



IEP

Reflecting on the past to inform education policy

The *Education and Collective Memory* project of the *Institute for Peruvian Studies* (IEP) is helping Peruvian schools remember past conflict in order to construct a more democratic future.

SETTING THE SCENE —The human and economic costs of the internal armed conflict that Peru experienced throughout the 1980s and 1990s have been the highest and most widespread in the history of Peru as an independent, democratic republic. In 2001, the government established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate the causes and impacts of the conflict. In its 2003 Final Report, the Commission estimated that almost 70,000 people had been killed or had disappeared during the years of violence. Although many atrocities can be attributed to the armed forces and the police, the Commission determined that the Communist Party of Peru: Shining Path – a political Marxist, Leninist, Maoist group commonly known as the Shining Path – was responsible for most of the deaths and disappearances.

Decades of neglect of the education sector by the government prepared the way for the Shining Path to take over public education to spread its ideology, making this one of the defining features of the Peruvian conflict. To ensure that the education system would never again be used to incite violence, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended a radical institutional reform of public education in Peru. However, this reform had yet to be introduced a decade after the commission submitted its report.

WHAT IEP DID —The Institute of Peruvian Studies (IEP) has a long history of research into Peru's internal

armed conflict. The most important studies on political violence in Peru during the 1980s were undertaken by IEP. More recently, with the *Memory Group*, they set up a forum involving senior and junior researchers to discuss and study memory-related topics related to the internal armed conflict. Equally important is IEP's history of research into education issues, which dates back to the 1970s. Since then, the institute's work on education has grown stronger and become more diversified, and IEP now has a multidisciplinary team studying the many aspects of this topic.

With this unique blend of experience in political violence and education, in 2012 IEP undertook a project entitled *Education and Collective Memory: a proposal for remembering the past and constructing a democratic future in Peruvian schools*. The project set out to study the many complexities involved in teaching about the conflict – such as the suppression of memories by families and communities and the distrust between teachers and their former students – and to provide the Ministry of Education with guidance for addressing the subject in public high schools. Funds for the project were provided by the British Embassy, while core funding from the Think Tank Initiative (TTI) was used for logistical, administrative, and information dissemination support. In November 2012, with TTI support, IEP also hosted the *Education and Memory* seminar, which was attended by the Minister of Education, national and international academics, government officials, and



experts. The seminar, which explored the concept of memory and recent history in the education of children and young people, was well received and provided insight and knowledge that could be used to inform the design of Peru's education policies.

THE OUTCOME —When the project began in 2012, teaching about the internal armed conflict was not a subject that was high on the public agenda. However, when the MOVAREDEF, a new political arm of the Shining Path, sought registration as a political party that year, there was a renewed and urgent demand by the media and the public to address the events of the past in schools so that new generations could understand and learn from those experiences. Consequently, there has been considerable enthusiasm for IEP's project, as illustrated by the large turnout at public consultation meetings with experts held as part of the *Education and Collective Memory* project.

The first phase of this project was completed in February 2013. In October 2013 IEP published a working paper entitled *Secretos a Voces (Open Secrets)*, which provided a summary of the project's main findings and proposed sustainable changes to the national education policy. IEP also intends to publish a book that covers the academic discussion and presents details of the findings of the study. Overall the study found that, despite the inclusion of this topic in the school curriculum, the internal armed conflict is not being addressed in the classroom. This is primarily because most of the teachers lived through those years of violence, are still suffering

the consequences, and have no clear view of the subject matter to be taught. The situation is further complicated by the unfavourable institutional environment, which provides no assurances for dealing with this issue critically. Students, as a result, tend to learn about the conflict through family members or the media.

Throughout the project, IEP worked with three agencies in the Ministry of Education: the National Directorate for Secondary Education, the General Directorate for Teachers' Professional Development, and the Violence and Social Redress Team. IEP was invited to participate in working meetings with authorities and technical teams within the Ministry, and to participate in public seminars and forums. The institute shared its findings through academic conferences and events hosted by the Ministry of Education, and through the media. IEP's findings are currently being used by the Ministry of Education for its citizenship and civic education program. Moreover, government officials responsible for the *Regional Curriculum Project* in Ayacucho have expressed their desire to incorporate the study's recommendations.

A second phase of the project began in August 2013 and will run until February 2014. One of the most important recommendations of the first phase is being implemented and tested, namely, the holding of workshops for teachers that provide them with a safer forum for reflection and memory before they begin teaching about the conflict in their classrooms. IEP is working on this project with teachers at two schools, one in Lima and one in Ayacucho.

For more information on IEP, visit <http://www.iep.org.pe>

TTI's Stories of Influence Series

This series, produced by TTI, shares stories about the impact Southern think tanks have on policy initiatives. All the think tanks featured in this series are supported by the [Think Tank Initiative](http://www.thinktankinitiative.org), a multi-donor program dedicated to strengthening the capacity of independent policy research organizations in the developing world. At www.thinktankinitiative.org, you can find profiles on the organizations in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia supported by the program, as well as publications, working papers, and general information about TTI.