

Letter from the director

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The national government is giving no little hype with the supposed “triumph” in the tests of PISA in 2015, which have been published these days. The alleged success merited a presidential address and an interview of the Minister of Education.

How far can we consider this victory an advance compared to countries similar to ours in terms of underdevelopment. But such methodology has had a breakthrough, since it is a consolation concerning the low economic progress to affirm that we grow more than other underdeveloped countries.

In any case it is affirmed as a great triumph that we have advanced some points in science and reading: but in these two lines the report says that the students examined do not know how to apply the former knowledge nor can they concretize the content of what was read.

The supposed achievements are parched up by the national Government with “there is much to do ...”. And this is all right. Why have we not done it? It is the question that deserves an answer. As far as memories go, in the creation of the National Front, back in 1957, it was seen as a great advance that 10 % of the national budget would be devoted to the education sector. But the large sums, which today appear to be the most important in the national budget, have not served much to make great leaps in education, a fundamental element of human development and consequently cultural and economic development.

It is clear that the country has failed to solve at least two major problems in education. The first is a lack of public educational policy. We are not beyond micro policies that last, at best, what a government lasts, and sometimes not even that, because they are limited to what a holder of the Education portfolio lasts in his/her position.

Apart from, probably, the budget issue - what important and continuous policies are there in terms of pedagogical methodology? What plan has been taken to achieve a comprehensive training of students? What general orientation has there been to guide students from their own intellectual conditions? It is necessary to sharpen the memory to find some integral plan of educational development and especially the right people to get it ahead

Without going further and citing well-known sources in the media – and, of course, without any intention of denigrating the current head of Education -, Luis Grubert, president of Fecode,

said: “I wish the new Minister of Education knows something about education”. And the dean of Social Communication at the Universidad de la Sabana, who seems to know the Minister well said: “the new card of Santos in the education portfolio, fills a large part of the country’s teachers with uncertainty, because all of them know she has no experience in education. “

Nevertheless, she comes from directing Colciencias and she was a temporary advisor to some vice Minister of Education. But that is not her background since she is an economist, specializing in conflict resolution and master’s degrees in Political Studies and War Studies. What happens to the current minister is what happened to almost all the persons who have been through that portfolio.

The second problem, which is as serious as the first, is the unionization of teachers in the public sector. Almost all the work of a Minister of Education is to deal with Fecode. And unfortunately the Federation does not think, either, about education but about salary problems. And in any confrontation between the Ministry and Fecode, Fecode wins, due to the blackmail that means a teacher strike for the country. But, of course, they do not accept assessments of their academic performance and only they retire, do well or do poorly, when they reach a retirement pension

While problems such as these are not resolved, we will continue with small leaps in international education assessment, jumps that will sometimes be forward and sometimes backward.