Fe y Alegría: Where Community is the Choice

INTRODUCTION
In the literature of school reform implementation we find two theoretical approaches that focus on different dimensions or factors of educational change. One approach focuses on market forces and the governance of schools (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Levin, 1997). It advocates redistribution of the locus of authority to consumers and private suppliers of education as a way to bring about changes in the education system. The other approach focuses on agents of change and the moral purpose of educational change (Fullan, 1998; Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotnik, 1990; Hargreaves, 1998). Moral purpose includes the social capital as well as the intellectual goals of education. In the latter approach, successful reforms aim to change the internal motivation of the participants in their implementation by developing a shared vision and strong sense of ownership, and by building positive forms of social capital, cooperative engagement, and community.

These approaches, which may appear to be mutually exclusive, do indeed coexist in the case of Fe y Alegría\textsuperscript{1} (FYA), as described herein. FYA is a Catholic non-governmental organization that delivers formal and non-formal education programs to people in very poor Latin American communities. Since its creation in Venezuela, in 1955, FYA has expanded dramatically to fourteen countries in the region, and now serves over a million people per year. FYA has accomplished this expansion by establishing partnerships among local communities, schools, and national governments. Throughout Latin America, FYA schools are privately managed and financed with public funds. In each country where FYA operates, the national governments contract with or charter the national chapter of FYA to provide educational services to rural and poor urban communities that are not being served by public schools.

As a private supplier of education, FYA represents a variation on the market efficiency model of governance (Welsh & McGinn, 1998; Chubb & Moe, 1990). This model is characterized by: governmental chartering of services; fostered competition among alternative suppliers; expanded

\textsuperscript{1} Spanish for ‘Faith and Joy’.
choice for poor parents; increasingly decentralized and autonomous management of schools; and increased efficiency in the use of resources (Chubb & Moe, 1990).

However, contrary to a market efficiency model that keeps the community “at a distance” (Welsh & McGinn, 1998), FYA places the community at the center of its vision, both as a partner and as the focus of development. Unlike market-based initiatives, which are often accused of reinforcing individualistic values (Putnam, 1993b), FYA has a strong commitment to creating community and fostering service, therefore building social capital. In this sense, FYA schools incorporate some characteristics of a political legitimacy/democratic model of governance, and address some of the problems of market-driven models. I argue that FYA meets the challenge of designing socially constructive school choice schemes in many ways, including: emphasis on community development; establishment of crosscutting cleavages and bridges among different groups; development of a sense of family and community in the school; promotion of democratic participation in the school; creation of partnerships with governments and civil society; and advocacy of equity principles by targeting very poor communities.

In the next sections, I will (1) provide historical and contextual information on the FYA movement; (2) describe the distribution of educational tasks and loci of authority among partners involved with the FYA program in Venezuela; (3) discuss FYA’s governance as a variation on the market-efficiency model; and (4) make the case that FYA contributes to strong social capital formation, in spite of being a market-choice scheme.2

I conclude that the best school choice plans are those with a strong emphasis on equity and social cohesion. They should carefully target the most disadvantaged groups in order to reverse inequalities, but they should do so in ways that build community rather than fostering individualism or segregation. I propose that FYA represents the “reinvented model” Boyd calls upon to “control school choice in fair and socially desirable ways” (1998, p. 367).

2 Sources of information for this analysis included: historical documents of FYA, interviews with FYA principals, interviews with people involved in the negotiation between FYA and the Venezuelan government in 1990, biographies of the FYA founder Padre Vélaz, unpublished reports of the Venezuelan Ministry of Education, notes from conference presentations about the AVEC agreement, FYA publications and newsletters, and literature about governance in the United States and developing countries.
1. HISTORY OF FYA
FYA started in Venezuela in 1955. Its origins date from 1954, when a group of students from La Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, led by Father Vélaz, started visiting the depressed neighborhood of Barrio Gato Negro (Catia/Caracas) as part of the university’s social extension services. On March 5, 1955 the first FYA elementary school was opened, on the second floor of the home of a barrio inhabitant, Abrahán Reyes, with 100 boys who sat in chairs improvised from bricks. A few days later seventy-five girls started studying on the first floor of the house. “The first teachers…were three young women, each 15 years old, with only a sixth grade education” (Sáez, 1999, p. 32). One year later, FYA opened a second school in Petare that served around 900 students. Other schools in other cities soon followed. The expansion of FYA in Venezuela was rapid, unplanned, unanticipated, and virtually unstoppable. “Quizás esta chispa llegue a incendio.” FYA’s founder, Father Vélaz, wrote in his testament. “Es una semilla no más, que busca la tierra, la tierra de la multiplicación en el morir primero” Many communities and individuals joined his dream; the spark did indeed ignite a fire and spread rapidly under heavy winds.

Nevertheless, the program had its critics. In 1978, independent evaluators in Venezuela prepared a document entitled Problemas más importantes detectados durante el proceso de evaluación de los planteles de Fe y Alegría. They criticized FYA’s expansion, stating that “it was more the result of mystique, boldness, and generosity than the result of a rational and calculated planning” (In Sáez, 1999, p. 57)

In the nearly five decades since its modest beginning, FYA has provided expanding education services to the poorest segment of the Venezuelan populace. It has targeted “the marginalized people who have been denied the right to education, to health, work, and a life full of opportunities for material and spiritual growth” (Fe y Alegría, 1998, p. 3). In Venezuela alone, the FYA program covers all levels of education: pre-school, basic and secondary, vocational, school-to-work, and higher education. At present, FYA provides formal education to over 150,000 students. FYA facilities include 148 schools, 634 orientation centers, and 45 radio stations throughout the country. Table 1 shows the distribution of students by level in Venezuela during

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3 When translations were not literal, I chose to keep the Spanish for the voices of FYA’s people, drawn from interviews or written documents. For these passages, I include English translations in the endnotes.
the academic year 2000-2001. In Latin America, FYA currently provides non-formal and formal education to over one million students in 943 schools and 2,227 centers. Table 2 shows the distribution of students and personnel by country and type of education in 2000.

Table 1. Students by Education Level in 2000-2001 in FYA centers in Venezuela

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATION LEVEL</th>
<th># STUDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-school</td>
<td>10,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Education/High School</td>
<td>86,662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>1,878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults (Literacy, Basic and High School)</td>
<td>57,870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Training</td>
<td>6,401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUBTOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>156,550</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Programs</td>
<td>43,420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>206,371</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2. Fe y Alegría’s Students and Personnel by Country (2000).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Founded</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
<th>Formal Education</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>4373</td>
<td>3276</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>176054</td>
<td>115039</td>
<td>8596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>16342</td>
<td>1,817</td>
<td>552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>224140</td>
<td>58103</td>
<td>4530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>53097</td>
<td>23078</td>
<td>2603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>9682</td>
<td>3523</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>25179</td>
<td>12075</td>
<td>839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>20994</td>
<td>9086</td>
<td>503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>18587</td>
<td>7653</td>
<td>797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>9205</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>168576</td>
<td>66621</td>
<td>3065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Dominican Rep.</td>
<td>59622</td>
<td>18907</td>
<td>699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>274185</td>
<td>98680</td>
<td>10773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1,061,015</strong></td>
<td><strong>418,608</strong></td>
<td><strong>33,735</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [www.feayalegria.org/feyalegria/cuantos.html](http://www.feayalegria.org/feyalegria/cuantos.html)

2. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE
In most of the fourteen countries where it exists, FYA’s organizational structure has three levels. In all the countries, a national level deals with the national government on issues of subsidies and direct allocation and distribution of funds to schools. This level is usually responsible for developing teacher training, and promoting the communication and exchange of information across FYA schools in its respective country. In countries like Venezuela, where the program is large, regional offices help coordinate the work of the centers. In turn, the educational centers enjoy a large degree of autonomy.

FYA schools follow the national or regional official curricula, developing local curricula when necessary. They adhere to the rules, standards, and norms of their respective countries’ ministries of education. In most countries, FYA chooses its schools’ principals. In Venezuela and Ecuador, a school principal has immediate control over the hiring and firing of teachers. In all the countries, FYA schools deliver religious education, which is at the core of the FYA mission.

In addition, an international umbrella organization assists national offices with international fundraising, organization of conferences and networking activities, and production of printed materials that propagate the FYA vision. Boxes 1 and 2 show the distribution of educational tasks among FYA partners and organizational levels in Venezuela.
Box 1. DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES BY ENTITY IN VENEZUELA

FE Y ALEGRÍA (FYA)
This non-governmental Catholic organization operates at four levels:

1. **International Level**

Represents a network of the FYA chapters in fourteen Latin American countries and Spain.

- Promotes the coherence of FYA’s vision throughout the region.
- Facilitates the communication of ideas and exchange of information among the countries and region.
- Organizes an annual International FYA Congress.
- Disseminates knowledge of practices and innovations, and local adaptations throughout Latin America.
- Publishes materials and organizes conferences and events in the region.
- Advocates and lobbies on behalf of the organization.
- Fundraises with international aid/lending agencies.

2. **National Level**

- Solicits and receives funds from Asociación Venezolana de Educación Católica (AVEC).
- Distributes AVEC funds to regional directorates according to the budgets proposed by the schools in each region.
- Collaborates with universities on professional development programs for principals, teachers, and community members.
- Hosts FYA’s teacher training institution: Centro de Formación Padre Joaquín, which develops the content of in-service training programs.
- Supports its dissemination and training programs. Publishes *Movimiento Pedagógico*, a bimonthly magazine from the Centro de Formación Padre Joaquín, which supports the on-going in service training of teachers, and the exchange of ideas among centers throughout Venezuela.
- Helps communicate the organization’s vision. Publishes “*Colección: Procesos Educativos,*” a collection of booklets devoted to critical issues, such as popular education.

3. **Regional Level**

- Provides organizational support to schools (i.e. recruitment services)
- Responsible for training *Coordinares Pedagógicos*, who serve as mentors/supervisors for teachers at the school level.
- Organizes teacher training meetings and teacher exchange meetings.
- Selects and hires principals for the schools.
Box 1. DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES BY ENTITY IN VENEZUELA
FE Y ALEGRÍA (continuation)

- Deals with local communities to create new schools and centers.
- Raises funds at the regional level.

4. School Community

**Principal**

- Develops the school budget. Requests funds from regional and national levels of the FYA movement.
- Manages school personnel: selects and hires teachers that fit into the organization’s mission. Sanctions and fires personnel. With Coordinador Pedagógico, supervises and mentors teachers.

**Principals, school administrators, and teachers**

- Participate in the collective construction of *el proyecto educativo de centro (the school’s educational project)*. Engage the community in the process.
- Select community development projects with community members.
- Establish alliances with organizations and individuals in the community to create support for the school, such as, sponsorships for events, stipend-scholarships for children, equipment and funds for school repairs.
- Raise funds.
- Manage community social services in the school: health care, cooperatives, nutrition and adult literacy programs.
- Teachers: Derive/develop *proyectos curriculares de aula* from the *proyecto educativo de centro*. Plan activities in the classroom that are consistent with the collective vision of the school. Develop local adaptations of the official national curriculum.

**Community, Parents, Students**

- Participate in constructing *el proyecto educativo de centro*.
- Assist teachers, serve as teachers aids, or as substitute teachers in the classroom.
- Mentor younger students in classroom or in after-school programs.
- Participate in the provision of Social Community Services.
- Assist in the maintenance of schools.
- Participate as organizer or audience member in the collective festivities around el barrio.
- Support school with contributions of work or money, chaperoning students, cleaning the classroom, selling raffle tickets to raise funds.
Box 2. DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES BY ENTITY IN VENEZUELA

**ASOCIACIÓN VENEZOLANA DE EDUCACIÓN CATÓLICA (AVEC)**
Catholic non-for-profit organization that:

- Acts as an intermediary between the government and Catholic schools working with poor communities in Venezuela.
- Receives the budget proposals submitted by the different Catholic organizations covered by the agreement between the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Asociación Venezolana de Educación Católica (AVEC).
- Requests to the government the allocation of funds and distributes funds among the different Catholic organizations covered by the AVEC-MOE agreement.

**GOVERNMENT**

- Distributes budget among private suppliers of education, covering the cost of teacher and staff salaries.
- Reviews budget proposals from AVEC and subsidizes FYA’s delivery of services to poor communities by transferring funds for the payment of personnel salaries to AVEC.
- Determines curricula, establishes teacher certification and graduation requirements.
- Established the legal framework that legitimizes the transfer of funds to Catholic Schools. (Decree N. 722 - Agreement AVEC-MOE)
- Is responsible for monitoring use of funds and for conducting evaluations.

3. FYA’s MODEL OF GOVERNANCE
The most remarkable feature of FYA’s program is a partnership model that involves multiple participants from the local communities, the national and regional governments, Catholic congregations, and civil society. Throughout Latin America, FYA schools are privately managed, yet financed with public funds. In Venezuela, the government has covered the payment of teachers’ salaries for FYA schools since 1990. In 2000, FYA-Venezuela reported that 69% of its funding was provided by the Venezuelan government, through el Convenio Ministerio de Educación (MOE)-Asociación Venezolana de Educación Católica (AVEC). Private sector contributions account for the remaining 31% of funding for FYA schools: 25% from individuals and corporate donations; and 6% from parents and families. (Source: Fe y Alegría, *Memoria* 2000)
As a private supplier of education, FYA represents a market-based form of governance. However, Welsh & McGinn (1998, p.19) argue that “Private control of the production of education is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the existence of an education market.” Markets require that people have genuine choices among educational products and producers. One mechanism through which choice can be provided is the “public funding of privately governed schools,” which is “implemented most frequently by contracting or chartering a group responsible for provision” (Welsh & McGinn (1998, p. 21). According to Levin (1997, p.35) “a contractual relation with a non-profit or profit-making sponsor within the scope of a particular agreement set out by the government” constitutes a form of public choice in education. FYA schools represent a form of public choice in a market-based model. They are managed by a Catholic Church-sponsored NGO with national governmental funding and contracts for FYA’s educational services.

This market-based model, originally proposed by Milton Friedman (1962) and championed by Chubb & Moe (1990), claims that the state should not monopolize the delivery of educational services. In addition to the government, other participants within civil society should help in supply educational offerings that are relevant to the communities served. According to these authors, government is responsible for: (1) ensuring education for all children; (2) regulating the delivery of education and determining standards; (3) subsidizing education services (Boyd, 1998, p. 354); and (4) providing incentives for other suppliers to deliver education services (Chubb & Moe, 1990), therefore expanding the choices available to consumers/parents.

Since its creation FYA has struggled to move away from what Boyd (1998) calls a “government-provided service” approach and toward a “government subsidized service” for the under-served segments of the Latin American urban poor and rural populations. In the early 1980s FYA’s leaders addressed this struggle: “From the beginning, and even now, FYA fights against the paralyzing monopoly of the state, which obstructs private initiatives to provide integral education to a powerful but dormant people” (Fe y Alegría, 1981, p. 14). In the first decades of the FYA movement, its founder Father Vélaz, was outraged by what he considered governmental discrimination against private education for the poor.
¿Se puede llamar ecuánime y justo a quien conociendo el drama educativo nacional y viendo que hay muchos que quieren participar positivamente en él a favor de nuestro pueblo más abandonado, se los trate con recelos, se les obstaculice y se les niegue la asistencia económica justa? … Una enorme movilización de recursos humanos brotaría de las familias y organismos privados si fueran sinceramente estimulados con un reparto proporcional del Presupuesto de Educación. (Fe y Alegria, 1981, p. 14) ii

Although the Venezuelan government has provided funding to FYA since the 1960s, the “reparto proporcional” (fair distribution of resources) did not occur until 1990 when the Venezuelan president, Carlos Andrés Perez, signed a special agreement (Decree N. 722). In previous years FYA received government assistance in the form of subsidies and personnel transfers. Public school teachers were assigned and paid by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to serve in FYA schools. However, problems were associated with this governmental aid: it was uncertain whether subsidies would be renewed every year, or whether funding levels would remain stable. Additionally, for several years FYA could not count on either broad political support, or support from the Jesuit order that had maintained its distance from Vélaz’s operations. (Sáez, 1999)

In societies characterized by great disparities (like those in Latin America) one often sees trade off’s between how well targeted programs are and how politically feasible they are. Those who benefit from injustices oppose change. FYA, however, was able to neutralize resistance, and secure necessary support from major stakeholders, by lobbying the Venezuelan congress to guarantee its continued financial assistance. With the support of local communities, FYA leaders carried out effective social marketing and public relations campaigns. Well-organized and highly visible raffles generated favorable attitudes towards FYA, and attracted considerable private funds nationwide, funds which substantially augmented the limited governmental support to FYA schools.

The Decree N. 722
In 1990 FYA’s lobbying culminated in a formal agreement with the Venezuelan government, Decreto N. 722, Reglamento sobre el Otorgamiento de Subvenciones a los Planteles Privados Inscritos en el Ministerio de Educación. This decree created the legal framework to provide public funds to private suppliers of education. According to the decree, funds would only be available for schools that provided free education, had insufficient funds to operate, or served the public
interest in the areas of human resources or manpower. Additionally, only private services whose
costs were lower than public schools were eligible for such support. Salaries of teachers and
administrators would be covered by the Venezuelan Ministry of Education, while school
operations and maintenance costs would be covered by the private organizations operating them.
Subsidies would be channeled through not-for-profit associations of private schools. The
government would sign individual agreements with each of these non-profit civil associations.

Carmen Cecilia de Mayz worked as an advisor to the Venezuelan Minister of Education in
developing the 1990 agreement between the MOE and AVEC. From her account of the
negotiation process, we can identify three factors that influenced the government to support this agreement:

- FYA had broad support of major stakeholders in Venezuela, including the political leadership
  (both in government and congress); the communities/beneficiaries of the service (whose
demand for education from FYA exceeded the existing capacity); and the church hierarchy,
embodied in “la Conferencia Episcopal Venezolana” (The Church supported the agreement
despite some archbishops’ initial reluctance to approve it, owing to concerns about the
Church’s institutional capacity for managing state funds). On the other hand, the ministry of
education’s middle management did not support the agreement. Mayz argues that these
middle-level bureaucrats were defending the state’s monopoly in education. “These
bureaucrats—many of them teachers who became supervisors as a political favor—are afraid
to lose their power over the distribution and control of the state’s funds” (Mayz, 1990, p. 8).

- FYA used research about Catholic education to inform its decision-making. Inspired by the
Coleman study on Catholic and public schools, Mayz argues for the need to provide the
government with sound data on the comparative advantage of Catholic schools over public
schools as critical to the decision-making process:

  Al conocer, no en detalle el estudio completo [de Coleman], pero si las variables que se
midieron, consideré que algo similar se podía hacer, ya que oralmente se había estado

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4 Recorded in unpublished internal documents of the Ministry of Education and in a presentation that Mayz made at
the XXVI Assembly of the Inter-American Conference of Catholic Education in Quito, Ecuador, June 1990.
5 Mayz does not indicate the title of the study, but the reference is likely to be Coleman, Hoffer & Kilgore’s Public
and Private High Schools: The Impact of Communities (1982).
vendiendo la idea de que la educación Católica tenía menos costo que la educación del estado, pero no se tenía ningún análisis científico de esto. Era una sensación, una hipótesis. Tal vez esto es verdad en el resto de América Latina y por lo tanto hay que probarlo, pues el Estado apoyaría a una educación de igual o de menor costo que la pública. Algunas realidades que nos parecen evidentes para presentarlas como fundamentación de un convenio hay que demostrarlas objetivamente. (Mayz, 1990, p. 13)

The Venezuelan Ministry of Education (1990) commissioned a technical study from the MOE’s Oficina Sectorial de Planificación y Presupuesto that compared student progress, drop-out rates, and the cost of education in public schools versus Catholic schools. (República de Venezuela, Ministerio de Educación, 1990) According to Mayz (1990), the study showed that Catholic schools had greater student progress and lower drop-out rates than public schools in Venezuela. The study found no difference in the cost of these two types of schools; it concluded, however, that the final per-student cost to the government for Catholic Church-run education would be lower because the government would be responsible for a portion, not the whole, program.

Lo más importante es la relación costo-producción. Pues los dos elementos analizados anteriormente probaron que el gasto es más productivo, que el costo social es mejor, que por cada unidad monetaria invertida hay una mayor productividad. Este es un reto de la educación Católica: productividad. Quiero comentar que ante el Gabinete Ejecutivo, los Ministros de la Economía consideraron ésta como la base de aprobación del convenio. (Mayz, 1990, p.13).

• The neo-liberal economic trends and the tendencies towards privatization in Latin American countries in the mid and late 1980s opened a window of opportunity for private actors to participate in educational change. Increased competition and choice (providing poor parents with an alternative to public education) were major arguments for signing the agreement with AVEC. Mayz (1990, p. 16) claims that the concept of freedom of choice was one of the aspects “considered by the Ministry of Education as an advantage for the state.”

The Minister of Education, who is a lawyer, and former CEO of Venezuelan private firms, understood that this option would be beneficial for the public schools as well, since it would foster competition and greater productivity. (Mayz, 1990, p.16)

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6 Mayz does not mention the potential selection bias of students attending Catholic schools as an alternative explanation for this study’s findings.
It is important to note that, in this agreement, the Venezuelan government did not impose conditions or limitations on the teaching of religious subjects common in Catholic schools. Nevertheless, this issue is relevant to our analysis of the implementation of the FYA movement.

4. BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

In this paper, I define social capital as the set of social resources (expectations, norms, obligations, trust) “embodied in the relations among persons” (Coleman, 1990, p. 304), which “facilitate cooperation” (Putnam, 1993b), and are useful for achieving goals, developing human capital (Loury, in Coleman, 1990), implementing school reform (Bryk & Schneider, 1996), and educating “citizens who have the commitment, skills, and dispositions to foster norms of civility, compassion, fairness, trust, collaborative engagement and constructive critiques under conditions of great social diversity” (Fullan, 1998, p.11).

The market-oriented approach stresses a view of education “as an individual consumer good, rather than a good that society provides for its collective benefit” (Elmore, 1997, p. 300). In a purely market-based model, participation is linked to the perception of private benefit. Citizens do not involve themselves directly in the process of school improvement. Rather, school improvement is achieved through competition in the marketplace, through efforts to attract individual consumers. These consumers, in turn, choose schools they perceive best serve their needs.

This type of competition might indirectly weaken the ties between members of local communities. Instead of generating what Coleman calls a functional community, where members share multiple links and take responsibility for one another’s children, choice and voucher models are most likely to generate a value community, in which parents often have no contact with one another. (Coleman, et al 1987). “This individual calculus on the part of the parent, attempting to maximize the fit of school to child, overlooks a set of social resources which are not provided by schools themselves, but are provided by these social relations that exist among the parents of students in the school” (Coleman, et al 1987, p. 216). The individualistic model of parents-as-consumers might weaken the social capital available to children by depriving them of the social resources embedded in relationships among their parents or parents and teachers. This situation has
profound policy implications for educators. According to Croninger & Lee (1996, p. 6) public policies can be seen as social capital investments. Those “that facilitate coordination and cooperation, that establish trust and norms of reciprocity, or that create templates for collective action are thought to be desirable; those that isolate people, foster distrust, or discourage cooperation are seen as undesirable.” As Putnam (1993b) suggests, educators need to acknowledge the consequences of education models on the social capital of families and children, and to consider creative alternatives where individual choice and the common good converge.

Educational policy-makers need to move beyond debates about curriculum and governance to consider the effects of social capital. Indeed, most commonly discussed proposals for “choice” are deeply flawed by their profoundly individualistic conception of education. If states and localities are to experiment with voucher systems for education or child care, why not encourage vouchers to be spent in ways that strengthen community organization, not weaken it? Once we recognize the importance of social capital, we ought to be able to design programs that creatively combine individual choice with collective engagement. (Putnam, 1993b, p. 40-41)

Putnam’s concerns are echoed by Boyd: “the real challenge is to design and maintain policies that structure and control school choice in fair and socially desirable ways” (1998, p. 367). Regulatory policies are seen as instruments that can correct the problems of school choice schemes (Hirsch, cf Boyd, 1998; Welsh & McGinn, 1998). Modifying the details of a school choice plan could enhance its ability to promote social cohesion and collective engagement. And Murnane and Levy (cf Boyd, 1998) affirm that the impact of school choice plans depends on the plan’s details.

The success of FYA, I argue, is the result of a convergence of seven features, within which the details operate to produce a socially desirable choice plan. These features are: emphasis on community development; emphasis on cross-cutting cleavages and bridging links among different groups; fostering a very strong and coherent popular education ideology among its members; developing a sense of family and community in schools; promoting democratic participation in schools; creating partnerships between governments and civil society, and targeting very poor communities with emphasis on equity principles. In the next sections, I will explain how these details work in FYA.
4.1 Emphasis on community development.

Market-based initiatives are blamed for reinforcing individualistic values and neglecting collective engagement (Putnam, 1993b; Welsh & McGinn, 1998, Elmore, 1997). Contrary to the market-based model, which keeps the community “at distance” (Welsh & McGinn, 1998), FYA places the community at the center of its vision, both as a partner and as the object of development. FYA’s vision of education is based on strengthening the community through a two-way model of collaboration: FYA schools are committed to improving local living conditions, and the community is involved in supporting the goals of the school and the education of its children. For this reason FYA schools are conceived of as more than schools: they are Community Education Centers—“Centros Educativos Comunitarios.” Their curricula arise from the community and reach back towards the community. “Tener a la comunidad como norte, siempre nos dará luz para esa actualización de contenidos, para eso no se necesitan ‘expertos’ de Harvard, ni del IESA.” (Pernalete, 1996, p. 2).

At the 1995 National Congress of FYA Teachers, a committee of teachers analyzed the weaknesses and strengths of twelve FYA school/community relationships. In each case, it found that the school had emerged as an instrument for solving problems beyond the school context, having engaged community members in examining social realities and in searching viable solutions (Chirino, 1995). Box 3 shows some of FYA community development activities.

The FYA model of community development conceives teachers as community organizers, and principals as social and entrepreneurial leaders. Welsh & McGinn (1998, p. 16) maintain that when teachers work as community developers the school governance model could eventually “shift towards a form of political legitimacy”. Political legitimacy, according to these authors, could “ameliorate the negative effects of competition” in school choice models of governance (1998, p. 16).

However, the implementation of community development programs has not been easy. Chirino (1995, p.48) reports some teachers are still passive (apáticos) and resist getting involved in organizing the community. Classroom challenges in impoverished communities can be formidable, requiring a teacher’s full attention and leaving little time for significant community
development. In these circumstances, a teacher’s work with, and for, the communities is at risk of becoming sporadic, subject to the teacher’s good will and enthusiasm. This situation calls for a more flexible structure in schools, which frees and supports teachers to coordinate community development projects.

**BOX 3. FYA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

As part of its community development work, an FYA school:

- serves as a center for social, sports, and cultural activities for the whole community. The school organizes the community to celebrate traditional festivities, such as Christmas. Its facilities are open after school-hours and on weekends. The principals I interviewed reported that the basketball courts, for instance, are used by all members of the community, including youths considered “malandros” (outcasts and outlaws). However, the premises are seldom or never vandalized or used for illicit purposes.
- develops innovative and entrepreneurial ways to mobilize resources in the community and supports groups in the community, such as microenterprises, food and school supplies cooperatives, etc.
- trains students and parents in developing income-generating projects.
- promotes the development of a sense of political self-efficacy. In Venezuela in 1999, for example, FYA centers organized communities to discuss the process of writing the new Venezuelan Constitution and electing the “Asamblea Constituyente” charged with the momentous undertaking. FYA centers have also become forums for political candidates to present their positions to the communities.
- provides instruction for parents and adults in different areas of need and interest for the community, such as adult literacy and agriculture.
- provides assistance and remedial courses to students who have dropped out of the system.
- mobilizes community support to develop local projects.
- develops systems of internships and apprenticeships for school students with local industries.
- collaborates with universities and teacher-training institutions to provide trainees with practicum opportunities at FYA centers under the supervision of experienced teachers. For example, education students from la Universidad Católica Andres Bello in Caracas can conduct their practicum in FYA schools.
- collaborates with professional schools and organizations in universities to get technical assistance for community development projects. For example, law, engineering, and psychology students from la Universidad Católica Andrés Bello provide support to community projects in the neighboring barrio La Vega.
- provides health care services, organizes nutrition and prevention programs, sponsors health and vaccination campaigns, and provides health instruction for children and mothers in the community.

4.2. The emphasis on cutting across cleavages and bridging links among different groups

Some authors say that school choice schemes invite social segregation and erode social cohesion. However, FYA brings together people from different backgrounds and creates multiple forms of connections among them, thereby strengthening bridging forms of social capital. FYA started in Venezuela as an outreach effort connecting affluent students from a private university to children of very poor communities. Today, such bridging social capital programs continue to exist, and thrive. Through FYA, university students mentor elementary students from poor communities. Law students provide legal advice to community members through FYA community centers. FYA also connects wealthy individuals to schools by sponsoring the education of a child (paying a child’s scholarship for books, food, and clothes). It also connects FYA students with potential job providers through its work placement programs. Students from very poor communities have no access to such connections on their own. I argue that the bridging ties established between corporate and more affluent and influent groups with underserved groups are critical to achieving social mobility in the less privileged communities of Latin America.

Promoting bridging forms of social capital is at the core of what Fullan (1998) calls the “moral purpose” of educational reforms. “To achieve moral purpose,” according to Fullan (1998, p 2), “is to forge interaction and even mutual interest across groups”. FYA has a strong commitment to this moral purpose of education. Also, alliances with other institutions, individuals, governments, and funding agencies in the broader society and the Latin American region have been instrumental for FYA to achieve its mission.
4. 3 Fostering a coherent popular education ideology among its members.

FYA’s movement has a strong religious and ideological foundation, held not only by the priests and nuns involved (approximately 3% of the staff), but also by the lay personnel in FYA schools (about 97% of the staff). Grounded on the ideals of popular education, FYA aims to bring about “social transformation based on the Christian values of justice, participation and solidarity.” and is committed to “those who are impoverished, marginalized or discriminated against, in order to promote their personal and community development so that they become protagonists in the construction of their society” (International Federation of Fe y Alegria, 2000, p. 8).

FYA’s goal is to educate men and women as whole human beings, that is: as skilled and productive workers with ethical integrity, capable of acting as agents of change for themselves as well as their communities. In this sense, educational change goes beyond schools and literacy to transform oppressive and unfair societies.

The most important educational change has little to do with curricula, or administrative issues, but rather with the development of new social relationships, understanding the student not as an isolated individual, but rather as subject of social relations (Fe y Alegria, 1993, p. 9).

FYA leaders have developed this vision and articulated the lines of action of the FYA movement in the International Manifesto or Ideario: The Identity of Fe y Alegria (Fe y Alegria, 1995). Throughout the years, constant communication of these ideals, mentoring of young teachers, and regular in-service teacher training have been instrumental in nurturing a strong sense of purpose and identity, which in turn attracts and retains a committed staff (despite very difficult working conditions).

In Venezuela, principals select and recruit teachers. Their criteria for selection include not only academic credentials but, more importantly, the potential to identify and commit to the movement’s popular education goals and its Christian values. In an interview, a former principal, and currently an administrative member of FYA national directorate in Venezuela, stated that she paid special attention to the human quality dimensions of prospective teachers.
El enseñar se va aprendiendo. Para el trabajo con el niño importa la calidad humana… La mística y la ética hacen la diferencia. Quiero a gente que pueda trabajar la parte humana, un docente que conoce a todos sus alumnos, conoce sus historias, sus familias, va más allá de dar la clase, un docente especial, para quien los niños no son números.

This principal conceived her role as a mentor for teachers. She was supposed to educate them in the vision and practices of the movement. “Preferimos gente con poca experiencia docente porque así los formamos. Cuando alguien ha trabajado mucho en el sector oficial tiene muchos vicios.”

Many of the FYA teachers had worked in public schools, she mentioned. Nonetheless, some of them feel they cannot do anything in the public system.

The strong ideological character of FYA requires a special kind of teacher. The former principal stated: “The teacher who cannot adapt to FYA, who doesn’t fit, will soon leave.” In the past, the Venezuelan MOE transferred public school teachers to FYA schools. It was hard for these teachers to adapt to the philosophy of FYA, and if a teacher failed in that regard, FYA was required to transfer the teacher back to the MOE, leaving the FYA position vacant.

Characteristics of the archetypal FYA teacher, according to FYA principals, are:

- a strong moral character and sense of mission;
- a willingness to participate in multiple after-school and weekend extracurricular activities; and
- a willingness to reach out to colleagues for help and advice (Swope & Latorre, 1998).

A possible shortcoming of FYA’s ideology is the potential exclusion of small segments of the Latin American impoverished population who are not Catholic. In principle, FYA schools accept children and families of all religious creeds. In an interview, a former FYA principal stated that in her school children had to attend all the school activities, including religious ones, although they were not obligated to participate in prayers or sacraments, such as communion. At the beginning of the school year, this principal asked parents to sign a letter of intent, allowing their children to participate in the school’s pastoral activities. She reported receiving only a few refusals from some “evangelical” parents. This example illustrates the disadvantage for the minority of the Latin American poor who are not Catholic and who do not wish to educate their children under the Catholic faith, but whose only option is to send them to substandard public schools. In order to
guarantee quality education for all children, therefore, both public schools and FYA schools must be strengthened. Potential strategies for public school change might include: reproducing FYA’s spirit in public schools by increasing the sense of family and moral purpose there; fostering a caring environment; and encouraging the teachers’ commitment to community development.

But is it possible to retain the spirit of FYA without the Catholic and popular education ideology that is a significant factor in its success? Could FYA’s success be replicated as a non-religious movement?

Such questions are difficult to answer, I believe, since a version of FYA devoid of Christian faith would cease to be FYA. In the United States, Bryk, Lee, & Holland (1993, p.11) have found that Catholic schools’ “inspirational ideology” (their “distinctive vision of active participation in a humane society”) is one of “the major forces that shape the operations of individual Catholic schools and contribute to their overall effectiveness” in conjunction with their distinct organizational features and sense of community. Bryk et al maintain that these organizational characteristics cannot be divorced from the Catholic tradition.

In Latin America, Jesús Orbegozo Director of FYA-Venezuela shared these reflections with me; I believe they shed light into these questions.

Estoy convencido que sólo se educa si se ama profundamente. No hay otro camino. Me pregunto qué es lo que mueve a la persona a darse a sí misma. En qué nivel de la persona están esos resortes que nos vuelven capaces de amar al desposeído, al que se encuentra al margen de la sociedad. Estoy convencido de que toda persona por el hecho de ser persona tiene estos resortes, esa fe fundamental, aunque no tenga expresión en una confesión concreta. Es la dimensión trascendente de la persona. Entonces, se vuelve indispensable para rescatar la educación de América Latina que suscitemos, cultivemos y profundicemos esa fe fundamental profunda, que nos hace capaces de amar sin esperar retorno. A veces, esa fe fundamental no encuentra explicitación religiosa en una confesión concreta. Otras veces, se explicita de modo diverso. En las estrategias de formación de maestros esta dimensión no es tomada en cuenta. Se cree que es suficiente cultivar la racionalidad, teorías y técnicas pedagógicas, didácticas... y tener un buen contrato. Todo esto es, quizás, necesario, pero no toca la tecla decisiva... (Personal correspondence, 2001)
4.4 Developing a sense of family and community in the school

In a study of FYA schools across nine Latin American countries, Swope & Latorre (1998) found that a top priority for principals in Venezuela is the creation of a school climate that engages students and welcomes parents. In my own research, I have found that FYA principals play a crucial role in developing a sense of family within their respective schools, and in fostering caring relationships among its members. A former principal I interviewed stated:

A FYA school is like a family, the principal works as a “conciliador.” Her role is to achieve the integration of the personnel into the family in order to educate the children. We integrate all the personnel. The janitors are as important as the principal in addressing the problems of the school. The human aspect of people is very important. The strategy is to win people over, so they can develop a sense of ownership in the school. (La táctica es ganar a la gente para que todos se apropien de la escuela.) A janitor’s job description does not include bathing a dirty child, but my janitors at school feel that they should do it because they care.

This is consistent with the philosophy of Catholic schools studied by Bryk et al. (1993) These schools are conceived of, and organized as, a community with high levels of interaction and trust, wherein members reinforce their moral commitments to one another (Bryk & Schneider, 1996). In Catholic schools, the principal has a communal leader role: his or her goal is "building community among faculty, students, and parents” (Bryk et al, 1993 p. 139).

The family-like environment in FYA creates interesting conditions in the schools: teachers stay longer and interact more, and everyone is more concerned about the welfare and performance of the students.

**Stability of teachers and principals in FYA.** Swope & Latorre (1998) confirm that FYA personnel are relatively stable, in spite of the lack of economic incentives. A stable group of teachers helps maintain ties and relationships, and the development of trust, over time. On average, the directors of FYA schools consider that the time teachers remain on their posts (‘staff stability’) is “reasonable”. Although the number of years of service is relatively low, the principals do not perceive this as a problem in accomplishing their centers’ objectives (Swope & Latorre, 1998, p. 102).
**Increased interaction among teachers.** Swope & Latorre (1998) report that in the FYA schools there is a high degree of interaction among teachers that cannot be characterized as formal teacher meetings, and that are less hierarchical, more casual, and more conversational in nature. These include interactions in the hallways, on patios, and in the teachers’ room. In these informal interactions, teachers share information and discuss strategies to address the children’s problems in school; in the interactions between teachers and parents, or principal and parents, the parties are more actively engaged in searching for solutions to children’s problems. They have many opportunities for communication and horizontal interactions (Swope & Latorre, 1998, p.109).

**Concern for the students’ well-being.** Swope & Latorre (1998) report that teachers are also more interested in the personal circumstances of students and their families. The strategies for solving problems are not limited to addressing specific problems, however; rather, all parties engage in a process of creating a favorable and caring environment that encourages learning.

According to Sergiovanni (1998) building community in the schools is a means to enact profound changes. This “community of mind” is the moral voice, the internal force, that calls for action towards the common good. In the case of FYA, the sharing of a vision of integral and popular education is the moral force that fuels the work of each FYA member. The leaders of this program have been skillful in reinforcing their members’ commitment by communicating their vision and identity constantly and effectively.

**4.5 Promoting democratic participation in schools.**

According to Welsh and McGinn (1998, p.29), “If effective forms of political governance are in place, the negative consequences of competition can be ameliorated.” Market mechanisms “must be regulated through politically legitimate governance structures” so they will not be exclusionary, limiting governance to a few.

FYA’s philosophy fosters democratic participation within schools. It stresses the collective construction of meaning among implementers through the creation of the *proyecto de escuela*. During in-service training, teachers and administrators learn how to develop the *proyecto*
**educativo del centro**: the collective vision of the school, the construction of the school they mutually desire.\(^7\) The process of developing this vision is participatory, and includes all the major school and community actors. The training of teachers and principals is particularly focused on acquiring the means to reduce power imbalances between parents, community members, teachers, and principals in constructing the project.\(^8\)

This vision draws on an assessment of the experiences of both community and nation. For that, *el proyecto educativo del centro* involves the active participation of the community. Using a methodology similar to that of Escuela Nueva, it requires collecting information about the community through its members’ own experiences, by visiting families, conducting interviews with community leaders, and proposing goals for the center. From these efforts the teachers derive the “*proyecto curricular*” in which they adapt the official curriculum to the specific conditions and needs of the community. FYA uses the community as a source of knowledge as well as a teaching resource. In conceiving of the FYA school as a community center, the school promotes

> la incorporación de personas y organizaciones de la comunidad a ‘ocupar el sitio de la maestra’ en temas puntuales vinculados al saber y al hacer popular: literatura popular tradicional, cocina criolla, medicina natural, tecnología popular, artesanía, organización comunitaria, oficios útiles, etc. De esta manera contribuimos con la promoción de la comunidad como autogestora de su proceso educativo, damos pequeños pasos en la superación de las diferencias entre educadores y educandos y nos acercamos un poquito al logro de la utopía de que el pueblo educa al pueblo’.\(^vi\) (Cañizales, 1997, p 20)

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\(^7\) “El proyecto educativo es una construcción colectiva propia de cada escuela, de manera que cada escuela debe elaborar y poner en marcha su propio proyecto. La escuela y la comunidad tienen que decidir el camino a seguir, según su propia realidad…” \(^7\) (Borjas, 1996, p.31)

\(^8\) “La construcción colectiva del proyecto educativo supone un gran esfuerzo de trabajo en equipo. No se trata de que el director del plantel imponga una línea de construcción desde lo que el equipo directivo percibe como necesario e importante. Tampoco los docentes deben adoptar una postura de espera pasiva a que las propuestas lleguen de parte de la dirección. El trabajo en equipo implica sentarse todos, sabiéndose corresponsables de la marcha de la escuela, con posibilidades de participación en el diálogo orientado al acuerdo.”\(^8\) (Borjas, 1996, p. 31)
4.6 Targeting of very poor communities and emphasizing principles of equity.

Boyd (1998) affirms that market-based models represent a shift in emphasis from principles of justice and equity to those of academic excellence. My thesis is that the best school choice plans are those based on equity. School choice schemes must have a compensatory nature. They should carefully target the most disadvantaged groups in order to reverse inequalities, but they should do so in ways that build community and solidarity rather than individualism or segregation.

FYA’s mission is to serve the marginalized people of Latin American societies through the promotion of individual and community development. Community development relates to the moral purpose of education in FYA, and moral purpose is a significant factor in the establishment of equity. Moral purpose means not only “making a difference for all the students” but “making more of a difference for the disadvantaged because they have further to go” (Fullan, 1998, p.1). This is a clear call for well-targeted compensatory programs that eradicate social exclusion and equalize disparities in the society.

I argue that choice schemes for educational change and interventions by civil society should have a compensatory purpose, aimed at achieving equality of educational opportunities for underserved communities that have been failed by the public system. The expansion of the supply side through school choice schemes should be stimulated by government with (1) incentives to serve disadvantaged groups with high quality education and (2) development of bridging forms of social capital. Bridging ties connect disadvantage groups with more advantaged groups that have access to desired resources and information. It also promotes solidarity and social cohesion that have been severely undermined by the significant inequalities that at present exist in Latin American countries.

4.7 Collaborative partnership between government and civil society.

FYA serves a segment of the population that government-delivered public education systems have failed or excluded. The participation of civil society (NGOs, local communities, etc.) is crucial in circumstances in which quality education is demanded, but has not been provided by the
government programs alone (Rugh & Bossert, 1998). It is incorrect, however, to perceive FYA schools in direct competition with public schools.

In this article I impose a theoretical framework of markets and choice onto the FYA movement in Latin America, and this framework assumes competition. But, in my interviews with FYA leaders and members, they speak about cooperation. These leaders consider FYA schools to be public schools and reject the notion of competing with government-run schools. In point of fact, FYA’s motto, ‘Where the asphalt ends,’ implies that FYA targets those vulnerable communities where there is little or no available public education. For FYA leaders, FYA cannot look impassively to the deterioration of public schools. They strive to strengthen both public schools and FYA schools.

Para FyA es vital la recuperación de la escuela oficial de América Latina, de modo que los pobres se eduquen con educación de calidad, recuperen o fortalezcan su dignidad y respeto, encuentren sentido sus esperanzas y se alcance un nivel de vida humano. Digo que es vital, pues es el sentido profundo de nuestra fe en un Dios que quiere la vida plena de los pobres y de nuestra fe en los pobres que son los compañeros inseparables en este camino (Orbegozo, J. Personal correspondence, 2001).

Public support is crucial for FYA schools. The movement could not have expanded and flourished throughout Latin America without the convergence of local communities’ active engagement, FYA’s social entrepreneurship, and significant governmental aid. FYA defines itself as a “non-governmental body of social solidarity, dedicated to uniting the efforts of civil society and the state in the creation and advancement of educational and social services in the depressed areas” (International Federation of Fe y Alegría, 2000, p. 2).

FYA represents a collaborative model of education based on community participation, where the delivery of education is a shared responsibility between government, NGO, and local community, and where the ties between school and community are exceptionally strong. In FYA’s hybrid model of governance, the community is not intended to supplant government, but rather complement it by capitalizing on respective unique strengths. The government role is redefined: it is no longer the sole provider of education, but rather a major partner with civil society in the
delivery of education services to all citizens. In this partnership, the government maintains regulatory functions and responsibility for correcting the inequalities arising from reliance on local resources for delivering education. It also develops a national curriculum that promotes and preserves a national identity, and funds the operations of both public and FYA schools.

As our account of FYA’s history reveals, the evolution of this partnership has not always been an easy one. Its success is dependent on the active and willing participation of the government, the community, and the FYA in relationships based on trust, reciprocity, and mutual benefit.

In sum, the FYA movement builds upon: members’ commitment to values of social justice; the local communities’ willingness to engage in collaborative partnerships to educate children in these values; and the support of national governments that subsidize FYA’s work without imposing limits on its religious activities.

FYA places the community at the center of its vision, both as a partner and as the focus of development. Unlike market-based initiatives based on individualistic values, FYA has a strong commitment to building community and fostering cooperative engagement toward a common good, thereby building social capital. I argue that FYA meets the challenge of designing socially constructive school choice schemes in many ways. It emphasizes community development, establishes crosscutting cleavages and bridges links among different groups, develops a sense of family and community in the school, promotes democratic participation in the school, creates partnerships with government and communities, and stresses equity principles by targeting very poor communities.

I conclude that the best school choice plans are those with a strong emphasis on equity and social cohesion. They should carefully target the most disadvantaged groups in order to reverse inequalities, but they should do so in ways that builds community rather than individualism or segregation. I propose that FYA represents the “reinvented model” Boyd calls upon to “control school choice in fair and socially desirable ways” (1998, p. 367).
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Princeton University Press


TRANSLATIONS OF SPANISH TEXTS

i “This spark might become a fire. It is a seed in search of soil, where it can multiply”.

ii Can we call those who are aware of the educational inequities of our nation fair? Who are aware of the efforts of those who want to actively participate on behalf of the forgotten children of our country, who impose obstacles to these efforts, who deny financial support, and look at them with suspicion? A great financial and social mobilization of private individuals, families, and organizations would be stimulated by a fair distribution of the education budget that supports quality education for the poor.

iii “After learning about the Coleman report … I thought that we could do something similar. We had been selling the idea that catholic education was cheaper than public education for the poor, but we did not have data to support it. It was just a hypothesis. This might be true about the rest of Latin America as well. For that reason, we needed to prove it. We thought that the state would support private education of equal or lesser cost than public education. We needed to demonstrate empirically some facts that we knew about so we could use them to justify the decree”

iv “The most important aspect is the cost-benefit relationship. The study proved that the costs were lower and the return greater for Catholic education [in comparison to public schools]. I want to make clear that the Ministers of the Venezuelan Cabinet considered this as the basis for endorsing the agreement between the state and Catholic schools.”

v “Having the community as the goal will always guide us. For that we do not need “experts” from Harvard nor IESA [an Ivy League-like institution in Venezuela]”

vi “People and community organizations take the place of the teacher in topics closely related to the popular/traditional culture (oral literature, local cuisine, folk medicine, community organization, arts crafts). In this way, we help empower the local community participate actively in overcoming the gap between teachers and students, and we get closer to the utopia where ‘the people educate the people’”.

vii “For FyA it is vital to recuperate public schools in Latin America, so that our poor have access to quality education, regain respect, strengthen their dignity, and make true their hopes for a dignified and humane living”.