

**UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR  
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT**



**TOPIC:**

**“THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION FOR IMPELLING SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT IN EL SALVADOR”**

**PRESENTED BY:**

**SANTOS ROBERTO HERNÁNDEZ LOZANO HL02010  
OSCAR ALFREDO LÓPEZ CRUZ LC04023  
RODRIGO FRANCISCO MARTÍNEZ FABIÁN MF01004**

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**ADVISOR:**

**LIC. VICTORINO BARAHONA**

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LIC. JOSE VICTORINO BARAHONA

**ADVISOR**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

This is an essay required to obtain the degree in the Major of English at the University of El Salvador. The essay is argumentative since it will take a stand based on the information recollected and presents arguments related to the historical and current situation of Public Education in El Salvador.

As started in the Constitution of El Salvador education for everyone is a necessity and a right (Art. 56 of the Constitution, Republic of El Salvador). This law article states that every citizen of El Salvador has the right to have access to education for free. In fact, even though education is a right up to secondary education, not everybody has access to it. Governments have the mission of offering public education for people in general. On this regard, different organizations like UNESCO support Latin-American governments in order to have a high level of literate people. In this purpose, universities are important institutions to form professionals who contribute to impel development in their countries, since education encourages them to be productive. Thus Public education must include everyone to contribute in the development of El Salvador.

This essay contains the following elements: the topic of the essay, the objectives of the essay in which the purpose is stated. Then the bibliographical references containing all the sources consulted such as books, documents, theses and web sites. Next the bibliographic entry card and Sources are presented. The body of the essay follows. This is the outline of an argumentative essay to provide a general view of the topic intended. Following a justification is presented. Finally the methodological framework that describes the process follows in order to gather the information which supports the essay's ideas and arguments.

## **II. TOPIC**

**“The Importance of Public Education for Impelling Social Development in El Salvador.”**

## **III. OBJECTIVES**

### **General Objective**

- To analyze some relevant data related to public education in El Salvador and at the same time discuss the factors which impel social development in industrialized countries.

### **Specific Objectives**

- To present the highlights events of public education through a historical review in order to find evidence that support this research.
- To argue why public education is one of the most important factors to improve social development based on gathered information.
- To discuss the way an industrialized country impels social development through public education by analyzing bibliography related to education and how these ideas could be applied in El Salvador.

#### **IV. JUSTIFICATION**

Education reflects to a large extent the condition and quality of the education structure of a country. Educational institutions have a mission and responsibility to fulfill towards society. There is a variety of benefits that education offers to individuals in any society. First, it improves the lives of students and the society to which they belong. Second, better job opportunities are available since higher levels of education correspond to lower levels of unemployment and poverty. Besides that, people with higher levels of education are less likely to face a hard way of living.

However, El Salvador has faced a hard reality; illiteracy has been a standard through time. Education has been left behind, even though society recognizes it as a priority.

Differently from El Salvador, countries like Denmark, China, France and Japan offer public education as a priority, and it is offered to rich and poor people. Since El Salvador is not an industrialized country, it should offer better conditions of public education as a way to overcome poverty, illiteracy and other social problems. In fact, offering quality in public education is not an easy task for institutions since it implies investment, and this is the main reason why education in El Salvador is not the way it should be.

Moreover El Salvador still has the necessity to eradicate illiteracy and contribute with a higher level of professionalism to expand social development. Making a change in social development is necessary to impel public education by giving the same growth opportunities to every single Salvadoran citizen. To reach this goal it is mandatory to start giving importance and support to the educational sector for a better quality of life for future generations.

In any society education plays a critical role especially for developing countries, since it contributes to impel social development. For this reason everybody must have access to education. Therefore it is mandatory for the governments of any nation to invest in public education and to consider it as a priority.

#### **A. WHAT IS EDUCATION?**

“Education is a public good and a human right from which nobody can be excluded since it contributes to the development of people and society” (*A holistic vision through UNESCO’s four World Education Conferences 2008-2009*).

The importance of education cannot be neglected by any nation. And in today’s world, the role of education has become even more vital. It is an absolute necessity for economic and social development of any nation. Education must be systematically organized as a formal process. Moreover, education is one of the most important tools to promote social development in any country.

Currently the Salvadoran educational system includes one year of preschool, nine years of basic education, three years of secondary education, and higher education and several specialized postsecondary institutions. However, in El Salvador it has never been a priority as it should be. According to UNESCO (Medium Term Strategy 2008-2013) Development and economic prosperity depend on the ability of countries to educate all members of their societies and offer them lifelong learning. An innovative society prepares its people not only to embrace and adapt to change but also to manage and influence it. Education enriches cultures, creates mutual understanding and underpins peaceful societies.



In addition, education is in fact a human right which it is necessary for any country to have a better quality of life.

## **B. HISTORICAL REVIEW OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN EL SALVADOR**

Since education was implemented in our country back on the XIX century, there has been disappointing data that reflects a necessity of improvement. According to Monsieur Pedro Cortez y Larras before the 1770's in San Salvador "there were not any schools to teach grammar not even to learn how to read, write or learn Christian doctrine for children" (Cortez y Larraz en Herodier, 1997). In fact, in 1808 there were only 86 schools and 88 professors for a country of 165.278 dwellers. This means an average of 1.982 people per classroom. In El Salvador, According to UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) a first attempt of implementation of educational reform was made in the XIX century (1832). This reform stated that "every single town should have one school and this should be administrated by a departmental board of citizens in representation of the community".

In 1841 the only public university (University of El Salvador) and also "*La Asunción*" high school were opened to the population. Students did not have to go to Guatemala at San Carlos' University to continue studying at a university level. However it was not until 1887 under Francisco Menendez government that the first attempt for updating and improving the educational system was made. In this

attempt a Colombian mission was brought to establish a progressive system of education, the “Pestalozzi system”. This consisted of assigning a teacher to each grade level and the incorporation of more subjects (e.g., reading, grammar, writing, calligraphy, arithmetic, sacred history, etc.)

During the administration of Maximiliano Hernández Martínez the first official Educational Reform was implemented. Furthermore, new plans were created and the educational program was divided in ten periods per year. At the same time teachers were trained to provide better quality of education. Later on, during the government of General Fidel Sanchez Hernandez (1968) the concept of basic education was established and divided in three periods: elementary, Middle and High School similar as in the present time. Then one more year was added to high school, and at this time the reform was taken to the rural area. Some other important achievements of this reform were the improvement in relation to infrastructure and the creation of “*Television Cultural Educativa*” in Spanish.

The “*Television Cultural Educativa*” initiated in 1968 with the intention to improve the quality of public education in El Salvador. According to M.A. Roberto Baltez, who was a member of “*Television Cultural Educativa*” and today a professor of the University of El Salvador, the televised programs were selected with the main purpose of supporting the curriculum used in public schools at that time. It was not until 1969 that the transmissions of different televised programs related to the subjects of the curriculum started. These types of televised programs

were useful for teachers in order to reinforce their lesson plans, so they had more sources to develop their classes.

It is important to mention that during the civil war in El Salvador (1980-1992) a few changes were made. It was not until 1990, two years before the Peace Accords, that the plan "*Educación con Participación de la Comunidad*" (EDUCO in Spanish) was implemented. Later on between 1994 and 1999 the ten-year Plan of the Educational Reform 1995-2005 was elaborated. This reform was organized in four axes: Coverage, Quality, Formation in Values, and Institutional Modernization. In 1995 the Law of the Educational Career was approved, and in 1996 the Law of Higher Education and that of the General Law of Education were also approved.

### **C. ILLITERACY IN EL SALVADOR**

Today, education is viewed as a vital key to success in life, and knowledge has become every individual's aim or concern. Each one of us is born in a different context and in different social and cultural norms; however, most of us approve of education's positive effects on society. 'Why do we need education?' and why do we think education is important?' is the issue to tackle. Education is an important issue all over the world, and it is one of the most forgotten topics in developing countries.

Although Salvadoran public educational system has been reformed along the history, all the efforts have not fulfilled the expectations. One of the main reasons has been a very limited budget. Very similar to the rest of Latin American countries, in El Salvador, the budget destined to all levels of public education is very restricted. Very little has been done to impel the human potential of their inhabitants. For example, in 1999 the labor force was a 7% of general employment and 13.6% of unemployment in the 18 and 19 year old population. More than 50% of the population is under 19 years old; however, there has not been a serious effort from the government to support this unemployed sector in such art, culture of education in general. According to a census by *DIGESTYC* (Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, in Spanish) in 2008, El Salvador had a 14.1 percent of illiteracy registered, being the male sector literate overhead in comparison with women.

Today, through the globalization process, multinational enterprises are taking advantage of low cost labor. These enterprises are bringing companies to these developing countries and offering jobs opportunities. In fact, people with low academic profile are pushed to take these job opportunities since they cannot apply for any other type of job. A palpable reason is the lack of skills they have, which means that the academic profile of each individual does not have the requirements to apply for a different type of job. In consequence the possibility of being promoted in order to have better quality of life is remote.

## **D. PUBLIC EDUCATION IN EL SALVADOR SINCE IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAN 2021 (IMPLEMENTED 2005-2021).**

In an effort to improve public education, The Ministry of education implemented *Plan 2021* in order to eradicate the phenomenon of illiteracy. This project was propelled in the government of Elias Antonio Saca former President (2004-2009). The main goal for this project was not only to bring infants to classrooms but also to make them finish high school. However, within four years since the creation of *Plan 2021* it is clear few changes have been reached.

One example of the unsuccessful strategy is the test *Prueba de Aptitudes y Aprendizaje para Estudiantes de Educación Media* <sup>1</sup> (PAES in Spanish) with an average score of 4.9% in 2009. This percentage illustrates the reality of the educational system. Government tried to propel this plan but forgot about quality of education. As a sample of this fact, is the case of the rural sector in which the educational crisis is reflected in the classrooms; teachers had a big challenge because in 45 minutes class, they had to teach two or three grades levels in the same classroom. This modality of teaching known as “integrated classroom” emerged some years ago in order to carry out education to areas where the population of children was few and diversified. Nevertheless, it is obvious that with this modality the level of teaching and assistance for the students was inadequate

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<sup>1</sup> *PAES is the administrated test to graduating high school students. It intends to measure their proficiency in all skills and knowledge acquired at this level.*

for achieving an effective learning. Patricia Avendaño, the Principal of school Canton *Las Lomas* said: "The school has 151 children and the first and second grade levels are located in the same classroom" That worries me but there is no other choice". (El Diario de Hoy Newspaper, 2009)

Another example is the school "Caserio Bhetel", in Cuscatlán. It has two integrated classrooms and just two teachers. One of the teachers worked as a principal of the school too. MINED (*Ministerio de Educación in Spanish*) searches for solutions to all these problems but does not provide enough alternatives to improve these precarious conditions of learning. This fact limits an effective and worthy development, mainly in the rural sector.

According to data provided by MINED, Elementary School Students who dropped out in 2005 was 10.35% after the implementation of Plan 2021. In 2009 it went down to 7.98%, the percentage of students who did not pass a course and had to take it again was of 13.8%. It was later reduced to an 11.15%.

According to the data mentioned above there has been a significant improvement, even though the reality shows a different view. The quality of education needs to be more efficient in order to reduce the percentage that still represents a challenge to eradicate.

## **E. PUBLIC EDUCATION IN INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES**

### **(HOW IT IS PROJECTED)**

Education and lifelong learning today play a critical role in the development of economies and societies. This is true in the world's most advanced economies as well as in those currently experiencing periods of rapid growth and development. For example, according to European-Agency: Denmark Republic in 2006 spent (including study grants) approximately 25.09 billion U.S. dollars or 8% of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) to education. About 99% of students attended elementary school, 86% attended secondary school, and 41% pursued further education. All college education in Denmark is free; there are no tuition fees to enroll in courses.

As for quality and supervision in Denmark, all schools must have and utilize a system for quality development and results assessment of each individual program. Within the general requirements the school itself decides the methodology for self-assessment and quality assessment. Literacy in Denmark is approximately 99% for both men and women. From 2006 to 2008, surveys shown in ABC news (2007) ranked Denmark as "the happiest place in the world," based on standards of health, welfare, and education.

## **F. IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN EL SALVADOR TO IMPEL SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.**

In El Salvador according to articles published about the investment on education for 2010, education will receive US 770. 6 million dollars and this represents the highest budget in the general plan of expenses for 2010. Even though, the educational system in El Salvador presents several deficiencies such as the lack of quality in education. The budget assigned to education is not enough for offering quality, and there are no substantial improvements. As a result, our educational system has stagnated, and there is still a necessity for avoiding school dropping and for eradicating illiteracy.

The crisis that El Salvador faces can be observed easily in the endless problems that affect the services of education, health and social security. For the matter of education, it is necessary to increase the level of knowledge and social conscience because education can transform the life of the people by changing their attitudes, values, and by providing them with open opportunities.

Indeed, El Salvador is at a point in which the priority must be the education of its population. This is the only way to adequately face a globalized economy that allows democracy and consolidates peace. The educational system of El Salvador is found in a deep crisis due to an extended period of carelessness before and during the civil war. The current efforts coping with the most urgent needs of



primary education are important and should be maintained, but in large dimensions to perform deeper changes in the educational system.

El Salvador is one of the countries of the world that invest less in education to all levels. In the same way, deep efforts are necessary to improve the administration of the public education for an efficient use of the resources. It is also important to focus on the basic levels of education since they represent the essentials of the pyramid of education.

In the middle term, it is important for MINED to offer higher levels of education to the majority of the population and to improve the quality of education offered in public schools. Technical education will continue to be important in the Short-term, and in the near future this will give opportunities of productive employment to the growing number of people that enter to the labor market with few skills.

## **G. INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC EDUCATION IN EL SALVADOR**

According to a document presented by the World Bank Financing Education- Investment and Returns (2002), human capital is a key determinant of economic growth, and emerging evidence indicates that it is also associated with a wide range of social benefits such as better health and well-being. Moreover the investment in education promotes economic prosperity, abundant employment and social cohesion. As a result, education increases considerably an investment for the collective future of our society rather than simply in the future success of individuals.

According to State General Budget, the amount assigned to the only State University was \$ 55,317,325 which is equal to 1.52% of the general budget, compared to Nicaragua which had the highest percentage in Central America in 2009, 5.9%. This is one of the main reasons why El Salvador is facing all these social problems such as unemployment, immigration, gangs, and violence among others.

Investments in education increase future productivity. The importance of education cannot be neglected by any nation. And in today's world, the role of education has become even more critical and an essential factor for economic and social development of any nation.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

As it has been mentioned above, El Salvador has faced a hard and slow process of educational development. Also educational reforms were implemented as well as plans and strategies to fulfill the necessities of having an efficient educational system. It means quality in education with the purpose of promoting culture and empowering inhabitants to practice other civil, political, economical and social rights, while attaining a life of dignity, eradicating the phenomenon called illiteracy, and ensuring a brighter future for all. In order to reach this goal it is really important to make education accessible to everyone.

For this reason the government and the private sector should play a critical role to increase the budget designated to education. Therefore education, which is a proven way that promotes social and economic development, must be afforded by every single citizen in order to provide each better and successful opportunities in life. Even though El Salvador is not an industrialized country, it has the responsibility to keep on improving the educational system as industrialized countries do.

The quality of human resource of a nation is easily judged by the number of literate population living in it. This is to say that education is a must if a nation aspires to achieve growth and sustainable development. This may well explain the fact that rich and developed nations of the world have very high literacy rates and productive human resource. In fact these nations have started providing selective training and education programs so as to meet the new demands of the 21st century.

## **VI. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

Step1. Select a topic: This topic was chosen due to the strong interest in education which is conceived as a main factor to impel social development in a given country.

Step2. Search the literature: For the development of this academic writing we need to assemble information about the topic, read this information and understand it. In order to accomplish this step we have considered books, articles, newspapers, internet, and documents among others. And we must examine, analyze and synthesize this information before writing the intended essay.

Step3. Develop the argument: The argument is based on existing data related to public education in El Salvador. Thus according to information obtained, a statement about the educational situation of El Salvador is presented.

## **VII. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- ❖ There should be an increase of the national budget to support public education.
- ❖ Professionals in education should be periodically evaluated in order to provide excellence in their educational fields.
- ❖ Access to technological resources should be a plus in order to meet the society demands.

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