

# Improving accountability in education: a critical appraisal of three experiences in Latin American

Gershberg, Alec Ian - THE NEW SCHOOL and NBER

González, Pablo – UNDP and University of Chile

Meade, Ben - New York University

# PROBLEMS WITH TRADITIONAL STATE PROVISION

- Incentives
  - Career paths and income do not depend on performance
  - Difficulties for consumers to influence delivery
  - Rely mostly on altruism and commitment?
- Information
  - Identification of good and bad performance
- Definition of output and value
  - Uniform provision

# HIERARCHICAL CONTROL

- Stronger supervision
- Evaluation and monitoring
- Different incentive schemes
  
- The consequences of such incentives tend to be very limited
- Require solving information problem providing inputs to higher hierarchical level
- Aggravates definition-of-output-and-value-by-the-state-problem

# EXIT AND VOICE MECHANISMS

- Competition between providers
- Empowering consumers of services
- Improve democracy

# Incentive problem

- Requires making the welfare of providers dependent on their performance or output
  - Vouchers: income of school depends on parents satisfaction
  - Public tender: select most efficient provider and control performance ex-post
  - Voice: parents participate in selection of teachers and principals, definition of school policy, promotion of teachers, incentives, etc.
- Align incentives/output with social objectives

# WHICH OUTPUT?

- Social objectives need to be made operational through measurement and dissemination of information
  - This entails facing the information problem and measuring output or performance
    - Value added indicators, reversion to the mean, random variation in scores, imprecision of tests, S-competition...
- Might damage other factors motivating workers and jeopardize the achievement of non-measurable objectives or distort provision in unintended ways

# IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS

- Those affected by the change of incentives must be able to adapt service delivery accordingly
- Assumes that capacity to act effectively exists at school level
- Might end up strengthening a problem of “multiple principals” especially if reforms imperfectly remove former rules
- Design is always incomplete and imperfect even if not the result of compromises

# NEED TO ADDRESS RESISTANCES

- New rules are not automatically translated into new behaviors
  - Human subjectivity, culture, habits
  - Rigidity of “the way of doing things”: resistance to change
- Role of enforcement mechanisms
- Role of governance mechanisms for adaptation to unforeseen circumstances
- Capacities and know-how



# EXIT AND VOICE MECHANISMS

- Competition between providers
  - Ex ante (Bogotá)
  - Ex post (Chile)
- Empowering consumers of services
  - Autonomous schools (Nicaragua)

# SELECTED ASPECTS OF CASES

	CHILE	BOGOTA	NICARAGUA
Institutional level	Law	Contract	Administrative decision
Incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Attract more students increases income</li> <li>. School community satisfaction</li> <li>. SNED: special incentive for teachers in 25% best performing schools in each “homogenous group”.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Attract more students increases income</li> <li>. Renew the contract</li> <li>. School community satisfaction</li> <li>. Increased visibility for providing organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. School community satisfaction</li> <li>. Social dynamic at school level of principal and teachers as leaders</li> </ul>
Constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. In municipal sector “Estatuto Docente” limits possibility of human resources management.</li> <li>. In private sector only minimum wages and maximum working hours</li> <li>. Mandatory minimum curriculum often qualified as “maximum”.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Curriculum in line with national pedagogical standards and norms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Hesitancy of poor parents to sanction. Reliance on cost recovery from parents leads to strong correlation between low poverty and successful autonomy.</li> </ul>

# SELECTED ASPECTS OF CASES

	CHILE	BOGOTA	NICARAGUA
Quality requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Although student results are evaluated since 1982 no achievement standard is used.</li> <li>. Recently teachers' competences are evaluated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Required to have higher academic performance outcomes than traditional public schools serving similar populations on outcomes such as test scores and attrition rates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Although student-level assessments exists no achievement standard is used nor are there strong consequences for poor performance.</li> </ul>
Enforcement of quality requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Market (lose students)</li> <li>. Municipal teachers that fail the national exam once or twice enter the training processes and three times are dismissed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. If minimum achievement levels not obtained for two consecutive years risk sanctions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Largely through parental and other stakeholder satisfaction via school councils</li> </ul>

# SELECTED ASPECTS OF CASES

	CHILE	BOGOTA	NICARAGUA
Governance	<p>. Authority rests in a legal figure named <i>Sostenedor</i> responsible for one or several schools while Ministry “retained” pedagogical responsibility</p> <p>. School director authority might be severely limited. Option for transference of responsibility for school management to school director in municipal sector scarcely used.</p>	<p>. School director responsible for most administrative decisions including hiring and dismissal of teachers, within certain restrictions, establishment of pedagogical approach.</p>	<p>. Administrative decisions transferred to school council and director include: cost recovery and use of discretionary funds (including to pay teacher bonuses), limited control over personnel decisions, very limited control over local curriculum.</p>

# LESSONS

- “Way of doing things” seems highly resistant to institutional change
  - More changes in administration than in pedagogy
- Enforcement mechanisms are weak
  - Parents: asymmetries of power and information, lack of information and capacities, reluctance to sanction specially among poor parents, interest waned with time
  - In Bogota: benchmark was given by comparable public schools. At least quality bounded by below
- Limited flexibility except in Bogota and private sector in Chile
  - High quality networks, small but significant effect
- Limited local capacities and motivation: heterogeneity
- Scarce know how about “making it work” and inadequate rewards for innovation
- Selection of students, more resources

# LESSONS

- New demands on central government
  - Coordination, monitoring, measurement of results, control misuse of resources, promoting equity
- Need to complement accountability and hierarchical control
- Reforms introduced by right wing governments resisted by trade unions and left wing factions
  - Success in Chile and Nicaragua to reverse essential components such as flexibility to adapt
    - Unexpected consequence on favoring private provision in Chile
    - Reversal of reform in Nicaragua after change of government. Similarly PACES, PRONADE.
  - Anti privatization rhetoric

# LESSONS

- Success in improving information available but restrict the notion of quality to standardized tests
- No “big jump” of educational quality
- Equity has been jeopardized by the reforms
  - By putting more money in privileged households
  - Better off households have more capacities to benefit from reforms
    - Chile has recently introduced a means tested voucher
- Social integration is absent as a social objective and might have been jeopardized in all three cases