

MENDIVE



REVISTA DE EDUCACIÓN

⁴University of Pedagogical Sciences "Enrique José Varona". Havana, Cuba.



bedmary92@yahoo.com

Received: February 23, 2024

Accepted: July 4, 2024

Original article

Teachers and the state of Honduras: between protests and agreements (1997-2009)

Maestros y el estado de Honduras: entre las protestas y los pactos (1997-2009)

Os professores e o estado de Honduras: entre protestos e pactos (1997-2009)

Daniel Enrique Esponda Velásquez¹



<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-8584-4672>

Edgardo Antonio Casaña Mejía²



<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-1057-9218>

Leonardo Pérez Lemus³



<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6590-7186>

María de la Caridad González Martínez⁴



<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7016-1403>

¹Ministry of Education of Honduras. Honduras.



danielesponda1985@gmail.com

²Congress of Honduras. Honduras.



edgardocoprumb@yahoo.es

³University of Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca". Pinar del Río, Cuba.



leplemus@yahoo.es

ABSTRACT

The history of Honduran education has significant works, which have been produced at different historical moments and which have been accompanied by protests and pacts by teachers. The objective is to highlight the history of the asymmetry of the Honduran teachers' union with the state of Honduras, between the end of the 1990s and the first decade of this century; likewise, in the specificity, to highlight the protests and pacts of the parties. The importance of the subject lies in unraveling the forms of protest and the negotiations initiated by teachers in relation to state actions. It was necessary to carry out a document and content analysis review of the bibliographic and newspaper sources that address the subject. It is noted that teachers have been a belligerent union in the history of Honduras, since they have put governments in difficulty with different pressure measures such as protests and negotiation frameworks. These actions have been what have led to pressure and to ensure that the teachers' struggle does not remain in their trenches, but that the union has identified this commitment to Honduran society.

Keywords: teacher; state; union; negotiations; protest.

RESUMEN

La historia de la educación hondureña cuenta con obras significativas, las que se han producido en diferentes momentos históricos y que han sido acompañadas por las protestas y pactos de los docentes. Es objetivo poner de relieve la historia de la asimetría del gremio magisterial hondureño

con el estado de Honduras, entre finales del decenio de 1990 y la primera década del presente siglo; de igual manera, en la especificidad, resaltar las protestas y pactos de las partes. La importancia de la temática radica en desentrañar las formas de la protesta y las negociaciones entabladas por los docentes en relación con las acciones estatales. Fue necesario realizar una revisión de análisis documental y de contenido de las fuentes bibliográficas y hemerográficas que abordan el tema. Se constata que los docentes han sido un gremio beligerante en la historia de Honduras, ya que han puesto a los gobiernos en dificultad con diferentes medidas de presión como la protesta y los marcos de negociación. Estas acciones han sido las que han conducido a presionar y a lograr que la lucha del magisterio no se quede en sus trincheras, sino que entre el gremio se haya identificado ese compromiso con la sociedad hondureña.

Palabras clave: docente; estado; gremio; negociaciones; protesta.

RESUMO

A história da educação hondurenha conta com obras significativas, que ocorreram em diferentes momentos históricos e que foram acompanhadas de protestos e pactos de professores. O objetivo é destacar a história da assimetria da união dos professores hondurenhos com o estado de Honduras, entre o final da década de 1990 e a primeira década deste século; Da mesma forma, na especificidade, destaque os protestos e acordos das partes. A importância do tema reside em desvendar as formas de protesto e as negociações iniciadas pelos professores em relação às ações estatais. Foi necessário realizar uma revisão documental e análise de conteúdo das fontes bibliográficas e jornalísticas que abordam o tema. É claro que os professores têm sido um sindicato beligerante na história das Honduras, uma vez que colocaram os governos em dificuldades com diferentes medidas de pressão, tais como protestos e quadros de

negociação. Estas ações foram o que levaram à pressão e garantiram que a luta dos professores não permanecesse nas suas trincheiras, mas sim que este compromisso com a sociedade hondurenha fosse identificado entre o sindicato.

Palavras-chave: professor; estado; guilda; fala; protesto.

INTRODUCTION

The historiography on the asymmetric relationship between the teachers' union and the state of Honduras is almost non-existent. As listed in the bibliographical references, what exists has been oriented to carry out analyses on the aspect of teachers' unionism from an organizational perspective. Because of this, it is necessary that this article not only contributes to unraveling the union history, but also the asymmetry of the Honduran teachers' union with the country's governments between the end of the 1990s and the first decade of this century.

With a clear objective, it is evident that the results presented in this article respond to the theoretical and methodological foundations that arise from why the research on the relationship between the teaching profession and the Honduran state was developed. In response to them, at first it was carried out with the purpose of filling the existing gaps on the subject and, at a second moment, to provide new historical knowledge that the asymmetric relationship of teachers with the state has a back and forth within the framework of their interests: there are multiple stages of confrontations and negotiations that lead to pacts.

In this sense, the concepts presented in the article are understood according to the periods of asymmetry between the teachers' union and the state. This means that the meaning of protest, negotiation and agreement of the parties has different dimensions, characteristics,

actors and results for those involved in the political processes.

Consequently, from these particularities described, the article presents a division of the presentation and discussion of the results that is based on the main facts that mark the asymmetry of the parties and the time periods in which they arose. With this horizon, it was determined that the starting point or articulating axis is the negotiation of the Honduran Teachers' Statute from 1997 to 1999, to then continue with the staging of the affectation of the same with the approval of the Retributive Law and, finally, the idea of the exclusion of teachers from the application of the aforementioned legislation in the government of former president Manuel Zelaya Rosales. In this sense, the objective of this article is directed to highlight the history of the asymmetry of the Honduran teachers' union with the state of Honduras between the end of the 1990s and the first decade of this century. Likewise, in the specificity, highlight the protests and pacts of the parties.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This article used a qualitative approach to reveal the forms of protest and the methods used in the negotiations between the parties.

It was necessary to carry out a documentary and content analysis review of the bibliographic and newspaper sources of what has been written on the subject. To do so, the following documents were consulted:

- *La Gaceta* (February 8, 1968). Law on the teaching career ladder.
- *La Gaceta* (September 29, 1997). Decree number 136-97. Honduran Teachers' Statute. pp. 1-36.
- *La Gaceta* (January 12, 2004). Law on the Reorganization of the Central Government's Remuneration System.

- *El Heraldo* (July 9, 2004). Government accepts proposal that the teachers' union has been considering.
- *El Heraldo* (July 11, 2004). Government and teachers sign agreement.
- *El Heraldo* (July 4, 2004). Sit-down strike.
- *El Heraldo* (July 8, 2004). Teachers' strike.
- *La Tribuna*, L. (June 16, 2004). Government invites broader dialogue. p. 10.
- *La Tribuna*, L. (June 25, 2004). Communiqué: force will be used to impose order.
- *La Tribuna*, L. (July 9, 2004). Government accepts proposal that the teachers have been handling.
- *La Tribuna* (June 15, 2004). Maduro: together we will achieve a comprehensive solution. p. 10.
- *La Tribuna* (June 23, 2004). Teachers add.

Similarly, interviews were conducted that contributed to supporting the research on the topic (D, Esponda, interviewer):

- Figueroa, JR /December 9, 2021).
- Contention, pact and results in the relationship between teachers and the Honduran government between 1997-2009.
- Lanza, CA (December 8, 2021). Contention, pact and results in the relationship between teachers and governments in Honduras between 1997-2009.
- Raudales, MM (January 12, 2022). Contention, pact and results in the relationship between teachers and governments in Honduras between 1997-2009.
- Reyes, MA (December 12, 2021). Contention, pact and results in the relationship between teachers and governments in Honduras between 1997-2009.
- Torres, MG (December 9, 2021). Contention, pact and results in the

relationship between teachers and governments in Honduras between 1997-2009.

Likewise, the sources (books, articles, decrees, autobiography, works) were compared and some data was extracted that allowed to link the process of confrontation and negotiation between the teachers' union and the state of Honduras.

All of the above allowed us to focus the level of analysis on three moments between the teachers' union and the state of Honduras: the first is the street protest and the negotiation that took place between teachers and the government within the framework of the Honduran Teachers' Statute between 1997 and 1999; the second is the violation of the statute with the approval of the Law of reorganization of the central government's remuneration system from 2000 to 2005; and finally, the third moment he emphasized the new protests and the agreements that were made between teachers and the state for 2006 and 2009.

The explanation of this process, and due to the type of research that was conceived from the epochal analysis, was developed from the historical point of view; this means that the processes where there were protests and negotiations of the parties were intertwined with the historical interests of the teachers' union and the state of Honduras. In this way, the game of interests was unraveled. Historical events occur over time and, therefore, it was necessary to use a periodization; that is, to divide the events as they have been happening, in periods, according to the historical processes that are taking place in the corresponding historical period.

To historicize a phenomenon like the one that was worked on in the research, it was necessary, first, to place it in the great periods of the history of Honduras, where each stage has its characteristics and they are already designed by historians; but, the specific phenomenon that was intended to be studied, in this case *Teachers and the State of Honduras: Between the Protests*

and the Pacts 1997-2009, had its peculiarities that allowed it to have its own periodization in each of those stages.

The cuts made over time -always conventional- were not static, as they depended on the variable used to analyze them. Of course, this phenomenon was not isolated and depended on other circumstances, on finding and relating.

Sources are necessary and essential for historical research. They must be subjected to criticism, first external, which means locating and organizing them; what can be called, then, information management. All of the above allowed historians to find meaning, reflect on and convert into knowledge all the facts with which they worked, in order to construct the historical and scientific course of the proposed phenomenon.

RESULTS

Among the educational sciences, the History of Education/Pedagogy has been placed, together with Comparative Education, as illustrators of the development process of education. Of course, the authors based themselves on a large arsenal of elements that have been developed by history, in general, as a science, but that particular does not mean that they are produced in the same way.

As for the common elements with history, there is the fact that in order to carry out historical research it was necessary to start from some principles that guide all the work that was intended to be carried out.

The clarification of what is a historical fact was of great importance, as the main category of history as a science. There are different historiographical concepts to approach history, but they all agree that a historical fact has the following characteristics:

- It is not subject to direct observation.
- It is known through sources.
- The historical process turns out to be a chain of interconnected events.

For Marxism, which is the theoretical position that was adopted, the historical fact as an object of research exists outside the consciousness of the historian and does not depend on him. It was also necessary to take into account that, in the thought of the knowing subject, which has an active character, the content of the fact is reflected in a more or less exact way, although it is mediated by the source (which, in this particular case, happen to be: the documents).

It is therefore stated that, although the historical fact passes through the prism of subjectivity, its essence does not change, and it can continue to be considered as an objective reality. Historical research, of any kind, allows us to get closer to reality as precisely as possible. Of course, there are other historiographical positions, such as that of the positivists and neo-Kantian historicism.

Positivism considers history to be an empirical science. Historical facts are absolutized and it is argued that it is not necessary to interpret and evaluate them. The neo-Kantian position denies that historical fact is objective. This concept is formed in the conscience of the researcher, according to representatives of the Baden school in Germany, such as Windelband and Rickert; as well as Droysen and Dilthey. They consider that there is a methodological dualism, since there is one method for natural sciences, which form laws, that is, nomothetic; and another, to confront history and other social sciences that are considered ideographic, and do not form laws in themselves, when one can speak of legitimate relations.

The Marxist historian starts by appreciating the unity between the empirical and the theoretical in the analysis of the phenomenon under study. He uses the dialectical-materialist method, which allows him to investigate nature, society and thought. The researcher of history needs to have

knowledge of the peculiarities of this science, in order to know how to search for and find the data he needs to construct his work.

From street protests to the negotiation of the Honduran Teachers' Statute (1997-1999)

In the 1990s, the political context of teachers in Honduras had changed dramatically, as they had gone from the repression of 1980 to confronting more open neoliberal governments, which allowed the actions of the country's social movements. Likewise, this framework allowed them to gain strength at the union level, as a result of the consolidation and orientation of their union interests.

In other words, a social movement is being identified whose demands are oriented towards salary issues, since historically their rights have been violated. Now, in 2009 these struggles for economic improvements will alternate with the political crisis, since the teachers' union joins the political movement of that year without economic interests. In this context, more than a partisan identity, one could say that a more patriotic idea characterized by the violation of the Constitution by other powers of the Honduran state was nuanced.

This protest dynamic that systematically became a wave and cycle of protest, on the one hand, strengthened the union identity and, on the other, became normative as a form of action for the teaching profession during most of the 1990s. In fact, this process occurred thanks to previous relations with government actors as counter-addressees and the staging of their proposal. In this way, and based on these theoretical assumptions, we will understand the history of the teaching profession with the state of Honduras before and after its legislation.

DISCUSSION

The situation of the teaching profession in 1990 was critical economically speaking, due to their meager and uncertain salary increase and the grievance they received due to the "political patronage of the positions that were assigned by the deputies," according to Reyes in an interview on December 12, 2021 (*Contest, pact and results in the relationship between the teaching profession and the governments of Honduras between 1997-2009*, D. Esponda, interviewer). What was described led to the development of protests year after year by the union. To avoid this annual problem, and with the idea of depoliticizing the assignment of positions and improving their income, the teachers reviewed their Career Law and realized that it was obsolete and that it was time to replace it.

This process of review and of preparing a new Law proposal, as pointed out by the interviewee, the former grassroots leader Carlos Alberto Lanza in 2021, was prepared by the teachers' leaders: Ambrosio Sabio, Oswaldo Rivera, Carlos Zúñiga, Carlos Mauricio López, Amílcar Tomé, Alduvín Díaz, who put it "on Suazo Córdova's table in 1982 and it ended in defeat product of the repressive context of the Low Intensity War (LIW)".

In fact, this environment led to the teachers being in the dark, at the level of action, for more than a decade and, with it, to the loss of belligerence as a social movement. Consequently, in the underground, teachers were developing their capacity for survival and negotiation, which would be reflected in the implementation of the Teachers' Statute.

In this sense, the implementation and, more frequently than in 1980, protests were identified as political action to achieve their objectives (Lisky, 1968): salary increase and, later, the approval of the Teachers' Statute. In relation to the issue of salaries, although it is true that the 1968 Career Law dignified the work of teachers by providing a certain stability and establishing the requirements for entry and promotion in the

teaching career, it did not allow salary increases to be made based on said legislation. This led to the salary increase not being made through negotiation without first going to the streets to demand and then correct the injustice (Turner, 1969).

The strengthening of the union explains the experience and the stages that the teachers' movement had to go through historically; in other words, its actions did not come out of nowhere, since they mutated from a social movement with a set of beliefs to one organized around its specific objectives (McAdam *et al.*, 2001).

In this way, the teaching profession as an organized social movement, was oriented to develop a contentious policy of interaction with the state of Honduras, regarding the approval of the Teachers' Statute (McAdam *et al.*, 2001).

From the setback received with Suazo Córdova, the teachers' union understood that the objectives would be achieved against the neoliberal governments through the union of the existing colleges in 1990. In that sense, and with an eye on the Teachers' Statute, in "1994 The teachers' organizations concentrated their staff on reviewing the 1982 draft and updating it according to the new reality that was being experienced," as expressed by Lanza, CA, in an interview on December 8, 2021, with the title: *Contention, pact and results in the relationship between teachers and governments in Honduras between 1997-2009* (D. Esponda, interviewer).

After this process, and with clearer objectives, the teachers realized that in order to achieve their goal it was pertinent to create a representative body and with this they gave life to the Federation of Teachers' Organizations of Honduras (FOMH), in 1995. Under this new unifying organization, the leaders: Ramón Álvarez, from the College of Secondary Education Teachers of Honduras (COPEMH); Marcelino Borjas, from the Professional College for the Improvement of Teachers in Honduras (COLPROSUMAH) and Amílcar Tomé, from the

old guard, "formed a multidisciplinary team of teachers, lawyers and economists" (Lanza, 2021) who systematically gave life to the draft of the Teachers' Statute.

This document, which sought to "dignify the teaching career and that the teacher had a law that would boost his salary without having to walk the streets", as stated by Torres, MG in an interview on December 9, 2021 entitled *Contention, pact and results in the relationship between the teaching profession and the governments of Honduras between 1997-2009*, was socialized to the entire union for subsequent negotiation with the Reina government. It is important to mention that in the process of drafting the legislation, what Pérez (2005) calls previous social relations with the future liberal administration is identified; that is, before Reina assumed power, "he promised that his government would approve the Statute... and to avoid fissures he sent collaborators to José María Ramírez and Carlos Arita Valdivieso," Torres said. The interesting thing about this pre-negotiation is that Reina would be able to obtain the support of the most belligerent union in the country in terms of votes and in the future avoid conflicts between the teaching profession and the state: improvement of political relations between both parties.

With the draft statute prepared and with the liberal approval, the leaders of the Federation of Teachers' Organizations of Honduras (FOMH) and representatives of the Honduran state, gave rise to mutual concessions with multiple meetings in different spaces. Regarding the actors of both parties, Torres says that the interviews showed that, for the teachers' union, "Ramón Álvarez, Marcelino Borjas, Amílcar Tomé, Omar Rivera, Marco Antonio Vallecillo, Carlos Zuñiga" acted. and, for the government, "Vice Minister Armando Euceda and Liberal Minister Zenobia Rodas."

The negotiating parties, in the first instance, evacuated the regulatory part and, finally, left the economic issue. While the dialogue table was developing, the union applied pressure through

other mechanisms such as protests in the streets and sit-ins at the National Congress (CN) and the presidential house. Once both parties reached an agreement on some changes to the statute, "the final document was delivered to the liberal deputy Rafael Pineda Ponce so that he could put the proposal on the CN table" (Figueroa, JR, December 9, 2021), [*Contention, pact and results in the relationship between teachers and governments in Honduras between 1997-2009* (D. Esponda, interviewer)].

What is striking is Pineda Ponce's participation. In fact, we can infer that his legislative work for the benefit of the teaching profession is connected to his professional life as a teacher. Likewise, his future political interests could have been another motivating factor, since in 1998 he became president of the CN and in 2001 he was a pre-candidate for the presidency of the Republic of Honduras.

In the end, through negotiations and protests, the teachers' union in 1997 managed to get the CN, headed by Flores Facussé, to approve the Teachers' Statute. This historic event leads us to answer some questions such as: what was the reason for the approval of the Teachers' Statute in the neoliberal context? What did the government gain and what did the union obtain?

Returning to the interviewees' notes, and in response to the first question, if we analyze, neoliberalism is spurious and what it has historically sought is to inhibit social movements. However, the political context of Honduras, compared to other Latin American countries, was different in 1997, since the teachers' movement was strong and the liberals "needed to keep power and a strike was not convenient for them to give continuity to their mandate and avoid governability by facing a strong union," says Reyes.

In other words, the approval of the statute was linked to the political interests of the Liberal Party of Honduras (PLH), since Flores Facussé was a candidate for the presidency. In fact, the move by the liberals possibly allowed their

presidential candidate to obtain the support of the teachers' union for the 1997 elections. As seen below, Pineda Ponce will try to emulate this action.

As for the second question, the liberals managed to stay in power and, to a certain extent, achieved governability. As for the teachers, they managed to dignify their profession and receive a series of incentives and corrective measures, until retirement from service. They also regulated the teaching career from their entry to the obligations and rights as teachers (*La Gaceta*, September 29, 1997). This regulation led to the competition and access to positions being "depoliticized"; deputies and mayors could not have any influence on the process of who worked or not.

The achievement of the teachers, which would possibly put an end to the annual protest demanding a salary increase and obtaining other benefits, was only the beginning and maturity of the conflict between teachers and the post-statute state. In fact, after Flores Facussé won the 1997 elections and assumed power in January 1998, the problem began in relation to the approval of the regulations and the non-compliance with the statute.

In this regard, after Reina left power, the obligations of complying with the statute were left to the new government headed by Flores Facussé. However, this president, at the beginning of his administration, would fail to comply with the new legislation that protected and guaranteed stability to the Honduran teachers' union. In response, those who taught returned to their old practice of protest, which continued until October 1998, the month in which the country was hit by Hurricane Mitch.

The impact of the natural phenomenon in the country, as Ismael Moreno notes (2004), "gave the government the best justification for failing to comply with the Teachers' Statute. Hurricane Mitch brought to the national table all the past and present problems, both temporary and structural." Faced with this type of situation, the

teachers could do nothing because they would earn the reproaches of the Honduran people. As a result, "the union was forced to agree with the government to postpone the approval of the Regulations and the suspension of the economic aspects agreed upon in the Statute," as expressed by Raudales, MM in an interview conducted on January 12, 2022 with the title "Contention, pact and results in the relationship between teachers and governments in Honduras between 1997-2009" (D. Esponda, interviewer).

By 1999, after the Flores Facussé government had given rise to the reconstruction of Honduras, the teachers' union, led by Nelson Cálix, Roberto Ordoñez, Staylen Mata de Copán, Henry Irías and Guadalupe Torres, began to pressure the liberal administration again to give in to the teachers' demands; however, negotiations were not reaching a successful conclusion due to government negativity, according to Raudales.

Given this situation, the interviewee continues, the mediator of the economic issue who did not prevent the breakdown of the dialogue was Father Tony Salinas and Gautama Fonseca. With these characters involved, plus the pressure from the teachers, the Flores Facussé government extended the payment of the deferred salary increase until 2002 and with the help of Pineda Ponce as president of the CN, the Regulations of the Teachers' Statute would be approved (Posas, 2003).

Facussé government obtained an extension of the payment of salary increases and the teachers' union was able to regulate its work and normalize its salaries. The interesting thing about this whole negotiation process is that in the next few years (up to 1999) the state of Honduras "would partially comply with the Teachers' Statute," Reyes said.

By 2001, the atmosphere was relatively calm for teachers, who were waiting for the Flores Facussé administration to approve the 2002 budget, which was supposed to include the budget to comply with the Teachers' Statute. However, it was not included (Moreno, 2004). On

January 27, 2002, the liberal president handed over the presidential sash to Ricardo Maduro and, with it, a host of problems that would detonate at the start of his administration.

To conclude, it is noted that the approval of the statute regulations was possibly a political move by Pineda Ponce, just as had happened with Flores Facussé when he approved the Statute to get votes. Pineda Ponce wanted to emulate the same; however, the non-compliance of the liberal government took its toll and he was defeated in the 2001 General Elections by the nationalist Maduro.

On the other hand, during this period (1997-1999) we identified that the problems between the teachers and the state were resolved through the signing of negotiated agreements. This type of document, which presented a possible fulfillment by both parties, only postponed the salary agony of Honduran teachers and put at risk the stability acquired in the statute.

Honduran Teachers' Statute versus the Central Government's Law on the Reorganization of the Retributive System. Between confrontation and capitulation (2000-2005)

The non-inclusion of the teachers' union in the budget approved by Flores Facussé so that they would be paid what was established in the Teachers' Statute was one of the incentives that led to the teachers returning to the streets for the first two months of 2002. Likewise, the teachers' situation became more complex over the months and the Maduro government, instead of seeking a solution, as Moreno points out (2004), The government evaded the demands and wanted to ignore the teachers. This government's lack of recognition aggravated the "conflict that grew progressively "like a snowball," according to the government itself, until that "ball" became the largest of the conflicts that threatened Maduro (Moreno, 2004). In this sense, the lack of payment and non-compliance with deferred payments led the

teachers' union to protest, which took on other dimensions due to the number of its members.

The pressure exerted by the teachers in the streets and by approaching the presidential house and the Education Secretariat certainly had positive results. The Minister of Education of Honduras Carlos Ávila and the Minister of Finance William Chong Wong, under instructions from Maduro, proposed to the teachers' union headed by the "traitors": "Rafael Izaguirre member of the Leovigildo Pineda Cardona Movement and president of COLPROSUMAH; Alejandro Ventura former Minister of Education and president of the First Professional Honduran College of Teachers (PRICPHMA); Fanny Álvarez president of the Professional Union of Honduran Teachers (SINPRODOH) and Israel Moya president of the College of Pedagogues of Honduras (COLPEDAGOGOSH)" (Funez, 2011, pág. 5), that the country's finances were not going through a good moment and that in order to overcome the educational crisis what could be done effective was the deferred payment from 2002 to 2004 (Posas, 2003).

In the hope that this proposal would become a reality, the teachers' union and the state of Honduras signed the document called "Negotiation Minutes." Broadly speaking, the agreement at the content level rescues the commitment of the Maduro government to pay and, on the part of the union, to resume work activities and leave aside the political action of the protest. It is important to note that, on the one hand, the government system came out favored because it managed to delay the debt and calm the problem and, on the other hand, the teachers did not get anything, only to delay for a longer time the fulfillment of the Teachers' Statute.

Despite the agreements, the teachers' union did not rest in the struggle; on the contrary, it continued to stand up in solidarity with other social movements in the country. In fact, in 2003, when the Maduro government threatened to reform the Civil Service Law that would freeze salaries and make state employees lose acquired

rights, the teachers joined the March for Dignity, called by the National Coordinator of Popular Resistance (CNRP) (Moreno, 2004). In this protest, the teachers showed the power and the first signs of unification that would be reflected in 2004 with the affront to the repeal of the Law of Reorganization of the Retributive System of the Central Government.

This latest legislation was approved together with the Budget Law On December 19, 2003. When comparing the Teachers' Statute with this Law, its first article elucidates that the statute "is the personnel administration regime that protects the teaching career in official, semi-official and private institutions governed by the Secretary of State in the Office of Education, as described in *La Gaceta*, September 29, 1997, on its first page.

Following Mario Posas (2003), he also states:

The prohibitions and rights of teachers. It specifies the rules that regulate the recruitment, selection and appointment of staff, labour mobility, evaluation and the disciplinary regime and the working day of teaching staff... as well as a special regime for private educational establishments and gives indications on the salary regime to which teachers will be subject (pág. 35).

On the economic side, the statute established a deferred scale to be paid over four years with a salary increase of "19% for the year 1998, 19% for the year 1999, 20% for the year 2000 and 20% for the year 2001". In this way, the salary calculation for primary school teachers went from 2,116.92 to 3,596.44 (Posas, 2003, pág. 36). It is important to mention that during the governments of Flores Facussé and Maduro, as a result of the struggle in the streets, these values were changing according to the increase in the minimum wage and the complements for years of service and went from 15% (five years of service) to 100% (with 30 years of work); In addition to this, the collateral by "position held, seniority in service, academic degrees acquired,

professional merits attained and work area", which is evidenced in *La Gaceta*, 1997, p. 19. In the case of the Reorganization Law, its objective was to "organize the salary system of the central Government and the decentralized institutions of the State to achieve the equity guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic". For its application, the definitions of "ordinary salary, integral, average, acquired right, compensation by work area and compensation for occupational risks" were adopted, as evidenced in *La Gaceta* (2007, p 1-2).

The application of the Reorganization Law does not directly mention the validity and monitoring of the payment of the collaterals of the Teachers' Statute. The only mention in said legislation is in articles 4 and 5, which clarify that they would be paid only from 2004-2006, according to the base salary of 2004 (4,453.80). Likewise, that from 2007 onwards a different way to that of the statute of integrating the collaterals would be sought. (*La Gaceta*, Law on the Reorganization of the Central Government's Remuneration System, 2004). For the teachers' union, this meant a freeze and a violation of the legislation that had been protecting them since 1997.

In response, and as a result of the danger posed by the Reorganization Law in relation to the Teachers' Statute, the "teachers' union, led by Eulogio Chávez, Jorge Franco, Nelson Cáliz of COPEMH and Ángel Martínez of the Professional Union of Teachers of Honduras (COPRUMH)" (Lanza, 2021) decided to gather its members to protest in the capital of Honduras in favor of its repeal. Carlos Alberto Fúnez (2011) notes that approximately 60,000 teachers gathered in Tegucigalpa to exert pressure, bringing the city to a complete standstill.

In response to these pressures that had been building since February, the Honduran government attempted to open a dialogue with the teachers' union in June 2004. In this regard, Maduro gave a series of interviews at press conferences that made it clear that "the government reiterates its position, which is legal and which we consider to be the most equitable

for all Honduran people, as an integral group," as reported in *La Tribuna*, to resolve the crisis through negotiation between the parties. Also, as part of the dialogue process that would begin, the government was asked not to increase the wage bill and the option to comply with the teachers' promise was to renegotiate with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) a support of 1.8 billion dollars. Likewise, he offered the payment of 85 million lempiras of the total owed.

However, the teachers attended the press conference and described Maduro's statements as evasive and as not presenting a concrete solution. In response, the teachers continued to exert pressure in June by blocking roads and paralyzing the main cities of the country. Given this subversive context, the state used force to try to break up the protests and arrest some teachers who were in the demonstrations; this was expressed in *La Tribuna that year*.

After a series of confrontations in June, which left teachers injured and detained, the situation did not present an immediate solution. This context made the Maduro government feel more pressured and, with that, it called for the formation of a first negotiation commission headed by the Secretary of Labor German Leitzelar; however, the commission failed and as a result could not reach any agreement with the teachers. As published in *El Heraldo* on July 9, 2004 with the title: "Government accepts proposal that the teachers have been handling". At the beginning of July, the crisis continued because the teachers were still in the streets and the Honduran students without classes and the government did not give in. In order to generate a new rapprochement and find a solution, the Maduro government again formed a negotiation commission to present to the teachers' union the proposal that included the payment of "85 million to cover the collateral, payment of public debt accumulated since 2000, payment for the last time of days not worked and return of professional deductions". As published in *El Heraldo* on July 9, 2004 with the title: "Government accepts proposal that the teachers have been handling". *Herald* of July 11, 2004

with the title: "Government and teachers sign agreement."

On the part of the teachers, they asked to "resolve the politicization of the departmental departments, restore the payment of collateral (five-year periods, zoning and academic qualification), compliance with the Teachers' Statute and (total) payment of the public debt," as expressed in *La Tribuna* on page ten. When we look at both proposals at a comparative level, we see that the government never makes direct mention of respect for the statute and neither does it emphasize eliminating the Reorganization Law.

It is important to mention that some sectors of civil society played an important role in this negotiation process. Likewise, during the first half of July, when the situation had acquired a more critical dimension, the negotiating parties asked for support from the Honduran population. In fact, awareness and discrediting campaigns were developed. The government stated that the state was not capable of making the payments established in the statute and that, therefore, it could not sacrifice the citizenry. In the case of the teachers, they put between the lines the reasons for their protests, all of which appears reflected in *El Heraldo* on July 4, 2004 with the title "Sit-Down Strike." With these campaigns to the detriment of the teaching profession and with the call by the teachers to obtain the support of the Honduran citizenry, the dialogue was suspended between the parties. The government also made a final announcement to the union that negotiations could be resumed as long as the conditions for the suspension of protests and the return to classes were met so as not to jeopardize the school year.

The statements made by the current government were put up for discussion in the teachers' union; in the end, and in common agreement, "the 18 departmental assemblies of the teachers' sector decided to return to the educational centers... throughout the country, but not to teach classes, but to continue convincing students and parents to support

them." It is important to note that this "return was with the aim of taking the schools as trenches to, from there, carry out joint actions of resistance," as stated in *El Heraldo*, on that same date. With this type of actions and with the return to the streets between July 4 and 9, the teachers' union once again pressured the Honduran government to find a solution to the problem of the violation of the Teachers' Statute with the Reorganization Law. As a result of the pressures and with the idea of dialogue, the state of Honduras called the teachers on July 9; In turn, he formed a new commission that was headed by "former president Rafael Leonardo Callejas, private secretary Ricardo Álvarez and Arturo Corrales Álvarez, as well as Porfirio Lobo Sosa." At the same time, the professors formed their committee, which was made up of "Nelson Cáliz, Ángel Martínez, Alejandro Ventura, Fanny Álvarez, Israel Moya and Eduin Oliva," as stated in *La Tribuna* on page eight.

With the committees formed and with the consent of the parties, on the same day (July 9) a new meeting was held and it was agreed to sign the document that would put an end to the problem on July 10. After the meeting ended, the teachers' leaders explained to their fellow fighters what had been discussed with the government committee. In this way, on the aforementioned day, the representative parties met again and signed an act of compliance with the demands of the teachers and the state.

The conflict between the teachers and the Maduro government was coming to an end. As for the achievements of the teachers' union, we can mention the state's commitment to pay the five-year periods and academic qualifications of teachers who acquired a bachelor's degree or a university technician, to deduct from these amounts 7% of the teachers' contribution to IMPREMA and the corresponding 12% as employer contribution, to reactivate the service of collecting contributions and contributions from COPEMH and COPRUMH members and the payment of the amounts for public debt corresponding to previous years. These would be paid in August 2004, which is clearly described in *El Heraldo* on that date.

Now, if we interpret the above descriptions quantitatively, we can say that the government will allocate to the teachers' union in a deferred manner "600 million lempiras during the years 2004, 2005 and 2006 for the payment of collateral to all those teachers who comply with the legal requirement." In that sense, 120 million will be added for this year, 240 million for 2005 and a similar amount for 2006. Having said that, the teachers went out to celebrate a victory that left much to be desired because the most important points of the Teachers' Statute were not resolved.

The government managed to temporarily solve the teachers' problem - extending payments - and thus the return to classes took place. They also committed the union to "resume classes, start a special plan to recover days off work, start a salary audit, join the educational transformation and include parents in the educational processes," which is evident in the publication that appeared in *El Heraldo*.

With these agreements, on the one hand, a crisis within the teaching profession that began in February 2004 as a consequence of the Reorganization Law was concluded. On the other hand, teachers began to plan their return to classes, which included working on holidays. Finally, the fact that the conflict between the teaching profession and the state was over benefited more than 600,000 children with classes and a significant percentage with the reactivation of school meals, as reflected in *El Heraldo* that year 2004, on its front page.

In closing, it should be noted that during the year of government transition (2005) the teachers' union and the state practically did not enter into conflict and the development of the different political demonstrations occurred with relative normality. In this sense, the general elections were held on November 27, which left the PLH candidate Zelaya Rosales as the winner, against the nationalist Lobo Sosa. With the new president of the Republic, the teachers hoped that from 2006 onwards their situation regarding

the Teachers' Statute would present a different scenario.

Between protests, negotiations and agreements between teachers and government (2006-2009)

The inauguration of former President Zelaya Rosales took place on January 27, 2006, at the national stadium "Tiburcio Carías Andino". In his inauguration speech, and with full knowledge of the teaching problems in the Maduro government, he made it known that he would fulfill his political campaign promise to the teaching union, respecting the application of the Honduran Teachers' Statute. Likewise, the student population at the pre-school, basic and secondary levels would have free tuition (Reconciliación, 2011).

With these promises, Zelaya Rosales began his mandate. In this context, and taking into consideration the conflict between the state of Honduras and the teachers' union, he asked the legislature to review the Reorganization Law that was approved under Maduro. After a review and analyzing its impact on teachers, the CN excluded the Teachers' Statute from the aforementioned legislation in July 2006, which sought to regulate and guide salaries in different institutions in the country, as stated in *La Gaceta*.

The exclusion of teachers from the Reorganization Law foreshadowed an atmosphere of cordiality and good relations between the parties that had been in conflict since the end of the last century; however, the teachers tried to take advantage of the context that was taking place in the liberal government to resume their demands regarding the Teachers' Statute. In fact, some negotiations took place behind the scenes between the union and the legislature to see what possibilities existed.

However, these first conversations between the president of the CN Roberto Micheletti and the teachers were never formalized. As a result, the

verbal negotiations did not come to fruition and the problems that Zelaya Rosales had wanted to avoid once again arose. In fact, the talks between the parties had been going on for approximately five months and the day after the exclusion of the Teachers' Statute from the Reorganization Law, the teachers' union began to exert pressure with the use of protests.

The first protest action and those that continued until July 26, 2006, focused on pressuring the Honduran government through already known mechanisms such as the takeover of the Toncontín airport, sit-ins in the offices of the Honduran Council of Private Enterprise (COHEP) and in front of the Presidential House. These political expressions brought together more frequently teachers from different parts of the country; rural and urban areas (Fernández, 2006).

While the protests were taking place, the Honduran government and the teachers created a dialogue table. On the state side, the Minister of Education Pineda Ponce and the Minister of Labor Ricci Moncada were participating. In the case of the teachers, a Strike Committee was created in the style of the workers of 1954 and a representative commission in charge of negotiating (Lanza, 2021).

The teachers' proposal was that, as a consequence of the exclusion of the Teachers' Statute from the Reorganization Law, they continued to be governed by the 1997 teachers' legislation; in other words, they were asking for its application. As for the government commission, it made it clear to the teachers that it was impossible to resume what was budgeted in the 1997 Statute, because the government did not have the capacity to comply with the economic clauses, as expressed in an interview with Figueroa on December 9, 2021 [*Contest, pact and results in the relationship between teachers and governments in Honduras between 1997-2009*. (D. Esponda, interviewer)].

Faced with this situation and the lack of a solid proposal, the teachers' union stopped

negotiating and withdrew. The dialogue between the parties had broken down and as a result the conflict worsened further, as the teachers continued to protest and the educational centers were closed. We continued to identify this dynamic in the first week of August, when more than "40 thousand teachers from all over the country marched from the headquarters of the Francisco Morazán National Pedagogical University (UPNFM) to the CN, in Tegucigalpa." In response, the government reiterated that it remained open to dialogue and, in turn, warned "that it will not submit a written salary proposal unless the teachers' leadership suspends the strike" (Fernández, 2006, p. 253).

Despite the warnings, the teachers continued to protest in the streets and the government, as on other occasions, severely repressed them with police and military, leaving more than 80 teachers detained and 40 injured (Fernández, 2006). However, the repression did not break the teachers' union and the problem continued. Given the teachers' firm position, the representatives of the state of Honduras had to call for dialogue again and form a commission that included the teachers to develop an assertive proposal.

Thus, on July 9, a negotiating committee from the FOMH sat down with government representatives to discuss different points of the document that would put an end to the problem. At the same time that negotiations were taking place, the Teachers' Strike Committee continued to exert pressure with marches in different parts of the capital of Honduras.

After a series of discussions that were postponed for more than fourteen hours, on August 12, 2006, President Zelaya Rosales and "the 6 leaders of the FOMH signed an agreement in Tegucigalpa that put an end to the 10-day strike in the national education system. In addition to the salary increase of 24.02 lempiras per class hour deferred for three years, the agreement includes the commitment of teachers to dedicate, in the next 3 years, 4 hours per week to literacy." (Fernandez, 2006, p. 254).

With the agreement signed by the parties, which was called PASCE, Honduran teachers were systematically integrated into their teaching work in urban and rural areas of the country. On the other hand, this signed document brings us back to the questions: how did the process take place? and what did the negotiating parties achieve?

In response to the first question, for this stage and problems of 2006 we think that, as in the other cycles, the negotiation process was a tug-of-war between the negotiating parties, since economic interests came first. Also, the negotiation was not immediate but delayed, since the state and the teachers' union had disagreements and being able to make the interests agree depended on political action as a form of pressure and on negotiating capacity.

In the case of the second question, the Honduran state may have been able to sustain its finances, since the statute has been unaffordable. In other words, the decapitalization of the state's economic factor was avoided. Likewise, the fact that the conflict was dissipated was a benefit to the government in power because "normality" contributes to not scaring away economic aid from sister countries and international organizations. On a more local level, the fact that the educational program was fulfilled allows the country's students to receive continuous instruction.

In relation to the teaching profession, the "special record" that recorded the agreements between the government and teachers shows that the latter managed to ensure that the Teachers' Statute was respected by establishing an economic regime that was structured according to the year of monitoring; that is, in 2007 they would receive 41.45 lempiras per hour and in 2008 49.49 and in 2009 the amount of 57.48.

Likewise, an annual salary increase that in 2007 was 6,466.20 and in 2008 it reached 7,715.76 and for 2009 it was 8,966.88 lempiras. In the case of collaterals, the seniority in service benefit

was set at 658.04 lempiras; academic qualification 3,073.12; bachelor's degrees, higher degrees and university technicians with 1,1536.56. It is important to mention that these benefits would increase starting in 2010 according to article 49 of the Teachers' Statute (Girón, Sorto, Agurcia, Rubio, & Macías, 2013). A collateral that we did not mention was the work zone; the teachers agreed that the same would be recognized for teachers who work in the departments of Islas de la Bahía, Gracias a Dios and other areas that have border limits.

When we look at the critical assessments mentioned above, we see increases in salaries and teacher wages, but it also shows that the Teachers' Statute has not been fully complied with; that is, that the values do not correspond to the financial structure established in the 1997 legislation. We identified this from 2001 onwards, when salary progression was halted due to irregularities in the country's budget allocation; in other words, the increases were insignificant until 2005.

In this sense, it is clear that the statute has not been fully complied with and, as a result of this, plus the exclusion of teachers from the development of educational programs and the flagellation of their rights with the approval of new laws such as the Law of Redistributive Reorganization, an almost permanent confrontation between the teaching union and the governments has been generated. Although it is true that this problem has been solved along the way temporarily through negotiations between the parties in conflict; however, the root of the problem remains alive to this day.

On the other hand, after the conflict between the state and the teachers' union ended, the latter waited for the PASCE to be fulfilled. However, this was not entirely possible in the following years (2007-2008). This failure led the teachers' union to return to the streets, but not with the same force as in 2006 and not with the same frequency, since the protest was inhibited along the way because the Zelaya Rosales government

spontaneously responded to some points of what was agreed in the "special act."

Despite some dissociations in the fulfillment of the agreement, everything remained in place; that is, the state and the teachers' union maintained relations. However, this asymmetrical relationship was temporary because the political reality of 2009 would take precedence. In other words, the coup d'état orchestrated by Micheletti and the Honduran Armed Forces (FFAA) led to the non-compliance with the Teachers' Statute.

In addition to the above, as one of the interviewees stated, teachers aroused an anti-coup sentiment and were one of the first unions in the country to protest against what happened on June 28, 2009. In fact, and as reported by the written media, teachers were a key base of the Honduran resistance and contributed significantly from their trenches to give life to the political party called Liberty and Refoundation.

The interesting thing about the role of the teachers' union in relation to the 2009 coup d'état is that, despite what happened in 2006, they showed solidarity with the national reality and, especially, with former president Zelaya Rosales. This solidarity, as Miralda states (2010), cost the union repression by the country's armed forces and the loss of some of its members in protest actions against the coup plotters.

The teachers' union in the first decade of this century has been a belligerent social movement that has put the nationalist and liberal governments against the wall. This belligerence has been manifested not only in the defense of its interests, but also in the political context of the 2009 coup d'état. In this sense, it is concluded by stating that the teachers' struggle has not remained in its trenches, but that the union has identified this commitment to Honduran society.

Similarly, a social movement is identified in which its demands have been oriented towards salary issues, since historically their rights have

been violated. However, in 2009 these struggles for economic improvements were alternating with the political crisis, since the teachers' union joined the political movement of that year without economic interests. In this context, more than a partisan identity, one could say that a more patriotic idea characterized by the violation of the Constitution by other powers of the Honduran state is nuanced.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

- Fernández, M. (2006). Honduras. Cronología de mayo-agosto de 2006. *Revista del OSAL*(20), 249-255.
- Funez, C. A. (2011). Las luchas magisterio en defensa de la educación y el estatuto del docente. *Revista Centroamericana de Teoría, Política, Economía e Historia* (10), 5-29.
- Girón, F. P., Sorto, R., Agurcia, M., Rubio, K., y Macías, F. (2013). *Renacer docente. Cincuentenario del COLPROSUMAH*. Tegucigalpa, Impresos Gráficos Sánchez.
- Lisky, M. (1968). Protest as a Political Resource. *The American Political Science Review*, 62(4), 1144-1158. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1953909>
- McAdam, D., Tarrow, S., & Tilly, C. (2001). *Dynamics of contention*, Cambridge University Press.
- Miralda, J. (2010). *Crónicas del golpe de Estado en Honduras*. Tegucigalpa.
- Moreno, I. (2004). Conflicto magisterial: crónica de un proceso inconcluso. *Revista Envío*, 270. <https://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/2471>
- Pérez, R. (14 de Enero de 2005). *Gobierno de Cantabria*. Obtenido de http://www.educantabria.es/docs/Digitales/Bachiller/LECTURAS_DIGITAL/Docs/HABERMAS/ppt/PPT7_hanna_arendt.ppt
- Posas, M. (2003). *Sindicalismo y gobierno. Una agenda para el diálogo en torno a la reforma educativa. El caso de Honduras*. Tegucigalpa: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras. <https://repositorioslatinoamericanos.uchile.cl/handle/2250/2677977>
- Reconciliación, C. D. (2011). *Cronología de la administración José Manuel Zelaya. Periodo de 27 de enero de 2006 al 25 de enero de 2009*. Tegucigalpa, CVR.
- Turner, V. (1969). *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure*. Brunswick and London: Aldine Transaction. https://books.google.com.cu/books/about/The_Ritual_Process.html?id=gaVwAAQAQBAJ&redir_esc=y

Conflict of interests:

The authors declare not to have any interest conflicts.

Authors' contribution:

The authors participated in the design and writing of the article, in the search and analysis of the information contained in the consulted bibliography.

Cite as

Esponda Velásquez, D. E., Casaña Mejía, E. A., Pérez Lemus, L., González Martínez, M. C. (2024). Teachers and the state of Honduras: between protests and agreements (1997-2009). *Mendive. Journal on Education*, 22(3), e3787.

<https://mendive.upr.edu.cu/index.php/MendiveUPR/article/view/3787>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)