CHAPTER 9

TRUTH COMMISSIONS AND NATIONAL CURRICULA: THE CASE OF RECORDÁNDONOS IN PERU

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A girl and a boy studying at a shared desk in a school in a small town of Peru.

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Unless otherwise indicated, all Spanish language texts and interviews in this chapter have been translated into English by the author.
INTRODUCTION

We must come to understand that the threat of the past repeating itself will continue to exist so long as we deny that the events of the violent past were not solely the product of the actions of subversive groups but rather the effect of profound inequalities, injustices, exclusion and mistreatment that predate the conflict and continually undermine the conditions which make possible a true democracy. From this need to understand comes the necessity to engage children and youth in reflection and moral inquiry about the past as an essential part of the educative process.²

This excerpt comes from the opening pages of Recordándonos, an educational resource based on Peru’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación or CVR³), which was developed for use in schools around the country. The final report of the CVR, presented in 2003, recommended preparation of national curriculum materials about Peru’s recent conflict. This chapter outlines the process through which these materials were developed and explores the political and practical challenges that have thus far prevented the incorporation of Recordándonos (in English, “reminding ourselves”) into Peru’s national curriculum.

The potential for linkages between the initiatives and goals of transitional justice and of educational reform in the post-conflict

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² Former President, CVR, Introduction to each of the Recordándonos workbooks. (See, for example, Conviviendo con Nuestras Diferencias: 1 y 2 de Secundaria, 2nd ed. (Lima: Facultad de Educación, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú y Instituto de Defensa Legal, 2006).
³ The Spanish acronym CVR (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación) will be used throughout this chapter to refer to the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The acronym TRC is also used throughout to refer to truth commission processes more generally.
context is increasingly recognized. Education, it is overwhelmingly acknowledged, can play a powerful role in peace-building. Unequal and discriminatory access to education, divisive educational content and violent or authoritarian pedagogy can contribute to conflict, whereas equality of educational opportunity, creative and democratic educational content and progressive pedagogy can contribute to social transformation. The educational sector is well placed to enhance the impact of transitional justice processes and to play an important role in remembering conflict and shaping peace-building processes in communities. Transitional justice initiatives are similarly well positioned to identify how educational processes and structures might have contributed to social division and violent conflict. Such initiatives increasingly seek to effect educational change. For instance, recommendations for educational sector reforms are increasingly seen in truth commission reports, as evidenced in Guatemala, Peru, Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste. These recommendations can offer important starting points for addressing the legacies of conflict within the educational sector, an important element of post-conflict educational reform.

Within this important but to date underdeveloped area, the greatest focus is on opportunities for transitional justice to transform curriculum initiatives and educational content. In addition to the specific recommendations calling for broader educational reform, many truth and reconciliation commissions (TRCs) are recommending curriculum revision and increased attention to peace and human rights education. The Peruvian case offers what is arguably one of the most comprehensive efforts to incorporate the results of a transitional justice initiative into the national curriculum. An exploration of the effort in Peru offers both practical lessons for improving similar initiatives elsewhere and additional conceptual insights into the challenges of teaching about conflict and the politics behind national curriculum reform.

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This chapter begins by exploring the potential for linkages between transitional justice and education, particularly in the area of curriculum reform, before outlining the limited degree to which transitional justice initiatives have informed curricula around the world. It then explores the twenty-year conflict in Peru, particularly in terms of its linkages with education, and introduces the CVR process. The chapter then details the development of the Recordándonos curriculum resource and the various practical and political challenges it faced. Finally, the chapter considers the potential and the politics of truth commissions in national curricula.

The chapter is based on field research conducted in Peru between January and October 2008. It relies on interviews with key actors from the Recordándonos development team, the CVR and the Ministry of Education.

The Peruvian case demonstrates a deep political attachment to the national curriculum within and beyond the Ministry of Education. It highlights numerous political and practical challenges in teaching about the violent past – and particularly in teaching about the role of the State in human rights violations. Despite these challenges, the chapter argues that there is a strong rationale for including materials based on the findings of a TRC within national curricula. However, as the Peruvian case demonstrates, for such an initiative to reach students and teachers, it should be accompanied by a conscious, articulated policy on teaching and learning about the recent past, and on addressing the legacy of conflict in education.

**TRUTH COMMISSIONS AND CURRICULUM: OPPORTUNITIES AND REALITIES**

**Transitional Justice and Post-Conflict Educational Reform**

On the cover of the manuals that introduce Peruvian teachers to the curriculum resource Recordándonos is the phrase “A country that forgets its past is condemned to repeat it.” The manuals begin:
“The Final Report of the CVR is a fundamental tool that must be taken advantage of. The report presents the opportunity for teachers to instigate a profound debate around the real causes of violence in the country.” The authors explain that “through the elaboration of educational materials, we believe that schools can stimulate students – the children and adolescents of our country – to approach the violent past as part of their personal and social history. We hope that this material will contribute to strengthening a sense of collective identity and a culture of peace.”

In these words resonate the goals articulated by those calling for both transitional justice and for educational reform in the post-conflict context. Indeed, remembering the conflicts and human rights violations of the past and teaching future generations about them are frequently put forward as important components of complex processes such as reconciliation and peace-building. A post-conflict educational reform committed to addressing the legacies of conflict within the educational sector, and to contributing to peace and democracy, shares many of the same goals as a transitional justice initiative that seeks to repair and clarify the past in order to prevent future violence. One of the most straightforward areas for thoughtful collaboration between education and transitional justice actors is around curriculum reform and the development of curricula about recent conflict and recovery from conflict.

Educational sector reform is increasingly recognized as a critical part of a humanitarian response to conflict and a necessary part of post-conflict transformation, while revising the national

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Curriculum is generally an integral part of the post-conflict educational reform agenda, despite the inherent challenges it presents. Transitional justice actors are increasingly concerned with ensuring that initiatives contribute to broader peace-building and development efforts, leaving longer-term and tangible legacies. Thus, for both education and transitional justice actors, there is considerable potential for a productive overlap between transitional justice and curriculum reform. This potential can suit the needs of teachers and children if it results in a balanced, pedagogically sound, dynamic curriculum resource that is understood and used by teachers and students to explore a nation’s recent past.

Truth commissions, with their aims of revealing, clarifying and acknowledging the past, hold clear pedagogical potential. For Priscilla Hayner, “the most straightforward objective of a truth commission is sanctioned fact-finding: to establish an accurate record of a country’s past, clarify uncertain events, and lift the lid of silence and denial for a contentious and painful period of history.” Truth commissions draw, at least to a degree, on methods grounded in historical inquiry. As Elizabeth Cole and Judy Barsalou point out, they offer strong didactic material since “they present the voices of ordinary people with compelling stories to tell.”

Engaging children and teachers in learning about TRC processes and the past is perhaps one of the most active ways that the overarching goals of a truth commission – fostering reconciliation and preventing future human rights violations – can be made concrete. Curriculum resources may aid a truth

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10 Elizabeth A. Cole and Judy Barsalou, “Unite or Divide? The Challenges of Teaching History in Societies Emerging from Conflict” (Washington, DC: USIP Special Report 163, 2006), at 12, [hereinafter “Unite or Divide?”].
commission’s process and impact, especially given that TRCs are regularly criticized for lacking follow-through and “fading away” at the close of their mandates. As Laplante and Theidon argue, “measures which accompany or follow the truth commission process…are indispensable in contributing to reconciliation and to a more just and peaceful future.”¹¹ Such measures, which might include the development of learning materials, are also important in determining the long-term impact and perceived success of a TRC.

It is logical to assume that a TRC’s findings will have a wider impact if they are well known and accessible and seen to be facilitating real social change. Developing curriculum materials based on truth commission final reports can at once make the reports more widely available and ensure that the findings are disseminated among a significant portion of the population. Curriculum materials can also bring greater longevity to a final report by introducing it to successive generations. Used by teachers and students, the materials can also facilitate exploration of the meanings of the past at personal and collective levels.

Since the national curriculum and its narrative of nationhood, identity and history hold considerable symbolic, cultural and political weight, including TRC findings within it can be seen as an important sign of the report’s legitimacy and the government’s acceptance and acknowledgment of its findings. Teaching about the violent past, and particularly about the State’s role in human rights violations, can indicate a significant break with this past. In Germany, for instance, teaching materials that condemn German actions during the Second World War “have frequently been cited as one of the central proponents of a reconciliatory stance towards wronged populations.”¹² The development of a curriculum based on the findings of a TRC may similarly demonstrate a reconciliatory position by the State and may contribute symbolically to closing a period of violence or repression.


¹² Julian Dierkes, “The Trajectory of Reconciliation through History Education in Postunification Germany,” in Cole, Teaching the Violent Past, at 33.
From the perspective of those involved in post-conflict educational reform and curriculum development, the “truth” produced by a TRC might offer a useful route through very contested terrain. Developing a curriculum about recent conflict is, after all, an incredibly complex and provocative process. As demonstrated in numerous countries, historical narratives are tightly tied to group identities, and the narratives chosen to tell a nation’s history through its curriculum are inevitably political and often controversial. Therefore, efforts to change, modify, open, erase or add to such narratives are likely to be challenged and challenging, particularly following a period of conflict or mass atrocity. Indeed, the politics and power dynamics of transition are linked to these very narratives; this is demonstrated powerfully in the Peruvian case, where political and personal biases within the State worked to block materials that directly acknowledge human rights violations committed by the State.

While truth commissions do not necessarily resolve contention or create consensus, they accumulate considerable and diverse historical information over a relatively short time period and present a version of the past based on that information. Moreover, as officially sanctioned bodies, TRCs engage in producing an “official” version of the truth. That this “official” truth is constructed from the testimonies of those who lived through the past speaks to the educational potential of truth commissions. Within the fraught space where the historical narrative is revised, therefore, the versions of the past produced by a truth commission, particularly one with a high degree of public support, can be significant.

TRC processes are inevitably complex and imperfect. The fact that they distill a version of the past within a charged social and political landscape makes them a useful resource for revising and developing a curriculum, particularly for the timely development of educational material to address recent conflict. Indeed, where a

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truth commission holds considerable legitimacy, collaboration with educational actors may validate both the need for curriculum revision and reform and the importance of addressing conflict and peace within it. The Peruvian case is perhaps the best example of an effort to realize the potential of a national curriculum based on the results of a truth commission, and it demonstrates the many practical and political challenges inherent in this process.

**International Examples**

Despite the strong rationale for including exploration of TRC processes and findings in national curricula, in only a few cases have such efforts been undertaken. As mentioned above, education and its reform have been the focus of recommendations in the final reports of many TRCs; recommendations for human rights and peace education are particularly common. However, these recommendations have generally not resulted in TRC-based curricula.14

For example, South Africa’s 1998 TRC recommended including its work and findings in the country’s new history curriculum.15 The TRC process itself did not have a strong focus on education, which was not the subject of an institutional hearing. Nonetheless, following the release of the TRC’s final report, panels were formed in the Department of Education to address teaching about the past and to investigate values and citizenship education. Despite this effort, a specific TRC-based curriculum element was never developed.

In Sierra Leone, UNICEF, with children’s participation, supported the development of a children’s version of the TRC final report. However, the Ministry of Education, Sports and Technology was not involved either in developing the resource or in the work of the TRC. UNICEF distributed the children’s version to schools in

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14 The Final Reports of TRCs in Chile, South Africa, Guatemala, Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste and Peru all recommend human rights and/or peace education.

2006, but because of a limited governmental response to TRC recommendations and the lack of a formal agreement between the Ministry and the TRC about the report, it has not been approved for use as a national curriculum resource.\textsuperscript{16}

In Guatemala, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) developed teaching resources based on the country’s truth commission report, but these materials have not yet been incorporated into the national curriculum.\textsuperscript{17} As in Sierra Leone, there were no formal links between the Ministry of Education and the educational initiatives, or between the Ministry and the TRC process. These NGO-led initiatives, therefore, remain ad hoc and do not reach all of Guatemala’s schools or children.

In Timor-Leste, there is some momentum to incorporate reference to the report of the TRC (Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação de Timor-Leste or CAVR) into the newly developed primary curriculum and the evolving curriculum for secondary schools. Though the process has been slow, productive relationships have developed between the Ministry of Education, donors and a post-CAVR secretariat. This presents opportunities for curriculum components based on the CAVR.\textsuperscript{18}

In Liberia, TRC actors considered development of a TRC component within a broader process of national curriculum reform, but the truth and reconciliation process is not complete and so far no further action has been taken.\textsuperscript{19}

As will be outlined in more detail below, the Peruvian case is


\textsuperscript{18} E-mail communication from Ann Linnarsson, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, September 2009.

\textsuperscript{19} E-mail communication from Saudamini Siegrist, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, October 2009.
unique in two ways: there was an agreement between the CVR and the Ministry of Education to develop materials, and the Ministry of Education participated, albeit to a limited degree, in the CVR process.

CONFLICT, EDUCATION AND THE CVR IN PERU

Peru’s twenty-year internal armed conflict was initiated in 1980 by the Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) following more than a decade of military rule and an economic crisis. The conflict began in the mountainous interior of the country, which had long suffered from widespread poverty and the social exclusion of indigenous people. Both government forces and Shining Path members were responsible for widespread brutality, including killings, disappearances, torture and rape, all of which fell disproportionately on indigenous groups. All of the armed actors deliberately targeted civilians, and the conflict was bloodier than any other war in Peruvian history. It ultimately killed almost seventy thousand people and displaced hundreds of thousands.

Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación

In 2001 the transitional government of Interim President Valentin Paniagua established the CVR by a Supreme Decree, which was ratified later that year by the elected government of Alejandro Toledo. The CVR was made up of twelve commissioners and one observer, all Peruvian. The President of the CVR was then Rector of the Pontificate Catholic University of Peru (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú or PUCP). Other commissioners were academics, religious leaders and human rights experts, and also included a retired army lieutenant and a former congresswoman. While many saw the diversity of the Commission as a strength, the makeup of the Commission was criticized as biased by groups on both the left and the right.

During its two-year working period, the Commission investigated human rights violations committed between 1980 and 2000. Its mandate was to “clarify processes, events and corresponding responsibility – not only of those who executed crimes but also of those who ordered or tolerated them – and to propose initiatives that affirm peace and reconciliation among all Peruvians.” The CVR opened five regional offices, collected testimony from nearly seventeen thousand people, conducted three exhumations and held several public hearings, including one on political violence and the educational community.

The CVR was created following the fall of the corrupt and increasingly authoritarian government of Alberto Fujimori in 2000, which opened the political opportunity to advocate for a truth commission. Its mandate for investigations spanned the governing periods of Presidents Fernando Belaunde (1980-1985), Alan García (1985-1990) and Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000). Therefore, the actions of each government were investigated, along with those of the Shining Path and Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru or MRTA) subversive groups.

The CVR produced a final report of nine volumes and eight thousand pages, which found that Shining Path was responsible for 54 percent of deaths and the armed forces for 34 percent. It reported that 75 percent of the victims of the conflict spoke Quechua, 79 percent lived in rural areas and 85 percent came from a handful of Andean and jungle departments. Two thirds of the victims had not completed secondary school.

The report states that “veiled racism and scornful attitudes”


22 CVR, Volume 1.

23 Ibid., Volume 2.

24 Ibid.

persist in Peruvian society. The CVR found that these attitudes and social divisions in the country created indifference in powerful social circles and in the “moderately educated urban sector” toward the violence that was occurring predominantly in rural areas and mainly directed at poor and indigenous communities.\textsuperscript{26} The CVR final report heavily emphasized the embedded, structural causes of conflict in Peru, rooted in inequality, racism and indifference. The Recordándonos resource, based on the CVR, does the same, which has created specific political challenges for its entry into the national curriculum.

The CVR’s final report, presented in 2003, was accepted by the Government of President Alejandro Toledo, who committed his administration to addressing its recommendations. The fact that President Toledo and his party were political newcomers and not involved in the conflict eased their acceptance of the report, though the administration made limited progress in terms of CVR recommendations. In 2006, when Alan García was again elected president, the State’s perception of the report and its legitimacy changed. Mr. García had been president from 1985 to 1990, a period during which the State had committed a series of human rights violations, according to the CVR. Under the García administration, the political will to address CVR recommendations has diminished; some sectors of the government have made efforts to discredit the CVR.

**Education and Conflict**

The Shining Path movement, committed to a Maoist revolution that would violently overturn Peru’s government, emerged\textsuperscript{27} on the campus of National University of San Cristóbal de Huamanga,

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{27} Abimael Guzmán broke off from the Bandera Roja Communist Party of Peru (PCP-BR) to form Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path).
where its leader, Abimael Guzmán Reynoso, taught.28 The movement, initially considered a marginal group consisting primarily of radical faculty members and students, grew during the 1980s and 1990s.29 Through its influence in the teacher’s union and at certain universities, Shining Path sought to place sympathetic teachers in schools where it wished to recruit young people.30 The CVR found that authoritarian pedagogy – grounded in rote learning and obedience, long the norm in Peru – lent itself well to Shining Path’s dogmatism and facilitated young people’s alliances with the movement. The CVR also found that the “incapacity of the State and the country’s elites to respond to the educational demands of youth frustrated their efforts towards social mobility and aspirations for advancement” and that this frustration may have motivated young people to join Shining Path.31 What Bush and Saltarelli call “the negative face of education”32 – education’s ability to perpetuate and entrench inequality and foster violent attitudes – was present in, and contributed to, Peru’s conflict.

Education took on a powerful symbolic role in Peru’s conflict, often expressed violently. During certain periods the State largely equated public schoolteachers at all levels with terrorists, presuming guilt where frequently there was none.33 This led to the installation of military bases on campuses, the arbitrary detention and disappearance of students and staff from several university


29 Ibid., at 27.

30 CVR, ‘Executive Summary’, at 22.

31 Ibid., at 23.


33 Pablo Sandoval, Educación, Ciudadanía y Violencia en el Perú: Una Lectura del Informe de la CVR (Lima: TAREA and IEP, 2004).
campuses and a number of deaths.\textsuperscript{34} Education, or in the words of the former president of the CVR “mis-education,” figures prominently in the CVR’s final report and is identified as one of the causes of conflict in Peru. The CVR assigns serious responsibility to the State for neglecting public education, stigmatizing entire communities of teachers and students and allowing grave human rights violations against them. The CVR’s findings about the role of education in the conflict provide a strong imperative for post-conflict educational reform in Peru.

\textbf{The CVR and Educational Reform}

The CVR is notable among truth commissions in having had a staff member – the coordinator of the sub-area of education – through most of the period. In April 2002, the CVR signed a contract with the Ministry of Education, which facilitated a working relationship and laid out areas of cooperation.\textsuperscript{35} These included CVR advice to the Ministry on the curriculum review that was then in process and resulted in the 2006 National Curriculum Design (Diseño Curricular Nacional or DCN); in the production of educational materials, emphasizing citizenship education and the CVR; in the preparation of teacher-training materials and workshops to develop teachers’ skills in teaching about conflict and reconciliation; and in a national survey of secondary school students’ knowledge of themes in citizenship education.\textsuperscript{36} Importantly, the CVR had to generate the financial resources for all these activities.

Initially, relations between the Ministry and the CVR were good. The coordinator of the sub-area of education, who had

\textsuperscript{34} CVR, ‘Executive Summary’, at 136.

\textsuperscript{35} “Convenio de Cooperación Institucional entre el Ministerio de Educación y la Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación”, SCO-571-05, 2002, available at Centro de la Memoria Colectiva y los Derechos Humanos, Lima (login required).

\textsuperscript{36} “Convenio de Cooperación Institucional entre el Ministerio de Educación y la Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación.”
previously worked in the Ministry, said that when she went to the Ministry “the doors were wide open. People were very committed; they gave you all the support.”

However, in late 2002, a new Minister of Education was appointed. Many of the contracted activities were left incomplete, including the national survey and the development of educational materials. The new Minister did not share his predecessor’s enthusiasm for working with the CVR and apparently did not prioritize the contract or the maintenance of a working relationship. Nonetheless, the CVR held several workshops with teachers and trainee-teachers in the five regions with CVR offices and undertook a public hearing on education. It also developed some materials for distribution to schools, including summary versions of its final report and booklets on values education. Although distributed with the collaboration of the Ministry of Education, these were considered additional resources, not Ministry-approved curriculum texts.

Near the conclusion of the CVR’s work, a consultant was hired to assist in developing recommendations for educational reform. The recommendations put forward for “reforming education to promote democratic values” were included among the four “essential institutional reforms” recommended by the CVR. The educational recommendations’ focus on improving the quality of rural schools, prioritizing intercultural education, improving girls’ literacy, transforming authoritarian pedagogy and ending violence in schools, and encouraging learning for citizenship and democratic values. They are broadly seen by the Peruvian educational community as having captured the needs and realities facing Peru’s educational sector. However, there is strong sentiment that the


38 CVR. Information on the public hearing is available at: http://www.cverdad.org.pe/apublicas/audiencias/index.php

39 CVR, Volume 9.

recommendations should have included concrete implementation steps. This absence, along with the limited time frame of the CVR and the inaction of a body with formal responsibility for follow-up, is perceived to have limited the resonance and power of the recommendations.

The Origins of Recordándonos

The CVR recommendations call for educational reform to be grounded in human rights, and the contract between the Ministry of Education and the CVR included the development of CVR-based curriculum. As a former CVR commissioner pointed out, earlier TRC experiences in El Salvador and Guatemala suffered from a lack of follow-up after presentation of the final reports. Therefore, the CVR pushed to ensure that processes would carry on beyond the Commission’s term, including mental-health initiatives with the Ministry of Health, development of national standards for exhumations and development of educational resources based on the CVR.41

Due at least partly to the change in ministers and the diminishing enthusiasm of the Ministry of Education, work on a formal curriculum resource did not begin during the mandate of the CVR, although Commission staff and members of the educational community discussed it. An agreement to begin work on the Recordándonos project was signed in late 2003 by the well-established human rights NGO Instituto de Defensa Legal (IDL), at which a former commissioner is based, and the Faculty of Education at PUCP, where the president of the CVR served as rector. The impetus for the contract came from these two organizations that were determined to carry forward the CVR’s recommendation. While the Ministry of Education was informed of the contract, indicating its support and a pledge to review the completed materials, it was not a signatory to the contract for the initial design of the Recordándonos materials or for its financing.

41 Interview with former CVR commissioner, 28 February 2008.
The Spanish organization Fundación Santa María funded development of the first version of materials, which was completed in 2004. UNICEF and Save the Children then agreed to fund a pilot and the development of a second version based on feedback from the pilot and the Ministry. The Ministry remained supportive as the Recordándonos team sent progress updates. Several respondents interviewed felt that the Ministry’s enthusiasm was due at least in part to international pressure to comply with CVR recommendations.\(^\text{42}\) One of the Recordándonos project coordinators expressed regret that the Ministry of Education had not been involved during the development of the first version, suggesting that this lack of engagement led to the Ministry later distancing itself from the project.\(^\text{43}\)

The Recordándonos materials were developed and presented to the Ministry of Education during the government of Alejandro Toledo’s Perú Posible party (mid-2001 to mid-2006). Many respondents stressed that the Toledo government did not have any “human rights debt”\(^\text{44}\) since it was a new political party, uninvolved in the decades of conflict. Although there were certainly political challenges to teaching about the recent conflict within and outside the Ministry of Education during the Toledo period, these have intensified since the government of Alan García came into office in 2006.

**THE RECORDÁNDONOS RESOURCE**

*Recordándonos and the National Curriculum Design*

*Recordándonos* was developed by a team from the Faculty of Education at PUCP and IDL with expertise in education, pedagogy,

\(^{42}\) Interviews, January-October 2008.

\(^{43}\) Interview with former IDL *Recordándonos* coordinator, 16 September 2008.

\(^{44}\) This term (“No tiene deuda en términos de derechos humanos”) was used repeatedly during interviews from January to October 2008.
human rights and the CVR. The coordinators of the Recordándonos team spoke with conviction about the need for children to learn about and engage with the CVR and the past. The former coordinator from IDL framed this within a broader societal need to engage with and acknowledge the past, explaining that:

Two things impressed us during the entire process of the CVR: how little many people knew about what had happened and the sentiment that once the period of violence was over, it was seen as something that happened to other people, that it wasn’t their problem. So, we thought that especially younger generations, youth, must be seeing this period as even more distant. We thought that it was important within the framework of a process of reconstruction of social ties and of reparation that people could understand this period of political violence as part of our history as Peruvians as well as part of their personal history. That is the objective of this material.45

Content was developed over the course of more than a year. It was then piloted in 2005 in schools around the country that were participating in a larger PUCP research project on educational policy and regional development. Teachers first participated in training workshops, which helped them deal with their discomfort in teaching about the recent conflict. Feedback from the pilot study and comments from the Ministry of Education were incorporated into a second version, which was released on a compact disc in 2006.

The second version of the Recordándonos material consists of six workbooks, three for primary-level students and three for secondary, and two teachers’ manuals. The colorful booklets include many high-quality illustrations, and the secondary level workbooks contain photographs, mostly from a powerful exhibit assembled by the CVR. The booklets also include activities for students.

45 Interview with former IDL Recordándonos coordinator, 28 February 2008.
According to the coordinator from IDL:

It was our institutional position that students didn’t need to know about absolutely all of the atrocities that occurred; what they did need to know were certain examples in order to understand deeply and to be able to analyze why these things occurred and to be able to speak to this truth without generating a lot of anxiety or fear.46

The coordinator from PUCP said the goal was to bring together three themes – reconciliation, recognition of the past and new values – in a way that would mesh with the curricular structure.47

Recordándonos was designed to complement the “integral communication” and “social personal” curriculum at the primary level and “social sciences” curriculum at the secondary level – all core national curriculum elements. It was also to be a resource for teaching human rights, which was approved as a cross-cutting theme across the 2006 DCN. Because history is not a topic in its own right at either the primary or secondary level in Peru – instead it is included in “integral communications” at the primary level and “social sciences” at the secondary level. Recordándonos was therefore not designed as mandatory curriculum content but as a resource for teaching relevant elements of the national curriculum.

The DCN is oriented toward the objectives of basic education in Peru: personal development, exercise of citizenship, creation of a knowledge society and linkages with the world of work.48 It lays out a series of characteristics that education should develop and establishes learning outcomes to measure the acquisition of these characteristics. Recordándonos, therefore, aims to foster these outcomes. The teachers’ manuals explain that the materials were

46 Interview with former IDL Recordándonos coordinator, 28 February 2008.

47 Interview with former PUCP Recordándonos coordinator, 14 April 2008.

developed to foster competencies and capacities outlined in the DCN, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making and creative thinking.\textsuperscript{49} Such an approach to teaching human rights and history presents limitations, particularly when teachers do not receive training in how to implement these elements, which are often considered beyond the actual stuff of national curriculum and conflict with the mandate to teach toward standardized outcomes.

At the secondary level, the DCN includes a brief syllabus of national and world events. It deals with the second half of the twentieth century in the fifth (and final) level of secondary schooling. The topic “subversive movements and peace processes in Peru” appears among a list of points that includes the cold war, international politics of the United States and processes of decolonialization.\textsuperscript{50} “Violence and internal conflict in contemporary Peru: Truth and justice” appears later, under the “citizenship” component of the social sciences curriculum for the fifth level of secondary education.\textsuperscript{51} The limited DCN guidance for teaching about Peru’s conflict therefore offers little support to teachers who may feel some trepidation about doing so.

The \textit{Recordándonos} resources use a similar approach at primary and secondary levels. An introductory section motivates students to discuss their impressions of the themes developed in the volume. A section designed to explore students’ existing knowledge follows, often including stories, case studies and projects to investigate personal and family history. Next are the themes of the particular volume, the section that includes most of the historical content. Students are often encouraged to undertake research projects and group work.

The \textit{Recordándonos} materials take seriously the CVR’s recommendation to transform authoritarian pedagogy in Peru, and they offer participatory and largely child-centered lessons. In

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Manual del Docente Primaria}.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., at 191.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., at 193.
addition to the content, itself potentially challenging to teachers, the teaching style envisioned requires pedagogical skills, such as facilitating group discussion and dynamic classroom activities, which many teachers trained prior to or during Peru’s conflict may not possess. Therefore, teacher-training workshops were envisioned, and these were part of the pilot.

**Piloting Recordándonos**

The first version of *Recordándonos* was published in ten bound workbooks. Preceded by the training workshops, it was distributed in 2005 to four schools (both public and private) in each of the seven regions attached to the PUCP’s research project on educational policy and regional development. Rich and enthusiastic feedback was received from students and teachers on the workbooks and their feelings about approaching these subjects in the classroom. Teachers shared projects completed by their students as part of the many activities suggested in the *Recordándonos* materials, and the team was impressed with their depth and thoughtfulness. The content was largely focused around urban and Andean experiences, with fewer examples from coastal and jungle regions. It was felt that the teachers and students had approached the materials with greater enthusiasm and commitment in certain regions than in others. The coordinator explained:

> We could see that in regions like Iquitos, for example, where there wasn’t a lot of terrorism, they didn’t encounter a lot of importance in the working on these themes; same thing in some of the regions of the north of the country, Chiclayo, Piura. On the other hand the

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52 The first version combines the primary and secondary teachers’ manuals into one volume; the second version splits these into two.

53 The seven regions were Huanuco, Cajamarca, Cusco, Ayacucho, San Martín, Iquitos and Trujillo. There are twenty-four regions, called departments, in Peru. Pilots were also conducted in Lima. Instituto de Defensa Legal, *Resultados del Cuestionario de Evaluación Proyecto Recordándonos* (Lima: IDL, undated).
materials were impacting for people in Ayacucho, for people in Cusco; for them these were themes that they really felt. They really appreciated much more the importance of the materials.  

This is an important finding, given the reconciliatory aim of the materials and the CVR’s insistence that the conflict is a national concern that was caused, at least to a degree, by the indifference of particular regions to the suffering of others.

Generally, the materials were well received by teachers, particularly those in the state sector. On a scale of zero to one, the lowest rating the materials received from teachers was 0.75 and the highest was 0.92. The PUCP coordinator said, “State teachers really appreciate receiving material that permits them to work in a straightforward way with their students.”  

Especially in Ayacucho department, the teachers expressed both willingness to and fear about approaching the violent past in the classroom. Many teachers were grateful for the entry the materials gave to this topic, which they acknowledged they had been unsure how to address.

Teachers suggested the materials should be amplified, should present a more critical view and should be specific to the conflict experiences of their region.

Despite the positive overall impression, the pilot uncovered ambivalence among teachers about the conflict and its causes. The teachers’ union was and is heavily politicized, and many teachers surveyed worried about how the materials would be seen by factions within the union. As the former IDL coordinator explained:

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54 Interview with former PUCP Recordándonos coordinator, 14 April 2008.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Instituto de Defensa Legal, at 3.
In reality, the teachers themselves did not have a consensus around how to approach the topic or around the causes of conflict. There were teachers who were sympathetic to Shining Path; there were teachers who told us the materials would cause a problem in the union because there were people there from the Patria Roja party [the Communist Party of Peru] who did not agree with the CVR’s final report. Others said the materials would cause problems with the forces of order in their communities.58

This feedback led the Recordándonos team to present the materials to the Ministry of Education with a very strong recommendation to provide teachers not only with “training in how to approach these topics with children, but also a space in which to reflect upon the significance of the period of violence in their own lives.”59 Teachers’ perceptions of conflict and their reluctance to deal with it in the classroom also indicate a wider need in the educational sector to reflect on the linkages between education and conflict in Peru and their legacies in current educational practice, and to provide policy guidance to overcome these. This process was not initiated during the Toledo administration, however, and has certainly not been a priority during the García government.

Students generally responded positively to both the materials and the opportunity to discuss the violent past. An initial survey found that student knowledge of the conflict varied considerably by region and that students in regions most affected by the conflict attributed more importance to learning about it than did their peers in less-affected regions.60 As with the teachers’ perceptions, this finding is significant when considered next to the CVR’s message that grappling with the conflict is essential for the nation as a whole.

58 Interview with former IDL Recordándonos coordinator, 28 February 2008.

59 Ibid.

60 Instituto de Defensa Legal, Cuanto Saben los Niños de la CVR? Estudio en 8 Regiones del Perú (Lima: IDL, undated).
The pilot also found that student knowledge of conflict increased across regions after using the Recordándonos material with trained teachers.61

State schoolteachers and students complained about the visual quality of the first version of the Recordándonos materials. These comments were taken into account in revising Recordándonos; the second version is dynamic and colorful, but as a result has been too expensive to print within the Recordándonos project budget and remains in CD format. This challenge remains to be addressed by the Ministry of Education (and donors) should Recordándonos eventually be approved and distributed.

**RECORDÁNDONOS AND THE POLITICS OF TEACHING ABOUT THE RECENT VIOLENCE**

**Challenges in the Ministry of Education**

In 2004, the Ministry of Education’s Vice Minister of Pedagogy and Management spoke publicly in favor of the Recordándonos materials,62 and in several interviews conducted by this writer respondents indicated significant support for the materials in the Ministry of Education during the Toledo government. However, given that the materials were to be distributed nationwide with the Ministry’s seal, there were political sensitivities. This led the Ministry to partially revise the Recordándonos materials in late 2005. The first edition of the primary education volumes was revised by a team from various areas in the Ministry, including basic primary, intercultural and bilingual education and specialists in the culture of peace. The former director of the basic primary area, who expressed a positive opinion about the materials, said that he and his team felt that “in many cases the activities generated discrimination” and that “in certain cases the topic of

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61 Ibid.

discrimination was not adequately managed” and “actually fostered a situation of violence.”

These comments, the Recordándonos coordinators argued, were based on fears that the materials would be difficult for children with family members tied to the police or armed forces, whose peers would accuse their families of violence. Although the materials avoid individual blame and accusatory statements, exercises repeatedly ask children to engage with their families’ personal histories and to interview family members. This is a process that may be difficult for children whose families were directly involved in the conflict on either side and for their families.

The Ministry team was also concerned about content referring to the role of the military and police forces. The former director of the basic primary area explained:

We undertook a full process of revisions and we changed – though not substantively, but yes, we did change – certain things because, as a part of the State, we [the Ministry of Education] cannot openly present information against the State. We cannot. Being very sincere, we simply cannot. So we undertook a revision and we rewrote the sections about the State without losing their foundation or their denunciation.

The Recordándonos team discussed the revisions with the Ministry and agreed to many suggested changes when they “felt the changes really didn’t modify what the material was trying to say.” In some cases, the changes were quite substantial. For instance, in the first edition of the volume for third- and fourth-grade students, a timeline of Peru’s conflict included a box that read: “The government decided to rely on the Armed Forces and the Police Forces to resolve the situation. They also used violence and in many

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63 Interview with former director of the Basic Primary Area, 18 February 2008.

64 Ibid.

65 Interview with former PUCP Recordándonos coordinator, 14 April 2008.
cases did not respect human rights.” The same timeline in the second edition reads: “In many cases innocent people were killed in the fight against the subversive groups. Communities organized to defend themselves against this situation.”

In the first version of the volume for grades five and six, a passage explains that the armed forces committed a series of human rights violations against civilians and includes in brackets: “assassinations, forced disappearances, etc.” The passage goes on to say that the military deemed this to be a “necessary cost” and names certain areas as “red zones” where anyone suspicious was killed without evidence as to whether they were part of a subversive group. In the second edition, this section reads:

The military had the mission to end the conflict as rapidly as possible, and they thought that by responding with equal violence they would reach this objective. The result was bad: many innocent people were killed because the human rights of all people were not respected.

Certainly the issue of how to present human rights violations committed by the State is challenging in any curriculum context. However, acknowledgment of past human rights abuses by the State in the national curriculum can demonstrate a profound break from the past and a desire for change. That such an acknowledgment was not forthcoming, even under the Toledo administration, indicates

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66 Aprendiendo a Convivir en Paz Desde la Escuela: 2 Ciclo Primaria 1st ed. (Lima: Facultad de Educación, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú y Instituto de Defensa Legal, 2005), at 19.

67 Aprendiendo a Convivir en Paz Desde la Escuela, 2nd ed. (Lima: Facultad de Educación, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú y Instituto de Defensa Legal, 2006), at 22.

68 Recordando Nuestra Historia Para Construir la Paz: 3 Ciclo Primaria, 1st ed. (Lima: Facultad de Educación, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú y Instituto de Defensa Legal, 2005), at 12, [hereinafter Recordando Nuestra Historia, 2nd ed.].

both the degree of this challenge in Peru and the deep attachment in Peruvian education to the “military hero” – a trope that dominated Peruvian history education prior to the introduction of the DCN in 2006.

The area for basic secondary education did not respond to the materials with the same interest as the primary area, and the Recordándonos team received no comments from the Ministry. This may be due to less-developed relationships between the team and the secondary-level administrators. It may also be due to unwillingness to introduce the materials into the curriculum, particularly among older students, for whom more detailed content had been developed. The second edition of the secondary workbooks, therefore, was only modified based on feedback from the regional pilot. This means that the secondary volumes, which go into greater depth about the conflict and human rights violations than do the primary ones, do not shy away from presenting the human rights violations committed by the armed forces and police.

Illustrations in the secondary-school version show armed men in uniform loading civilians into a truck, soldiers destroying homes as civilians look on and masked subversives shooting indiscriminately. The middle workbook in the series includes CVR testimony from a woman who was raped by members of the armed forces, along with a three-page section on “crimes and violations derived from state strategy.” This section concludes by proposing two topics for classroom debate: “Was it necessary to use a ‘hard hand’ to combat subversion?” and “What are the consequences – for the State and Peruvian citizens – of the twenty years of violence?”

As the Recordándonos team stressed, all references to state violence are derived directly from findings of the CVR and describe crimes in similar language, though in slightly simpler phrasing for younger audiences. Nowhere do the materials mention the name of

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70 Ejerciendo Ciudadanía y Derechos: 3 y 4 Ciclos de Secundaria, 2nd ed. (Lima: Facultad de Educación, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú y Instituto de Defensa Legal, 2006), at 13.

71 Ibid., at 18.
any member of the police or armed forces. Photos of the three presidents in power during the conflict appear on pages detailing the principal human rights violations committed during their administrations. A photo of Peru’s current President, Alan García, who served his first term during the period of conflict, appears in the book for the final secondary level. The photograph appears below a paragraph describing the failure of García’s attempts to condemn military violence at the beginning of his regime followed by his decision to increase the presence of the armed forces in certain regions. The paragraph closes by describing the massacres that killed 270 people at the Canto Grande and El Frontón prisons.72

Political Challenges

Recordándonos was developed during the government of Alejandro Toledo, the president who ratified the CVR decree and accepted its final report. The release of the CVR report generated considerable momentum both domestically and internationally, particularly around its recommendations, and the government and international donors encouraged initiatives using the report and recommendations. As the former director of the basic primary area at the Ministry of Education said, “At this time, the Ministry and the educational sector had the mandate to comply with the recommendations of the CVR.”73 The former coordinator of the education sub-area at the CVR said, “Toledo didn’t have any debt when it comes to human rights. In other words, his party was new, he was new to the political scene and therefore he was able to support the CVR with considerable strength because he didn’t have any fault in its findings.”74

72 Apriendiendo de Nuestro Pasado, 2nd ed. (Lima: Facultad de Educación, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú y Instituto de Defensa Legal, 2006), at 12. Many inmates linked to Shining Path were killed during an uprising at El Frontón prison in 1986.

73 Interview with former director of the basic primary area, 18 February 2008.

74 Interview with former coordinator of the sub-area of education, 27 February 2008.
Nonetheless, various sectors of Toledo’s administration – including the Intelligence Services, the Chorillos Military Academy, the Ministry of Defense and the Congress, which all employed officials with connections to earlier governments – expressed reservations about the Recordándonos initiative. The former director of the basic primary area said, “They weren’t censoring, but the very fact of their questions made us realize there were special interests involved.”

The Minister of Defense in office during the final year of the Toledo administration wrote a letter to the Ministry of Education in 2006, which was copied to IDL and PUCP, stating that the materials were insulting to the armed forces and were therefore not acceptable as national curriculum content. This letter was taken very seriously. Members of the Recordándonos team and former CVR commissioners view it as having effectively stalled the process of Recordándonos approval in the Ministry. Indeed, the Ministry did not defend the initiative or mention DCN guidelines (still being finalized at this time) regarding teaching about conflict, human rights and citizenship.

With the run-off election of Alan García in June 2006, resistance to the materials persisted and intensified among many sectors outside the Ministry of Education. García’s administration was not free from human rights debt; his first term as president coincided with part of the period investigated by the CVR, and his government was found responsible for serious violations of human rights. The CVR report names members of the current administration and in some cases suggests their prosecution. The current Vice President, a retired navy admiral who was linked to the El Frontón prison massacres, in 2006 added his voice to other state calls to stop distribution of the Recordándonos materials.

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75 Interview with former director of the basic primary area, 18 February 2008.
76 Interview with former coordinator of the sub-area of education, 27 February 2008.
77 Ibid.
The former director of the basic primary area, currently heading another area in the Ministry of Education, states that he is not aware of any current discussion of the CVR, its recommendations or the Recordándonos project in the Ministry. Other ministry respondents concur. In its last communications with the Recordándonos team in 2006, however, the Ministry stated that a validation of the primary school materials was underway.79

The Educational Emergency

The twenty-six hundred primary schools that received Recordándonos materials were schools targeted under Peru’s “educational emergency” policy framework in place from 2004 to 2006. In 2004, the Ministry of Education declared the country’s public education system to be in a state of emergency, largely due to students’ poor results on the standardized Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests. The Ministry said that students were not learning basic skills for personal development and subsequent national growth, that many students were studying in suboptimal conditions and that students were not being trained as citizens.80 In order to address the emergency, the Ministry developed a series of actions, particularly focused on schools in the most “marginalized and excluded” communities.81

In October 2004, the Vice Minister of Education announced to a group of representatives from regions affected by violence that “the agenda of the educational sector coincides with the recommendations of the CVR.”82 Since the CVR’s recommendations also called for addressing educational quality in rural schools and in

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79 Interview with former PUCP Recordándonos coordinator, 14 April 2008.


82 Ibid.
communities living in poverty, the Ministry bundled its CVR obligations into its plan to address the educational emergency, though it did not explicitly include or plan for conflict-related elements in its emergency plan. This bundling included the preliminary distribution of Recordándonos to schools targeted in the emergency, the first step in the Ministry’s pilot and the possible validation of the materials as a national curriculum resource. The former director of Basic Primary Education explained that twenty-six hundred primary schools were prioritized because Shining Path was known to target and recruit in zones suffering the greatest poverty. He felt the Recordándonos material was sent specifically to these schools “as prevention against the possible resurgence of violence.”

Certainly there is resonance between the policy goals of the educational emergency and the CVR’s recommendations for educational reform, particularly regarding educational quality for the most marginalized. Similarly, pilot distribution of the Recordándonos material within the emergency programming was likely most convenient for the Ministry. While it is certainly appropriate to target particular educational interventions, especially those aimed at redress and repair, toward communities most affected by violence, curriculum resources aimed at national reflection about recent conflict are perhaps less appropriate for targeted interventions. Framing the Recordándonos material as most appropriate – or worse still, only appropriate – for communities heavily affected by violence or for excluded and marginalized communities, can perpetuate some of the very attitudes the CVR identified as playing into Peru’s conflict. Indeed, the Ministry’s decision parallels the attitudes of some teachers and students collected in the IDL-PUCP pilot: that the materials were more appropriate and more interesting for particular regions.

The Recordándonos tools are geared toward reconciliation and aim to reach a national audience of students and teachers. They seek

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84 Ibid.
to stimulate reflection among all of Peru’s young people, not only those whose families and communities experienced violence. The development of empathy and understanding among children, families and communities who experienced the period of political violence in different ways is one of the goals behind the material. The framing of Recordándonos as a “preventive” resource, relevant only to the most marginal communities, where violence is “likely” to take root, detaches the materials from their emphasis on the deep structural causes of conflict within Peru as a whole. In many ways, it reiterates the very structures of difference, division, regionalism and racism that the CVR identified as causes of Peru’s conflict.

The educational emergency policy framework, always envisioned to be finite, ended definitively in 2006 when the García government took power and a new minister of education was appointed. The current Ministry of Education policy makers do not consider the emergency to have been a successful initiative, and the Ministry has not continued its programs. As the former director of the Basic Primary Area said:

> Because the CVR materials were part of the “educational emergency” framework and because the national program for the educational emergency was an initiative of the previous administration, well, today nobody speaks about the educational emergency at all.\(^{85}\)

Thus, the validation of Recordándonos for curriculum approval by the Ministry of Education remains stalled within a larger, discontinued initiative for which there is little political appetite. Pressures to avoid teaching about the findings of the CVR applied by state entities outside the Ministry and the failure of the “educational emergency” both pose serious challenges for the eventual approval of Recordándonos. These are reinforced by the lack of political will in the García government to engage with or even acknowledge the CVR findings and recommendations. In the

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\(^{85}\) Interview with former director of the Basic Primary Area, 18 February 2008.
words of the former director, “What I want to emphasize is that this issue makes waves, and this is probably one of the reasons why no one wants to bring it to the forefront again, so it will again make waves and polarize everything.”

Technical Challenges

In addition to the political challenges the *Recordándonos* resource faced within and outside the Ministry of Education and under the Toledo and García administrations, a series of technical challenges colluded to further hinder its incorporation into the national curriculum. The Ministry’s lack of involvement in developing *Recordándonos* and its resulting lack of ownership created a number of challenges. For one, it discouraged ministry engagement in piloting and approval of the materials. As political pressure to comply with CVR recommendations lessened, the *Recordándonos* team had to rely on the personal commitment of individuals in the ministry rather than on any imperative for ministry participation. The lack of ministry engagement also meant that no budget was provided to print, review, pilot and distribute the *Recordándonos* materials, creating a further disincentive for ministry personnel to push for their incorporation. Likewise, neither the ministry nor the *Recordándonos* team had secured funds for the large-scale teacher training needed to successfully introduce *Recordándonos* into classrooms.

Finally, an ongoing partnership with the Ministry could have encouraged or facilitated the development of educational policy on teaching about the violent past. Ideally, this could have been undertaken within a larger process of educational policy-making to address the legacies of conflict, which has yet to occur in Peru. Such a policy would offer both an opportunity and political justification for the *Recordándonos* resource and would assist the Ministry in justifying to less enthusiastic sectors of the State the importance of teaching about the recent conflict.

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86 Ibid.
CONCLUSIONS

Opportunities and Challenges

As Elizabeth Cole emphasizes, “perhaps the key actors in the process of history education reform are ordinary people at all levels of society – teachers, principals, parents and students themselves.”87 It is unfortunate that the debate generated by the Recordándonos resource in certain sectors of the State has not included such voices and their perspectives on teaching and learning about conflict. Shifting the debate toward discussion of how and why to teach about the recent conflict could in itself open space for policy-making.

Should a consensus emerge that not only permits but calls for teaching about Peru’s conflict, the existence of an internally piloted, high-quality resource like Recordándonos will certainly be useful. The fact that it is not in wide use in schools today does not mean it never will be; the fact that it is already developed and is of high quality in design, content and pedagogical appropriateness presents a great opportunity for the future.

This said, however, the current government’s lack of political will to engage with the CVR may suggest that a TRC should not be viewed as the only source for teaching about the conflict. TRC content could usefully be accompanied by information from other sources, such as fictional works, historical and scholarly sources, newspaper and other media reports and artistic sources. Margaret Sinclair and colleagues argue that teaching about conflict from multiple vantage points offers entry points for teachers and learners coming from diverse viewpoints.88 An approach of multiple perspectives may also help diffuse political responses that may attempt to discredit all teaching about the past.

87  Teaching the Violent Past, at 17.

88  See, for example, Margaret Sinclair (in collaboration with Lynn Davies, Anna Obura and Felissa Tibbits), Learning to Live Together: Design, Monitoring and Evaluation of Education for Life Skills, Citizenship, Peace and Human Rights (Eschborn, Germany: GTZ and UNESCO, 2008).
The quality of the Recordándonos material itself also presents considerable opportunity. It appears to have the potential to promote nuanced and balanced learning about conflict, fostering reconciliatory attitudes without compromising historical and collective memory. In Guatemala, Elizabeth Oglesby found that NGO educational materials based on the truth commission report obscured the agency, resistance and diverse experiences of victims of the conflict, and ultimately sacrificed the development of contextual historical memory to the development of a more globalized idea of a “culture of peace.”

The Recordándonos materials navigate the difficult terrain between the facts of violence and the aims of reconciliation more successfully – indeed, doing so was a priority of the team. They appear to have followed Martha Minow’s advice that “by focusing on the history of responses to atrocity rather than atrocity alone, scholars [in this case, educators] can underscore that continuing human project of dealing with – and preventing – mass inhumanity.” The use of well-developed, thought-provoking and creative activities throughout the materials can chart a course to guide students through the CVR’s findings in a way that fosters the skills and capacities desired as part of the curriculum that the material has been designed to complement.

However, teachers’ trepidation about introducing such discussion into their classrooms (as expressed during the pilot), along with their positive responses to the idea of training on the topic, demonstrate not only the need for solid policy direction around teaching about the past, but also for teacher training and support. Cole and Barsalou argue that “reforming pedagogy – the way history is taught – should take priority in many contexts over curriculum revision, especially when resources are scarce.” Indeed, such processes need not be either-or; engaging resources offer

89 “Educating Citizens in Postwar Guatemala.”

90 Between Vengeance and Forgiveness, at 144.

91 “Unite or Divide?”, at 10.
opportunities for teachers to experiment with new pedagogies, provided they also receive pedagogical training.

Certain practical or technical steps taken at the outset of a TRC and/or curriculum-revision process may enhance collaboration between the two. These include establishing a working partnership between the Ministry of Education and the truth commission, involving the Ministry throughout the process, and budgeting for substantial teacher-training to support the introduction of the materials and particular pedagogies. Political challenges might be minimized by considering from the outset how to best present human rights violations committed by state actors and by linking the development of TRC materials with ministry policy on teaching about the past. Where such policy does not exist, materials should be linked to the development of policy.

**Politics and Potential**

Sarah Warshauer Freedman and colleagues, in working to develop history curriculum in Rwanda, found that the process reflected in microcosm the forces behind that country’s conflict. The same can be said for certain episodes in the story of the CVR-based curriculum in Peru. By directing the piloting of *Recordándonos* only to communities most likely to have been victims of Peru’s conflict, the Ministry of Education in the Toledo government chose to reiterate and highlight geographic, socioeconomic, linguistic and racial divisions and stereotypes that fed into conflict in Peru. The García government chose to deny the reality of the State’s past human rights abuses by disengaging from the *Recordándonos* resource and furthering calls to keep it out of the national curriculum.

In addition to offering insight into dynamics that fueled Peru’s conflict, these episodes paint a picture of the current state of reconciliation. If acknowledging past human rights abuses in national curricula indicates a breaking from the violent past, a reconciliatory stance toward victims and a new beginning, does refusing to do so indicate the opposite?

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92 “Teaching History After Identity-Based Conflicts.”
Despite its lack of human rights debt and its CVR mandate, the Ministry of Education in the Toledo government did not strongly articulate the importance of teaching about the violent past, nor did it build a strong policy framework to support it. This lack of infrastructure, combined with political disincentive to look backward in the García government (except to discredit what came before, like the CVR) has led to a stalemate in terms of teaching about Peru’s recent conflict.

The Peruvian case demonstrates the degree to which political and technical challenges can undermine attempts to access the potential inherent in TRC-based curriculum material. Consideration of this case might provide insights for the design of similar initiatives elsewhere that avoid or minimize the challenges that hindered Recordándonos. In fact, the Peruvian case does not discredit the potential for links between the education sector and transitional justice initiatives like truth commissions. Rather, it demonstrates the importance of embedding initiatives to tap such potential within institutional processes that include policy- and capacity-building opportunities and long-term vision.