

TO GOVERN AND TO SERVE

A new book synthesizes lessons from a 30-country study of education, roads and water services

15 June 2017. The Global Development Network (GDN) and the Peru-based Group for the Analysis of Development (GRADE) co-hosted the launch of the new book, 'Improving Access and Quality of Public Services in Latin America: To Govern and To Serve' at the GRADE offices in Barranco, Lima on Thursday the 15th of June, 2017.

During her opening speech, the Vice-Minister of Finance of Peru, Rossana Polastri, said the book set up an important contribution to the implementation of the development agenda: "The book is aligned with our priorities. It is a luxury for academics to have knowledge and experiences from around the world and we need to take more advantage of that."

The book captures lessons from governance and public service delivery from a 30-country project of education, roads and water services in Latin America. Three successful elements of governance emerge from it: better information for users, increased accountability through paid services, and an enabling political culture. The variety of case-studies examined in the volume focus on wider political economy questions, on the intricacies of political competition and governance reform, and on public spending efficiency in countries as varied as Colombia, Peru, Chile and Uruguay. GDN's Guillermo Perry (Board member) and Ramona Angelescu Naqvi (Director of Programs) co-edited the book.

In his foreword to the e-book, GDN's President, Pierre Jacquet, says the book is important because it reflects a "successful attempt to approach governance issues from a concrete, local and empirical, instrumental perspective." He emphasizes that this approach is an essential component of poverty reduction and inclusive growth strategies.

According to Miguel Jaramillo, Executive Director of GRADE and co-author of one of the chapters, improving public services is critical to making sustainable the gains of recent economic growth in the region and to consolidating democracies. "Some of the key questions that this book addresses in an original and fruitful way are what kind of governance structures are required to provide quality services to citizens? And, which public policy instruments best serve this purpose?"

The book has also received critical acclaim from experts and scholars working in the area of governance and public service delivery. Ariel Fiszbein, Senior Fellow & Program Director, Education, Inter-American Dialogue, USA, says in his review, that the book deepens collective understanding of the institutional, political and social factors affecting the quality of services by providing "a nuanced perspective of the role played by information and governance arrangements in affecting the behaviors of providers, decision makers and users of services."

Towards a future research agenda, the discussion suggested researchers should set their agendas thinking about long-term challenges thus policy makers can rely on a stock of quality evidence. It was also highlighted the relevance of designing public policies from the needs of citizens and how they relate to the State. In addition, the inter-sectorality emerged as a key element to enhance institutional arrangements that allow better quality in service delivery.

The book can be ordered via Palgrave-MacMillan or Amazon in hard copy or as an e-book.

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