifically looked at how the Paraguayan government, namely the MEC, is actually addressing these issues, and whether it even recognizes these issues as problems it needs to fix. To find out how the Paraguayan government is framing the apparent failure of MEC's expenditure in public education, the thesis will therefore explore the official narrative put forward by MEC through the thematic analysis approach described below.

Data Body

Before settling on this thematic analysis approach, however, other potentialities were explored. At first, this thesis project aimed to incorporate face-to-face interviews with MEC officials who were instrumental in the design and implementation of the MEC's National Plan 2014, including MEC's former Vice-Minister Mrs. Diana Serafini Fernández, Vice-Minister of MEC's Educational Development Mr. Héctor Valdez and former Minister of Education Mrs. Marta LaFuente. However, these kinds of interviews as the main or even added qualitative method had to be discarded due to logistical concerns and eventually lack of access in spite of early positive signs.

Therefore, the methodology selected for this thesis is based on a study conducted through a thematic analysis of materials published on the MEC's official website regarding its investment and expenditure in terms of education. To construct an appropriate data body for analysis, several searches for relevant official documents published on the MEC's website

(www.mec.gov.py) were conducted. First, in order to locate applicable documents, preliminary searches of the key words in Spanish “presupuesto,” [budget]; “invertir,” [invest]; “financiamiento,” [financing or funding] “finance,” [finance] and using the website’s general search function were carried out.

The results of the searches for each key word produced an average of roughly a hundred short MEC press releases going back to 2009. While at first seeming like a worthwhile data source, many of these press releases were not immediately accessible or downloadable from the MEC’s website. Several attempts to open these documents to gauge their relevance revealed a number of major technical issues with the MEC’s webpage, such as links loading slowly or not loading at all, dead links, and a number of error screens. Moreover, since the general search feature lacks advanced search functions to customize, filter, and refine the results by date or search operators, the ability to identify relevant documents for further analysis was severely hindered. Given that these search results would likely not produce a representative or worthwhile sample, it was decided to exclude these materials from the data body, although with better access these materials could be included in future studies.

As a second step, an alternative approach was taken to locate official documents on the Documentation section of the “Documentation and Publications” tab on the MEC’s webpage that hosts a database containing 12802 official documents and publications published between 2006 to the present day. While all official documents seem to be indexed by title, description, publication date, and document category (e.g. resolutions, laws, official bulletins, and general resolutions), the search function does not allow for result filtering by two or more key words or Boolean operators. Although the initial idea since the inception of this thesis was to analyze official documents published by the MEC going back to the start of the democratic transition and the beginning of the educational reform in 1992 until 2015, the

government and its ministries have only recently started uploading documents online. In the case of the MEC in particular, most of the official documents that have been uploaded are dated only as far back as 2006. This lack of materials before 2006 is likely associated with the Paraguayan Congress approving a 2014 law that explicitly regulates Article 28 of the National Constitution that guarantees citizens free access to public information and government transparency (Benitez 2015). Eventually, all publications should be accessible online, but at this time the website is still lacking a considerable amount of material and even for those years that should be available, documents appear to be missing or inaccessible.

Hence, for the purposes of the thematic analysis used for this thesis, a search for each main document category (using the aforementioned key words) published from January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2015 was conducted and the following results were obtained: five results for resolutions using the key word “budget,” which were all documents exclusively discussing MEC’s employee salaries; eight results for laws using key words “investment” and “budget” that mostly addressed the approvals of the “General Budget of the Nation” from the years 2007 through 2010 followed by tables and numbers; three results for official bulletins published to date: two issues in 2013 whose content do not load upon clicking, and one issue in 2015 containing a list of names of teachers receiving school kits; and finally, about 180 results for general resolutions using keywords “investment” and “budget” with documents containing legalistic and bureaucratic jargon, which in scanning through did not include material likely to produce discourse related to answering the research question.

Given the results obtained from the first and second attempts at finding relevant discourse and the lack of search functionality within the Documentation and Publications database, a third search phase entailed conducting additional searches within the “Publications” tab of the MEC website. The Publications section’s webpage included specific publications regarding primary and secondary school education such as study programs,

curriculum-related material, regulations, and planning and evaluation guides. It also included 28 publications by the Center for Educational Research and Innovation (*Centro de Investigación e Innovación Educativa*, hereinafter “CIIE”) a body dependent on the MEC. The CIIE’s publications cover specific topics such as higher education, the teaching of the Guarani (native) language, and the incorporation of information and communications technology (ICT) in education. A third and final step in the process of retrieving official documents required scanning the website’s main menu and its contents. After skimming each categorical division, the drop-down menu about “The MEC” resulted in the most relevant material as it included fundamental information about the ministry as an institution and the short, medium, and long-term educational strategic plan and the medium-term agenda that outlined the main operating pillars and principles. Moreover, the main menu also offers access to management reports, although only three of these reports were readily accessible from the website, namely the management reports for the last three years (2013-2015)

The abovementioned challenges posed by the search design and functionality of the MEC’s website, coupled with the bugginess of the website itself, certainly hampered efforts to assemble a constructive sample of official documents that would be suitable to answer the research question at hand. However, the thesis was able to locate four core documents, extracted from across the MEC’s website that should represent the most central strategy documents available. This data body comprises the following documents: (1) the National Plan of Education 2024, which is the MEC’s roadmap to improve education by 2024 through short, medium, and long-term programs and projects; (2) the Educational Agenda 2013-2018, which provides a planning tool to set priorities education policy priorities but focuses on improving the quality of education as proposed by the National Plan of Education 2024; (3) Management Report covering the period August 2013 to August 2014; (4) and the Management Report covering the period January 2015 to December 2015.

These four documents not only embody MEC's constitutional policy, but they also convey to the public the MEC's view and stance on the conversation between what is written and what is practiced in terms of public expenditure and budget allocation. The National Plan of Education 2024 outlines the MEC short, medium, and long-term strategy, and therefore, it serves as guidance for policymaking and thereby for budgetary distribution. In addition, it draws from former plans since the first Educational Reform after Stroessner, in 1992, and also feeds from the Strategic Plan by building on their postulates while also acquiring new goals and objectives to keep up with the changing environment. The Educational Agenda 2014-2018 outlines the education policy priorities for said period to be implemented on the medium term. The agenda, in turn, draws from the National Education Plan 2024 and is a bit more detailed than the National Education Plan. The two most recent Management Budget reports for 2013-2014 and for 2015 should outline the expenditure balance as a result of the implementation of any programs and projects that the National Education Plan 2014 and the Educational Agenda 2014-2015. Therefore, in a way, the analysis should resemble a reconciliation process except that a personal interpretation is needed in the absence of specific numbers or benchmarks (Benitez 2015).

Figure 4: List of Documents Retrieved From MEC's Official Website

Name	Source Type	Link
Plan Nacional de Educación 2024 [National Plan of Education 2024]	Strategic Plan	http://www.mec.gov.py/cms_v2/adjuntos/2344
Agenda Educativa 2014-2018 [Educational Agenda 2014-2018]	Strategic Agenda	http://www.mec.gov.py/talento/descarga/AgendaEducativa_2013_2018_Folleto.pdf
Informe de Rendicion de Cuentas Agosto 2013-Agosto 2014 [Management Report August 2013-August 2014]	Report	http://www.mec.gov.py/cms?ref=294663-informe-de-gestion-2013-2014
Informe de Rendicion de Cuentas Enero 2015 - Diciembre 2015 [Management Report January 2015 to December 2015]	Report	http://www.mec.gov.py/cms_v2/adjuntos/13468

Thematic Analysis

In order to answer the research question of this thesis, that is to answer how the Paraguayan government through the MEC framed investment to improve the educational system in the country after the last dictatorial regime, the data body retrieved from the MEC's website will be examined through a thematic analysis method, a process delineated by the guidebook *Applied Thematic Analysis* (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey 2012). The analytical purpose of this thesis is to explain why the government does not invest in long-term policies to improve the educational system, a question that remains unexplained given the puzzle presented by the evidence and data found in the literature. The thematic analysis, as a qualitative method used frequently by scholars in looking at discourse, resorts and relies upon the author's interpretation of the data, through which hidden and obvious patterns or themes can be identified and later described using an exploratory approach.

Taking this into account, thematic analysis as a method used to analyze MEC's official documents brings at least one advantage and one disadvantage. A benefit of using thematic analysis in this case involves the capacity to overcome the inaccessibility of online

data on the MEC's official website regarding public expenditure. The thematic analysis can still examine the limited available key strategic documents published by the MEC to date. As long as it is done systematically, the analysis will still offer insight into understanding MEC's strategy and whether it matches with what the existing literature and research suggest. As for the disadvantage, despite using a systematic methodology to analyze the data body, whether unconsciously or not, this qualitative method still involves author's interpretations that inherently draw from personal biases and experiences growing up in Paraguay. Regardless, an analysis of the most recent and accessible national plan, educational agenda, and latest management reports can offer a very significant portion of the MEC's discourse and thinking.

The thematic analysis process entailed the following steps: (1) collected the data body from the MEC's website; (2) printed out the official material selected for analysis; (3) and read and then re-read the printed data identifying key words and code occurrence while reading; (4) merged similar codes together as to have more compact codes; (5) and then finally constructed themes for further analysis based on the identified codes.

Chapter 4: Analysis

This chapter will discuss the results of the coding process completed through the thematic analysis. Four main themes associated with public expenditure were identified in the data body: (1) quality of education, with 28 occurrences of affiliated codes; (2) insufficient government expenditure, with 24 occurrences of affiliated codes; capital costs, with 17 occurrences of affiliated codes; and supplementary programs, with 14 occurrences of affiliated codes. Interestingly enough, the first three themes happened to be addressed by the literature and research discussed on Chapter One and Chapter Two. However, MEC tackles these themes in a favorable fashion whereas the literature explored in said chapters discusses and presents them negatively. This analysis will therefore examine this mismatch by establishing connections between the themes found in the literature and the ones identified through the thematic analysis of the data body. Beyond that, this chapter will also illuminate on some of the matters that were pointed out in the literature but that are not part of MEC's educational strategy in terms of the public expenditure discussion.

Codes & Themes

The thematic analysis helped identify the codes regarding public spending that later were clustered into themes being used in the strategic thinking of the MEC. As indicated in Chapter Three, the themes surrounding the government's approach to education spending as outlined in the National Plan 2024 (hereafter referenced as the *Plan*), the Educational Agenda 2014-2018 (hereafter referenced as the *Agenda*), Management Report 2014 (hereafter referenced as *MR 2014*) and Management Report 2015 (hereafter referenced as *MR 2015*), were collected from MEC's official website. The literature chapter together with the current situation chapter and the analysis of the data body portray a mixed picture of the public

spending on primary and secondary education. The codes and the four themes identified in the data body as indicated by Figure 3. Since the themes “Supplementary Programs” and “Capital Costs” seems to be discussed at the same level by the MEC’s educational strategy based on the occurrence of codes, they are still subsets of the overarching “Quality of Education” theme. Therefore, the core analysis will focus on the two most prevailing themes of “Quality of Education” and “Insufficient Government Expenditure.”

Figure 5: Themes and Codes Identified in the Thematic Analysis Process

Themes & Total Number of Code Occurrences	Codes	Occurrence
Quality of Education 28	Guarantee Access to Quality Education	2
	Teacher Training	13
	Increase Investment to Improve Quality Education	2
	Improve Quality Education as Challenge	1
	Improve Quality Education as Goal	6
	Incorporate ICT to Improve Quality Education	3
	Improve Surveys, Assessments, and Evaluation Tests	1
Supplementary Programs 14	Scholarships	2
	Distributed Nutritional Supplements	4
	Building School Cafeterias	1
	Distributed School Kits to Students and Teachers	4
	Facilitated Student Bus Tickets	2
	Distributed Dental Kits	1
Insufficient Government Expenditure 24	Investment Increase Only Due to Education Expansion	1
	Insufficient Percentage of Total GDP	3
	Over 93% Spent on Running Costs	2
	Insufficient Government Expenditure as Total Expenditure	5
	Improving Budget Management	1
	Allocating Budget in Accordance to National Plan 2024	1
	Increase Budget For Education	1
	Identify New funding sources	1
	International Cooperation	4
	Inter-Institutional Relations	2
	FONACIDE Funding	3
Capital costs 17	Built New Classrooms	2
	Improved School Infrastructure and Provided Maintenance	2
	Provided Furniture	2
	Built Libraries	2
	Expansion of the Education Coverage	2
	Built New Technology Rooms	2
	Funded Various School Repairs	2
	Purchase of Notebooks	1
	Distributed Textbooks	2

Quality Education Theme

Universal coverage still remains one of MEC's objectives and challenges as reflected in the Plan, in which it advocates for an educational system that will ensure affordability of education (14). At the same time, it explicitly recognizes that universal coverage, in turn, demands enough budget, enough schools and teachers, and adequate infrastructure (13-14). However, the dominant codes that constitute the theme of "Quality Education" clearly reflect MEC's decision to shift its focus from expanding education access to improving the quality of education, which has been wanting. This change in priorities, expressed both by the Plan and the Agenda, is aligned with the evidence about quality education reviewed in Chapter Two and more broadly in Chapter One. In addition, the shift suggests an acknowledgment of the unequal progression between education expansion and quality education attainment over the years, as also seen in Chapter Two. In this sense, prominent Paraguayan scholar and educationalist Benjamin Fernandez echoes the Paraguayan disappointment in the public education system and repeatedly maintains that lack of investment in quality education is the main culprit for Paraguay's underdevelopment and perennial poverty (Diario 5días 2015). Fernandez's demand is wholeheartedly supported by most Paraguayans, who consider him as being the people's voice in this matter.

Teacher Training Code

As observed on the codes and themes chart, most of the codes concerning quality education concentrate on teacher training. In particular, the professionalization of teaching and teacher training codes that are present on the Plan indicate that teachers constitute one of the main drivers to improve the quality of education (2011, 55). However, they do not address underlying problems indicated on Chapter Two regarding teaching deprofessionalization, loss of prestige, and decreasing salaries that still permeate in the make-

up of education practitioners today. This suggests that even though there is progress in recognizing that student learning outcomes ultimately depends mostly on the teacher's academic knowledge and pedagogic skills, a deep transformation in teachers attitudes and teaching style towards a culture that truly supports quality education is still pending.

Quality Education as a Goal Code

The second most repeated code making up the Quality Education theme is addressing Quality Education as a Goal. From this standpoint, the Plan not only contemplates constant training for adults in the face of evolving technologies in the workplace but also warns that its successful execution is contingent on more financial resources (28-29). In other words, the new approach to learning throughout a lifetime will not only affect the traditional educational setting due to the changing sociopolitical, economic, cultural, and overall global environment, but will also force the government to revise and increase the annual budget destined to education (Ibid.). The Plan not only challenges the existing budget allocation but it also calls for efforts to be directed to teaching and learning outcomes as well as to the improvement of the efficiency of the system and the use of resources in order to increase the investment to improve the quality of education (55-56). Based on observations presented on Chapter One and Chapter Two, the MEC's dual proposal comes across as detached from reality for two main reasons: (1) structural problems and the institutional stickiness that said chapters identified given the historical context and thus concluded that they need to be acknowledged accordingly, and (2) the limited financial prospects that the MEC itself recognizes openly, which turns out to constitute the second theme identified by the thematic analysis discussed next.

Insufficient Government Expenditure Theme

The second theme of the analysis is a general acknowledgment of weak public expenditure in education. Both the Plan and Agenda explicitly and consistently address the main budgetary constraints that have been hindering the improvement of the educational system, but the Agenda offers more numbers. First, both the Plan and Agenda specify the legal provision contemplated by the National Constitution 1992 regarding the national budget for education, which must represent at least 20% of the total budget assigned to the Central Administration, excluding loans and donations (33). Moreover, the Agenda even indicates that only 13.71% is spent on education as a percentage of total government expenditure. Then it emphasizes the low government education expenditure as a percentage of GDP at 4.3 relative to its Latin American neighbors. Additionally, the Agenda specifies 3.9 as of 2014 while still recognizing that despite an increase of the percentage of total GDP from 3.8% in 2008 to 4.7% in 2010, it has been insufficient to guarantee free and quality public education in Paraguay. Likewise, the Agenda advises that 3.9% of the GDP is not enough to cover the expenses that the goals outlined by the Agenda require; therefore, it estimates that the GDP contribution should increase from 3.9% to 6.4% by 2018 in order to successfully put the educational agenda to work. However, although the national agenda is more specific in terms of budget projections than the national plan, it still does not give any specific steps as to how to increase the GDP contribution to education.

As for financial distribution, the Plan breaks down MEC's budget allocation into three areas: primary education accounts for about 50%, secondary education 21%, and higher education around 22%. Since over 93% is spent on running costs, the remaining is destined to capital expenditures, which does not leave enough for infrastructure investment or for interventions (57-58) of improvement in the quality of education. (MEC's National Agenda, National Plan). The Plan also points out that even though investments in education assigned

to MEC have increased over the years, the rise is largely attributed to the creation of new teacher positions for primary education and salary increases for teachers that led to the expansion of public education coverage. This line of reasoning also coincides with the literature described in Chapter Two that showed how education coverage expanded over the years but not quality of education (57-58). Finally, the Plan outlines a disclaimer-like statement with a number of conditions that need to be met in order to successfully implement the Plan. The most important constraint being that the financial resources assigned to education be sufficient for the Plan to work (71).

Government Does Not Spend Code

Unlike the Plan, MEC's Agenda appears to convey a more impersonal attitude toward education policy and investment. MEC is in charge of planning and administering the educational system of the country through its directors, experts, supervisors, and education practitioners who contribute to education policy and the pedagogic agenda of the educational system. However, MEC's Agenda emphasizes education as a task to be performed by the state as a whole and emphasizes the task of educational policy in general under its mandate. Moreover, it addresses education as a shared responsibility, with the family having the greatest duty, and then the community, society, the schools, mass media, and the estate. As an illustration, it collected thirteen passages of feedback received by Paraguayan workers, parents, and students stating that education rests primarily in the family's hands rather than in the government's and then included such passages on the Agenda document. Moreover, in the spirit to involve the participation of every sector of society, both the Plan and the Agenda admit to the importance of external support and international cooperation to an effective implementation of the educational strategy (71). And while there is no information on any bilateral or multilateral international cooperation carried out on the MR 2013-2014, the MR 2015 demonstrates that there have been some international cooperation exchanges with the

European Union, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, Development Bank for Latin America (*Banco de Desarrollo para America Latina*, CAF), and the Government of Spain. The MR 2015 does show that there were many investments in different sectors, but it provides specific numbers with no baseline for comparison purposes (8).

Still, the Plan claims that MEC's general goal is to guarantee access to education and quality and efficiency of the Paraguayan education as a public good. Yet, the Plan does not outline objectives related to specific actions to actually increase investments or the national budget beyond the mere intention to take action or provide solutions (68-70). For example, the Plan presents broad and intuitive "Acciones" [actions] such as the following: *promote* actions that contribute to increase the budget destined to education; *identify* new internal and external funding sources like the private sector; *devise* a more inclusive and participatory budget whereby all geographical departments participate; *improve* the procedures of the budget management; and *allocate* budget in accordance to the postulates of the Plan, MEC's Agenda, and any needs that may arise (68-70). In other words, expectations are stated but not specific solutions or an action plan to actually increase public spending on education. ‘

Implications

All in all, it is clear that the analysis of the Quality Education theme and Insufficient Government Expenditure theme unveils a surprising contradiction on two dimensions: (1) while the discussions on Chapter Two criticize the scarce public expenditure on quality education, MEC's educational strategy actually appears to have focused and allocated more resources on quality of education more than on expanding education coverage or any other area; and (2) even though the data body demonstrates that MEC's strategic dialogue centers on quality of education and all that that entails (supplementary programs and capital costs included), the acknowledgment that there is not enough budget for the Plan and the Agenda to be implemented successfully suggests an obvious mismatch. Finally, the answer to the

research question this thesis set out to elucidate is that, contrary to the literature and recent research discussed in this thesis, the MEC appears to be investing in education to improve the educational system. Not only that, the MEC seems to focus on quality of education rather than expansion of education, as demonstrated by this analysis. As a result, another question arises: if the MEC is indeed spending in education and is aware of the budgetary constraints regarding government expenditure in education, why is it that they do not have any effect on the educational outcomes as illustrated by the literature?

But beyond that, in the face of such a wider puzzle, perhaps having an idea of the rate at which public policies succeed or fail comes in handy to assess Paraguay's social policy and, more specifically, education policy in this case. As one way to measure this more broadly, the Inter-American Development (IDB) policy brief produced a Policy Index that computes the following policy features: policy stability; policy adaptability; policy coordination and coherence; policy implementation and enforcement; policy efficiency; and public-regardedness of policies (7-9). The Policy Index ranked Paraguay, Haiti and Venezuela as having the lowest index while it ranked Chile, Uruguay, and Costa Rica, as having the highest (Chuaire and Scartascini 2014, 11, 23). In comparing countries, however, it is of the utmost importance to bear in mind LAC's inherent and highly "complex multilingual, multiethnic, multicultural, and political" diversity, a characteristic that might also partly explain the high "heterogeneity across countries" reflected by BID's study based from the Policy Index (Torres and Puiggros 1995, 2; Abente 2007, 2; Levy and Schady 2013, 196; Chuaire and Scartascini 2014, 23). In other words, some of the cross-country studies or theoretical constructs that this thesis draws from might not hold for Paraguay and thus the implications for public policy are far more complex – as the analysis on this chapter has just demonstrated. Clearly then, more research is now needed and more emphasis and aid needs to be put upon and given to the MEC by local and international expertise in order for

Paraguayan to progress, especially since it is actually oriented, in some respects, to the problems facing the education system according to the literature, but not actually achieving results.

Conclusion

In attempting to uncover why the Paraguayan government fails to invest in public education, this thesis has shown that the strategic materials retrieved from the MEC's official website has indeed focused and allocated resources to education, especially on improving the quality of education—despite the fact that it did not appear to be doing so according to the literature and data available. To arrive to that answer, the data body used for the thematic analysis consisted of four core documents, two of which represent the input and the other two, the outcome: (1) the National Plan of Education 2024, which outlines the MEC's short, medium, and long-term strategy and was expected to contain specific objectives and actions for implementation; (2) the Educational Agenda 2014-2018, which draws from the National Plan but outlines the education policy priorities in more detail for said period for the short and medium term; (3) and (4) The Management Reports for 2013-2014 and the Management Report for 2015, which are supposed to provide quantitative data on the outcome of the National Plan and Educational Agenda implementation. However, the first two documents provided more material than the management reports, which proved to be vague and did not provide any comparative baselines for money values.

However, with the data body at hand, the thematic analysis process revealed four main themes: (1) "Quality of Education," (2) "Insufficient Government Expenditure," (3) "Capital Costs," and (4) "Supplementary Programs." The core analysis, then, concentrated on the themes of Quality of Education and Insufficient Government Expenditure for being the most salient in terms of the number of codes involved, while the themes of Capital Costs and Supplementary Programs were categorized as sub-themes belonging to the Quality of Education theme. The conflicting results of the thematic analysis and the results of the literature examined on Chapters One and Chapter Two suggests that there is not a disconnect

between policymakers and policy problems, as there perhaps appeared to be, but rather a disconnect between policy and results. If MEC's official documents reveal resources are focused to improving quality of education, but the reality on the ground reflects the opposite, then this raises new questions about why there is an apparent policy failure taking place. Is the money being mismanaged, or misallocated? As it turns out then, this thesis was only a beginning to better understanding the discourse involving two contradictory narratives, and uncovering the problems facing the Paraguayan education system.

Indeed, due to limited data access and logistical and time constraints, this thesis had to settle on the mentioned materials, which, have, however, suggested interesting results. Given that the views and interpretations in this thesis are subject to personal interpretation, it would also be interesting to observe if other discourse would reveal the same effects. Possibly interviews would be a more appropriate method, to show whether the theoretical constructs on the relevant literature and the findings presented on the last chapter hold up. Maybe this type of qualitative method would explain if policymakers have a set of talking points, and outright avoid the real issues at stake. Or, it could allow for researchers to actually ask about why policymakers believe the increased expenditure does not appear to be meeting expectations. As a consequence, this thesis offers a starting point, but without a deeper understanding and analysis building off of what was found here, the Paraguayan education will likely continue to flounder and fail the Paraguayan public, students, and thus Paraguay's democratic future.

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