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**REGIONAL REPORT ON EDUCATION FOR ALL
IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
(THAILAND 22 – 24 MARCH 2011)**

- UNESCO, Santiago 2011 -

**Regional Report on Education for All in
Latin America and the Caribbean**

Thailand 22 – 24 March 2011

**Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the
Caribbean
OREALC/UNESCO Santiago**



Regional Bureau of Education for
Latin America and the Caribbean
UNESCO Santiago

Latin America and the Caribbean: Main Characteristics

This report covers the 41 member countries and territories of UNESCO in Latin America and the Caribbean, which are listed below with their identifiers (used in graphs and tables).

Latin America		Caribbean	
AR	Argentina	AI	Anguilla
BO	Bolivia	AG	Antigua and Barbuda
BR	Brazil	AW	Aruba
CO	Colombia	AN	Netherlands Antilles
CR	Costa Rica	BS	Bahamas
CU	Cuba	BB	Barbados
CL	Chile	BZ	Belize
EC	Ecuador	BM	Bermuda
SV	El Salvador	DM	Dominica
GT	Guatemala	GD	Grenada
HN	Honduras	GY	Guyana
MX	Mexico	HT	Haiti
NI	Nicaragua	KY	Cayman Islands
PN	Panama	TC	Turks and Caicos Islands
PY	Paraguay	VG	British Virgin Islands
PE	Peru	JM	Jamaica
DO	Dominican Republic	MS	Montserrat
UY	Uruguay	KN	Saint Kitts and Nevis
VN	Venezuela	VC	St. Vincent and the Grenadines
		LC	St. Lucia
		SR	Suriname
		TT	Trinidad and Tobago

- Diversity: LAC comprises 5 languages and many indigenous languages.
- According to the World Bank Classification most countries of the region are middle income countries; nine are low middle income countries (Belize, Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Nicaragua and Paraguay) while only one is classified as a low income country, Haiti.
- According to the UNDP Classification, most LAC countries have a High Human Development Index. On the extremes, only Barbados has a Very High Human Development Index, while Haiti has a Low Human Development Index.

1. INTRODUCTION

The following report was prepared for the 2011 High Level Group meeting in Jomtien, Thailand. In the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region, progress towards meeting the EFA targets is fostered through the Regional Education Project (EFA/PRELAC) action framework. The report is based upon a review of the progress achieved through the EFA/PRELAC, identifying remaining challenges in education in this particular region, as well as to give inputs into strategic and initiatives to address these challenges.

The main issues of concern, problems and obstacles to fulfil quality EFA stayed basically the same over the years. The analysis¹ of the time series data between the Jomtien and Dakar conferences (1990-2000) identified major challenges for the region, such as the lack of extension and improvement of Early Childhood Care and Education; problems with repetition and drop-out in primary education; extending the offer and completion of education for young people and adults; a lack of equity in many dimensions of quality of education, leaving certain social groups at the margin of the educational system; functional illiteracy; and severe problems with learning achievements and quality education.

A juxtaposition of the present analysis and the sub-regional reports presented in Dakar, in the year 2000, shows clear improvement in the region, however the old problems remain and haven't lost their relevance.

During the first decade of the XXI century, the Latin America and Caribbean region went through an important period of sustained economic growth. The 2000s have seen some positive signs regarding the improvement of living conditions of the population and have also shown important improvements in terms of literacy and access as well as completion of all educational levels in most countries.

Latin American and Caribbean states move towards EFA goals, however not all at the same pace. It can already be said that a lot of countries of the region will probably not be able to achieve all EFA objectives by 2015, especially in terms of quality education in its broadest sense.

Social inequalities in the region still remain in the form of complex structural problems, which are rooted in the region's geography and history. This legacy results in the consolidation of socioeconomic, territorial, ethnic and gender inequalities concerning the completion of primary and secondary education.

Though access to primary schools does not seem to be a major problem in the region anymore, there are still severe deficits in terms of the academic achievement of the students. Educational achievement in most countries is poor and represents a real threat to the pursuit of quality education for all. The employment of duly certified teachers, better teacher training and more flexible curricula with student-centred approaches are directly related to this issue.

On the whole, quality of education, and more notably, access to and quality of secondary education and TVET emerge as main challenges in the lead-up to 2015, and in the post-2015

¹ See: *Informe Subregional de América Latina. Evaluación de Educación para Todos en el año 2000*. http://portal.unesco.org/geography/es/ev.php-URL_ID=9660&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html and *Síntesis Subregional de la Educación para Todos*. http://portal.unesco.org/geography/es/ev.php-URL_ID=9659&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

scenario. Strategic interventions and redesign of public policies are critical to address these challenges.

The following report briefly outlines a broad collection of topics that describe the state of education in LAC, in the last years, its main trends, as well as the difficulties the region is facing in order to provide quality education for the whole population. With the available information, an overview of the region is provided, including a comparative analysis between countries' educational situations in the last decade.

We aspire for this document to contribute to a better understanding of the state of education in Latin America and the Caribbean, and to enrich the debate on this issue.

2. IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL AGENDAS FOR EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

In the last years, important international agendas and programmes for education to support and complement EFA have been agreed upon in the region.

The Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean (PRELAC by its Spanish acronym), adopted by the ministers of education in Havana, Cuba (2002), intends to promote substantial changes in educational policies and practice, through the implementation of initiatives in five focus areas (contents and practices; teachers; culture of schools; management; and social responsibility) deemed to have strategic importance in the region for achieving the EFA objectives. The UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC/UNESCO Santiago) serves as its Executive Secretariat.

The project also represents a technical and political forum that promotes dialogue, the collective construction of knowledge and exchange among education system leaders, teachers, professional educators and other concerned stakeholders.

As a result of the Second Meeting of the Inter-Governmental Committee of the Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean, (PRELAC II), EFA/PRELAC was further developed, in particular by means of a conceptual framework regarding quality education as a fundamental human right. A baseline document was submitted (Quality Education for All: a Human Rights Issue), in which education is deemed a public asset and a right from which no-one should be excluded. In this sense, quality education for all is defined through five dimensions: relevance, pertinence, equity, effectiveness and efficiency².

At the Second Summit of the Americas, in Santiago de Chile in 1998, the 34 head of states and governments of the Organization of American States (OAS) adopted a plan of action in which education was identified as a regional priority. This led to the approval of a programme with the three main goals for 2010. These objectives include universal access to quality primary education; access of at least 75% of young people to quality secondary education; and the offering of lifelong educational opportunities to the general population.³

As EFA, the Summit of the Americas action plan stresses that it is essential that quality education is available to everyone, especially children and youth whose participation is limited for reasons of gender, life in marginal areas, for rural and indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups.

Another important programme was launched by the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI by its Spanish acronym) in 2008 during the 18th Ibero-American Education Conference in El Salvador. The Educational Goals 2021 programme has 11 objectives, covering almost every aspect of education. Here again, quality education in combination with parity, and a special concern to reach the most marginalized, is considered of critical importance.

² UNESCO-OREALC. 2007. *Quality Education for All: A Human Rights Issue. Educational policies within the framework of the II Intergovernmental Meeting of the Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean (EFA/PRELAC)*. Santiago de Chile, OREALC UNESCO-Santiago. See also the EFA/PRELAC monitoring document: UNESCO/OREALC. 2007. *The State of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Santiago de Chile, OREALC-UNESCO. The edition for 2010 will be released in March 2011.

³ UNESCO participated in the monitoring of these goals. See: UNESCO-OREALC/OAS. 2011. *Educational Panorama, 2011: remaining challenges*. Santiago de Chile, OREALC/UNESCO Santiago, OAS, SEP de Mexico.

In conclusion, we can say that in the last decade the region was highly active in terms of developing international political agendas and common educational goals. This reflects recognition for education as a key factor for human development, and the fight against poverty, as well as a deep concern for improving the countries' educational systems.

3. CHANGES IN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND DONOR SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The situation regarding technical and financial development cooperation in the region shows both signs of change and continuity⁴. In the region, a lot of external funding for education still tends to follow traditional patterns such as soft loans and grants. Development Banks, UN agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), bilateral agencies, and international foundations all issue these. However, at the same time, there has, in the past decade, been a shift in thinking on how development and its funding – particularly in the area of education – are structured.

However, simultaneously several Middle-Income Countries (MICs) are emerging as donors and development partners across the LAC region. Particularly through related mechanisms such as South-South Cooperation, there has been a move away from so-called ‘horizontal’, country-specific programming, towards ‘vertical’, often issue-based sub-regional, regional or even global programming.

What has actually emerged in the region is a mix of these two modalities, with donors and development agencies still pursuing bilateral, country-based programming, while becoming increasingly interested in implementing multi-country programming. With its focus on PRELAC (the Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean coordinated by UNESCO Santiago), regional programming in education in Latin America and the Caribbean lends itself to the latter. Its proponents argue that this type of vertical programming would ensure that the same standards governed the programming, while also resulting in more efficient implementation, in turn, speeding up progress towards meeting goals.

Alongside this, there is increased interest in better identifying and evaluating the results of development work in line with international commitments. These changes have created challenges and opportunities for UNESCO and signal the need for all development partners to evaluate and revisit their practices and goals.

With regards to funding education programmes, and in addition to their own government budgets, some MICs in the Latin American and Caribbean region use a mechanism called the Self-Benefitting Modality (SBM). As the name implies, the SBM is aimed mainly at national projects and interventions. It is an attractive mechanism for countries that have the requisite funds for education programming, but not the capacity to implement them. Here they turn to UNESCO to not only manage the funds, but for the agency’s technical expertise, experience and guidance with programming.

It is judged that as countries develop and their capacities become more robust, the SBM may become increasingly redundant. As a result, other funding options need to be considered. Besides this, the use of the SBM serves the Member State’s interests rather than those of the agency and the size and project portfolio have not always fallen within UNESCO’s core mandates. As a result, a rethink of the mechanism is required. Lately, other education funding mechanisms besides SBM have become attractive within the region and have to be taken into

⁴ The UNESCO office in Santiago de Chile organized a roundtable on ‘Emerging Donors for Education Funding in Latin America and the Caribbean Countries’ conference, which took place the 16th and 17th of December 2009 in Mexico City and resulting in the following paper: UNESCO-OREALC. 2010. *Emerging donors for Education Funding in Latin American and the Caribbean Countries: An Overview and Issues Paper*. Document prepared by Daniela Di Lorenzo and Elizabeth Mills.

account by UNESCO. These include: South-South Cooperation, Endowment Funding, Public Private Partnerships, and Debt Swaps.

An issue that overshadows the development agenda is obviously the impact of the global economic slowdown. Potentially, its effects will be significant: perceived wisdom suggests that it will leave donors with less funds to spend, governments with the need to redirect finances away from areas like education, and the private sector with reduced capital and other resources for development agenda work.

4. TOWARDS EFA 2015: THE REGIONAL STATE OF AFFAIRS

The following section provides a view on the state of education in the region by EFA goal.

4.1 EXPANDING AND IMPROVING EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

In almost all Latin American and Caribbean countries' education laws, policies and programmes, ECCE is incorporated. It is normally defined as education targeted at children between birth, or the age of three months, and 5 to 6 years, depending on the country's age for the start of basic education. This education level is referred to by different names in different countries but is generally organized into two or three cycles, as is the case for primary education. The last cycle is usually referred to as "preschool" (*preescolar*) or "pre-primary" (*preprimario*), with earlier cycles known as "nursery" (*parvularia*), "initial" (*inicial*) or "infant" (*de la infancia*) education.⁵

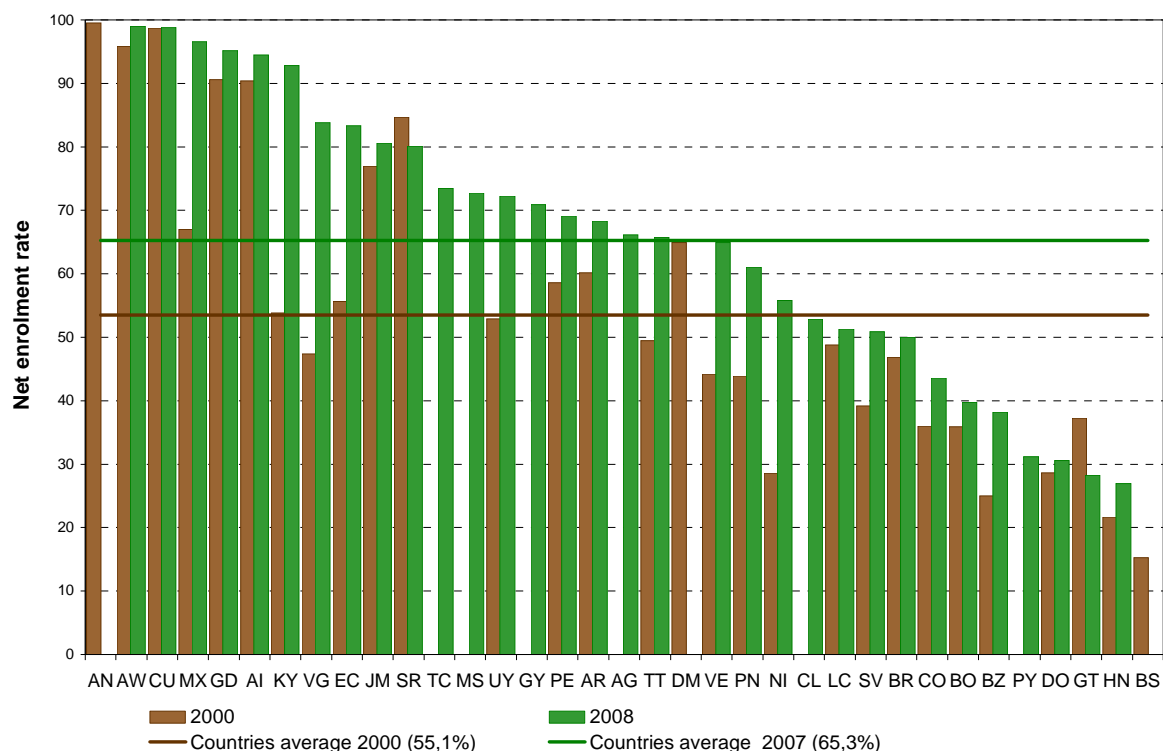
As there is very little statistical information on early childhood care and education available, the following analysis refers only to pre-primary education, giving some information on enrolment and attendance rates, parity, and data on certified teachers for this educational level.

Pre-primary enrolment in the region has gradually increased over the last few years. However, the numbers reflect a need for greater efforts. Average net enrolment in countries⁶ for which information was available stood at 55.1% in 2000, and at 65.3% in 2008, representing an increase of around 10 percentage points. Six countries have rates lower than 40%, and only ten have rates above 80%.

⁵ UNESCO/OREALC. 2010. *Early childhood care and education. Regional Report. Latin America and the Caribbean. Report prepared for the World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education. Moscow. September 2010.* Santiago de Chile, UNESCO/OREALC.

⁶ To obtain reference values with which to compare national averages and rates, we average national figures without weighting them by population. The results are thus not regional averages, which would require weighting national figures according to the relevant reference populations before averaging them. The decision to use unweighted averages of country figures rather than regional averages as reference values reflects a desire to give the same importance to each country's situation on the different dimensions analysed, regardless of its demographic weight within the region. The "country averages" mentioned at various times in this document are thus unweighted averages of the various countries' national figures.

Graph 1. Evolution of net enrolment rates in pre-primary education. 2000- 2008.



Source: Data base of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).

In terms of gender, the school attendance rates of girls and boys one year younger than the official entrance age for primary education are rather equal in most countries.

However, there are significant gaps between the highest and the lowest income quintiles, as well as between urban and rural population in almost all of the countries for which data are available, indicating important disparities in access to this level of education across socioeconomic strata.

4.2 ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

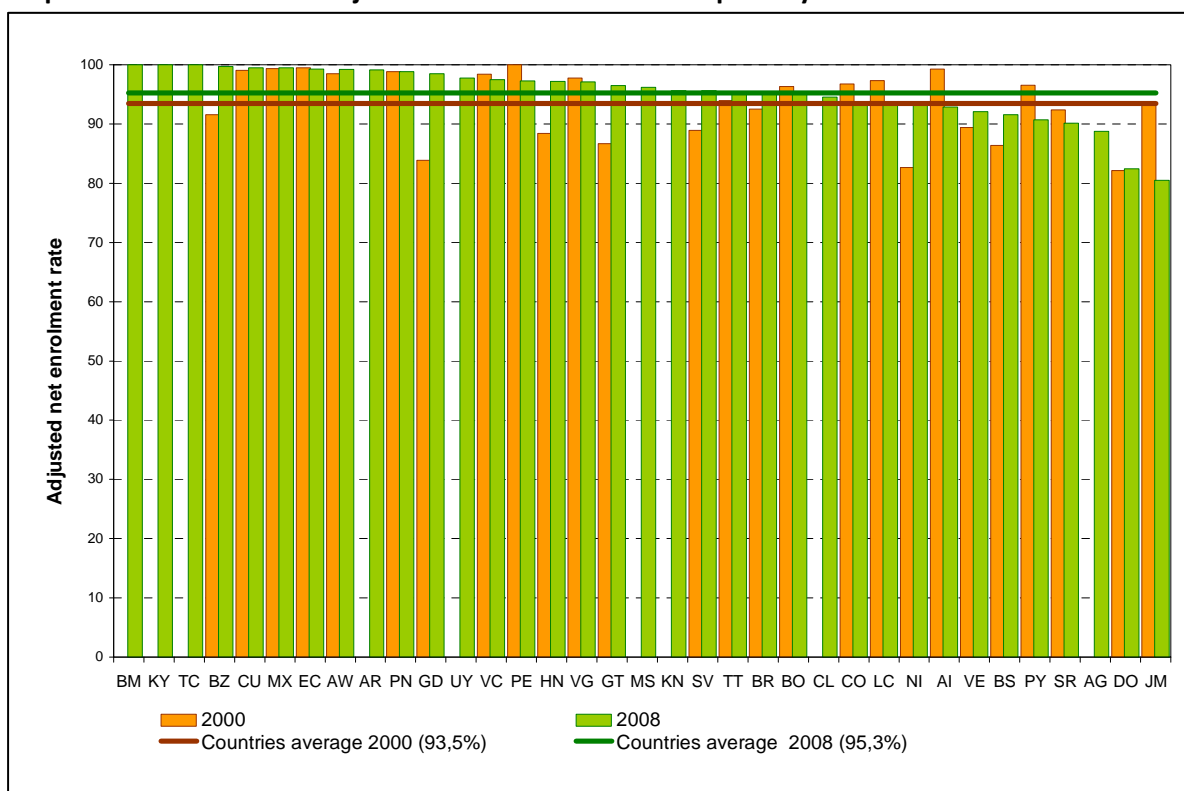
The following section refers to the second EFA goal, of universal primary education (UPE), providing some information on access, repetition and completion of this educational level.

4.2.1 Access to primary education

One indicator for access to primary education is the adjusted net enrolment rate (ANER). This represents the percentage of children of the official primary school age who are actually enrolled in either primary or secondary school.

Graph 2 shows countries in descending order of their adjusted net enrolment rates for primary education in 2008. The figures indicate that, on average, the region has been highly successful in this area. However, the average rate was almost unchanged from 2000 (93.5%) to 2008 (95.3%).

Graph 2. Evolution of adjusted net enrolment rates in primary education. 2000-2008.



Source: Data base of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).

These figures show that most children in the Region enter primary education at some stage. However, the net intake rate in first grade in 2008 was only 72%. The net intake rate in first grade is a way of measuring the extent of timely entry into school⁷. This finding suggests that the region is encountering challenges in meeting the second EFA goal, since children who lack access at the appropriate age and enter school later than they theoretically should, are more likely to drop out before completing primary education.

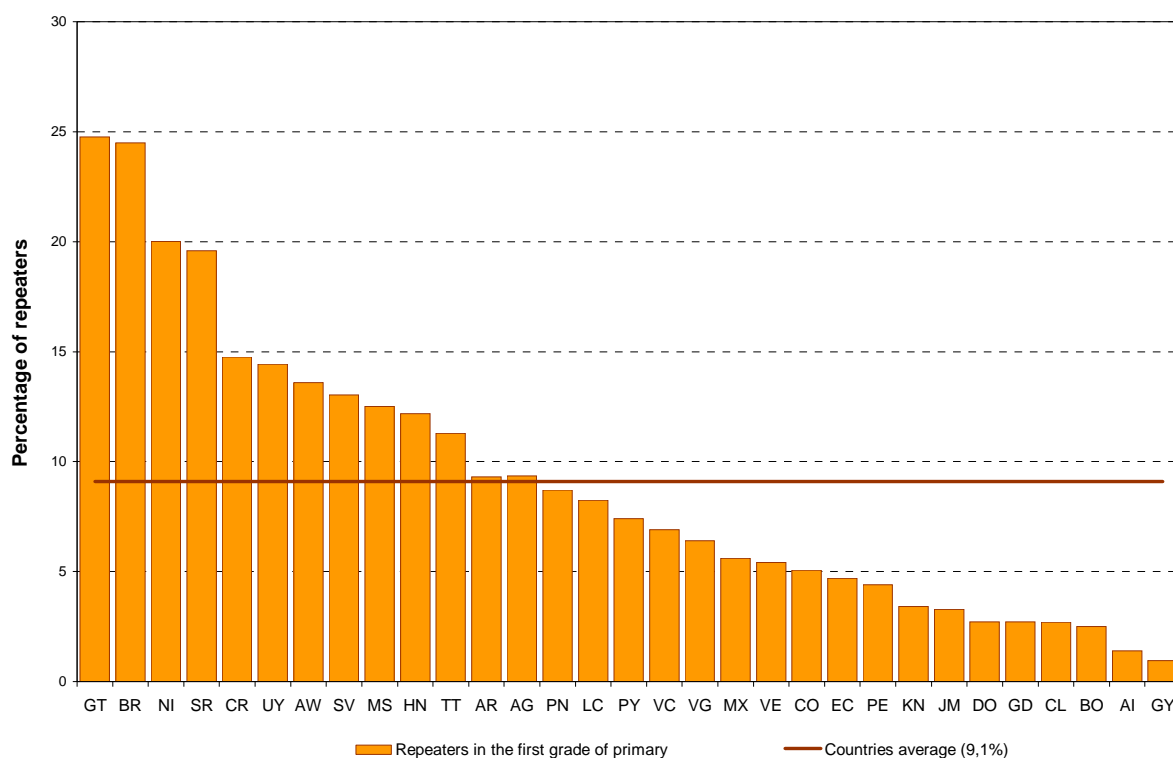
4.2.2 Problems with repetition and early school leaving

The opportunities of a child to complete primary education and to progress to other levels of education are affected by delayed access to primary education and repetition.

Graph 3 shows the percentage of children who repeat first grade in each country. The average for the countries for which information was available is 9.1%.

⁷ It represents the number of children in primary school during a given year, at what is theoretically the appropriate age, as a percentage of the total number of children of that age.

Graph 3. Percentage of repeaters in the first grade of primary education. 2008.



Source: Data base of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).

Despite its importance, this indicator must be considered with caution, because while it can reflect a system’s efficiency, it also can be influenced by the particular policies and educational models. Some countries have automatic grade promotion policies, while others promote students on the basis of age. In many cases, the relation between grade repetition and academic performance is somewhat tenuous, since the criteria for evaluating learning vary greatly from one country to another, and even within countries that have no national criteria governing repetition. As repetition very frequently doesn’t contribute to better performance and even foster early school leaving, the percentage of children repeating is an effective direct measure of the waste of resources that occurs when a child enrolls in the same grade for two consecutive years.

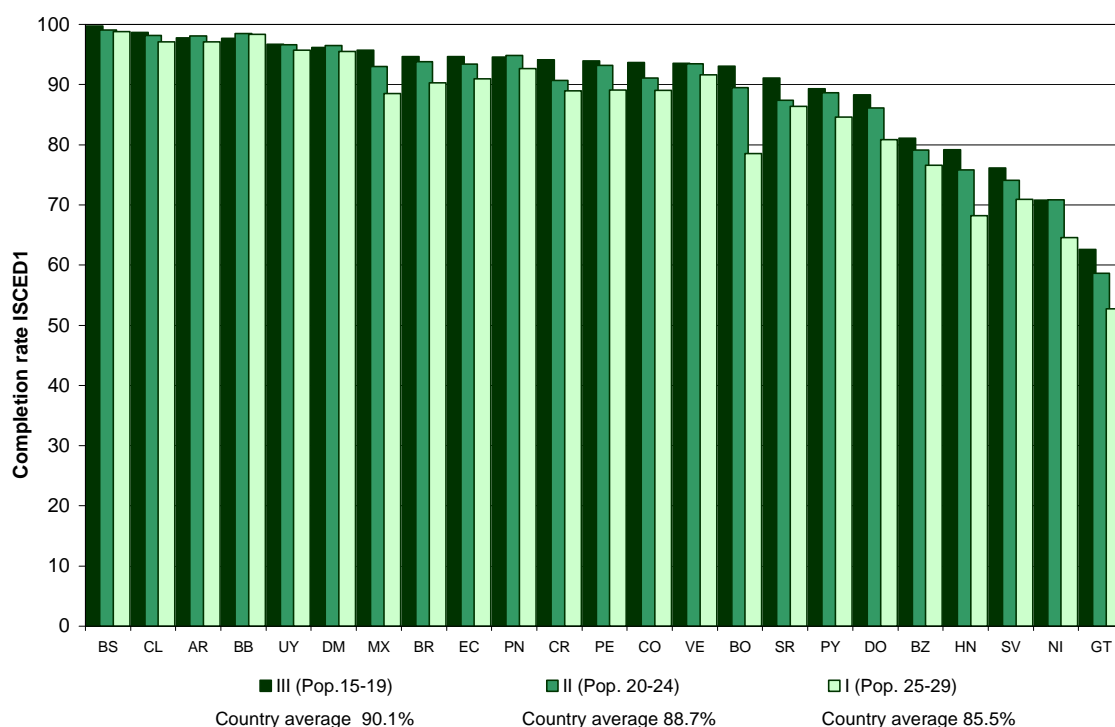
4.2.3 Completion in primary education

Primary education completion rates measure the percentage of adults who have finished this level of education. This indicator focuses on the educational performance of individuals whose age qualifies them to have finished primary education. It uses sociodemographic data and reports on the percentages of the population in various age groups that have completed primary school.

The graph below presents data on completion rates for three age groups (15-19, 20-24 and 25-29). Comparing completion rates for these groups provides information on progress over time.

Graph 4 shows the youngest group first, since members of this group are likely to most recently having completed primary school.

Graph 4. Primary completion rate (ISCED 1). Comparison between three age groups. 2008.



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

For the youngest group (15-19), seven out of 23 countries have completion rates of over 95%.

Thus, the average rate of completion in the 15-to-19 age group is 90.1% in the region. This drops to 88.7% for the 20-24 age group, and to 85.5% for those in the 25-29 range. The figures reveal clear progress in the completion of primary education in the region, although not sufficient to meet Goal I overall. Also, the graph shows major differences between countries in completion rates for primary education.

Despite the shortcomings, it should be stressed that the countries with low primary education completion rates for the oldest group have achieved significant increases: Guatemala 18.8%, Bolivia 18.5% and Honduras 16.1%.

4.3 RESPONDING TO LEARNING NEEDS OF ALL YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC),⁸ completing at least 12 years of schooling – the time required to complete secondary education in most of the region’s countries – constitutes the minimum educational capital for well-being. This is because that amount of schooling is associated with a probability of greater than 80% of securing a job with an income that provides an adequate standard of living.⁹

⁸ ECLAC. 1997. *Social Panorama of Latin America 1997*. Santiago de Chile, ECLAC.

⁹ This concept involves an “educational threshold”. Operationally, one can measure the threshold necessary for staying out of poverty, which is currently 12 years of formal education. See ECLAC. 2000. *Social Panorama of Latin America 1999-2000*. Santiago, Chile, ECLAC.

Secondary education is also the key to access to tertiary education, assuring even better work opportunities highly increasing the probability of remaining above the poverty line.

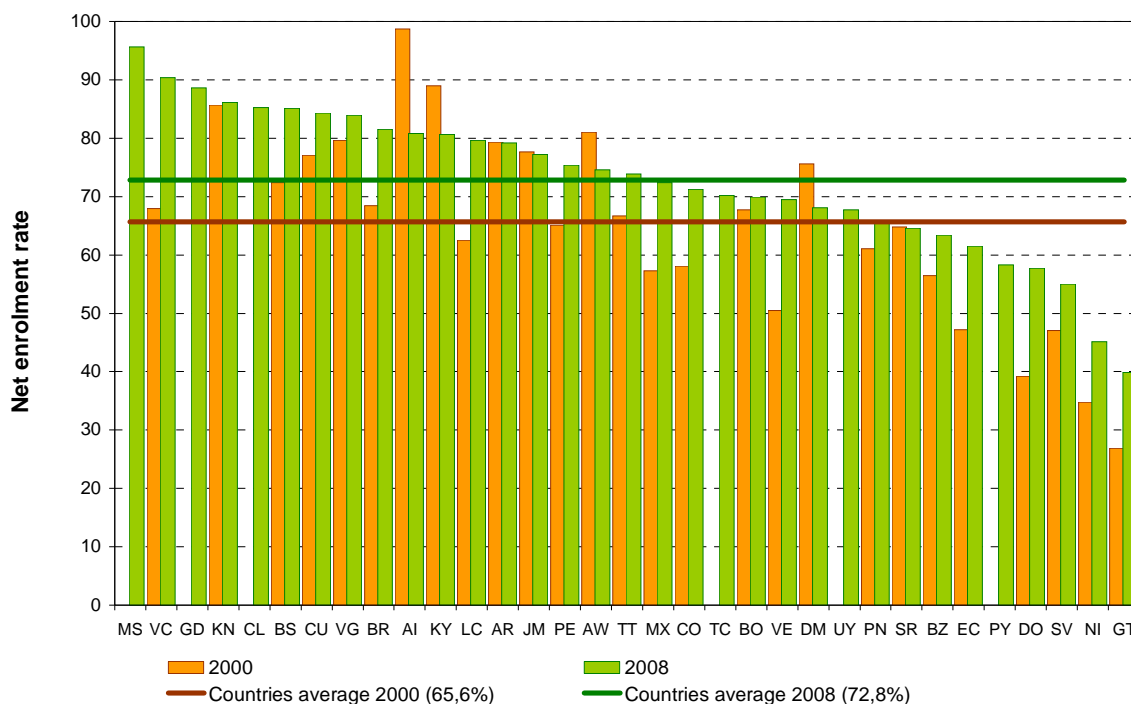
The following section gives some information on access and completion of secondary education, tertiary education and the highest educational attainment in the population.

4.3.1 Access to secondary education

The net enrolment rate (NER) in secondary education is an indicator of access to this level of education. It is a proxy measure for participation of adolescents and young people who are of official secondary-school age in both secondary education levels (ISCED 2 and 3).

Graph 5 ranks the countries from highest to lowest secondary NER as of school year 2008, showing recent levels in the region ranging from 39.9% (Guatemala) to 95.6% (Montserrat) and averaging 72.8%. The average increase in net secondary enrolment between 2000 and 2008 in the region was 7.2%.

Graph 5. Evolution in the net enrolment rates in secondary education. 2000-2008.



Source: Data base of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).

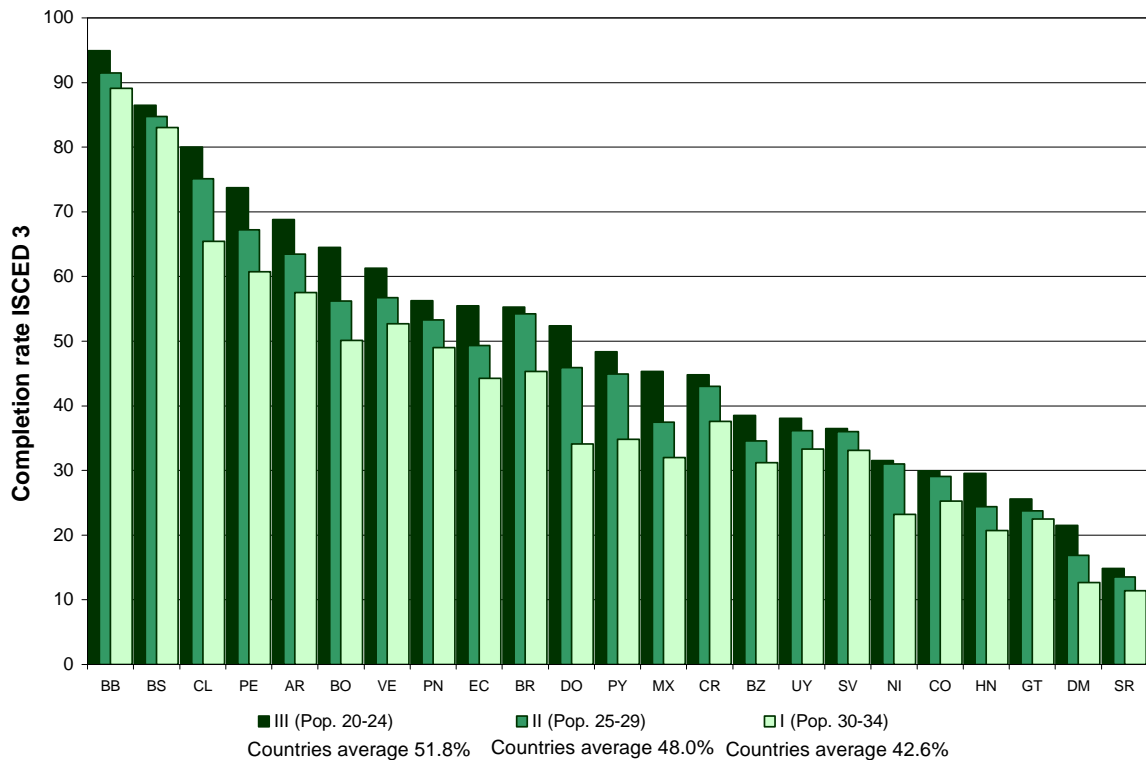
There was a rising trend in access to secondary education in most of the countries for which information was available. The greatest increases took place in Guatemala (48.5%) and the Dominican Republic (47.2%). Four countries show a substantial downward trend.

4.3.2 Completion of secondary education

The following information shows upper secondary education (ISCED 3) completion rates. Data is provided for three age groups (20-24, 25-29 and 30-34), showing generational changes over time.

Graph 6 is organized to show completion levels in youngest group (those who most recently were of the age appropriate to complete this level of education) in comparison with the older groups (Group II and III).

Graph 6. Upper secondary education completion rate (ISCED 3). Comparison between three age groups. 2008.



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Secondary school completion rates for the three age groups are as follows: 51.8% for the 20-24 age range, 48% for the 25-29 group and 42.6% for the 30-34 age range.

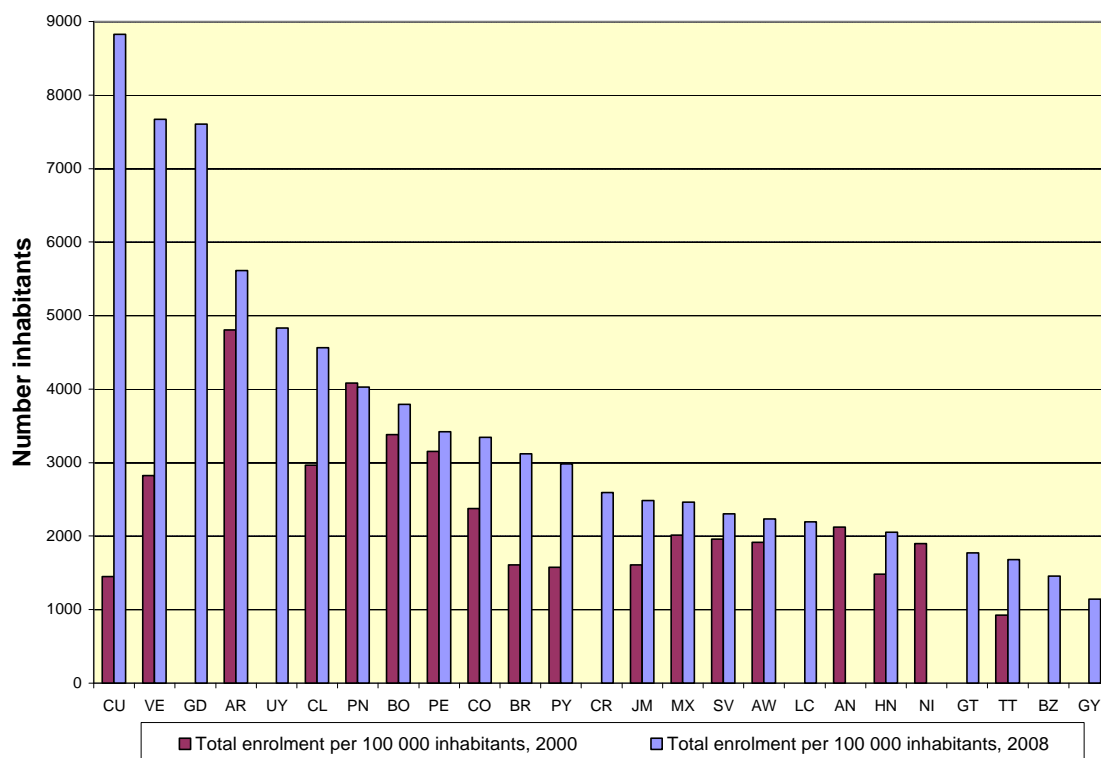
The countries with the lowest completion rates for the oldest group have made significant progress among the youngest members of their populations. Their current figures are as follows: Dominica 69.3%, Dominican Republic 53.5%, Honduras 42.5%, Mexico 41.7%, Paraguay 38.9%, Nicaragua 35.6% and Surinam 29.7%.

Averaging the various countries' difference between their youngest- and oldest-group completion rates shows that on average the countries have increased completion rates at this educational level by 25.7%.

4.3.3 Tertiary Education

As evidence on access to tertiary education, the following graph shows changes over the 2000-2008 period in the number of students in tertiary education per 100,000 inhabitants. The data include students enrolled in tertiary education abroad.

Graph 7. Number of students in tertiary education per 100,000 inhabitants (ISCED 5A-5B-6). Evolution year 2000-2008.



Source: Data base of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).

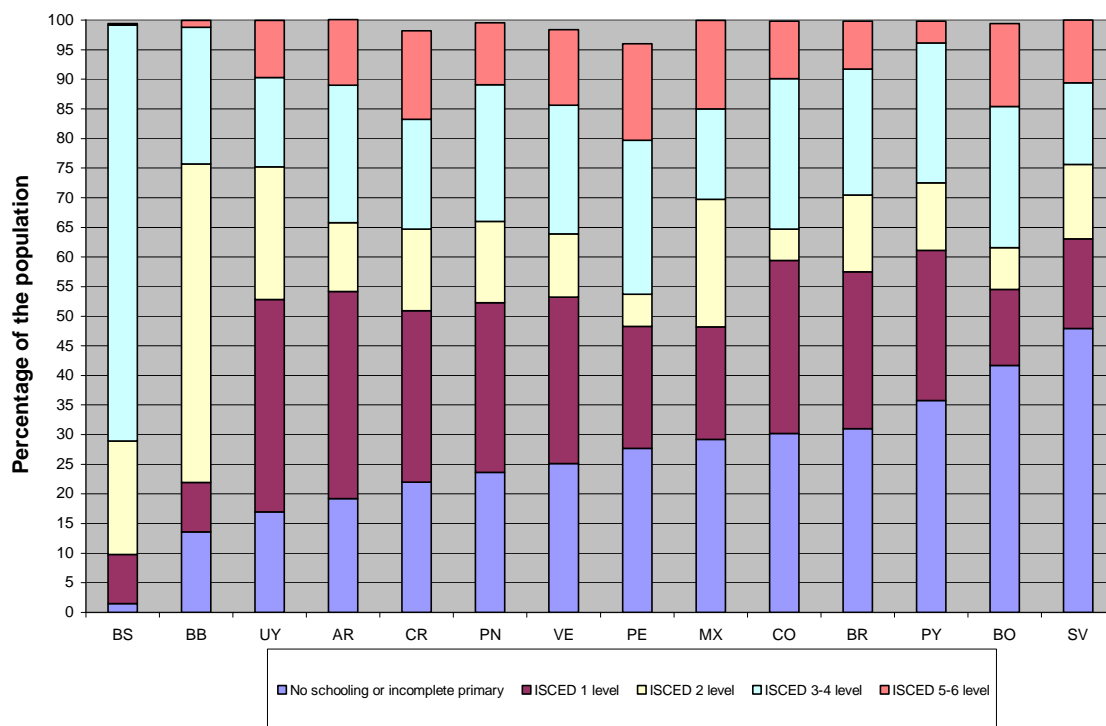
A comparison of enrolment rates in 2000 and in 2008 reveals a significant increase in access to tertiary education in most countries for which information is available. Uruguay's progress is particularly noteworthy. It has increased the number of students in tertiary education by over 2000 per 100,000 inhabitants.

4.3.4 Educational attainment in the population

An important aspect of lifelong learning has to do with the competencies and basic knowledge provided by basic education. There were important advances in the region in enrolment and completion at all educational levels, although universal completion of primary education is still non-existent, and secondary education coverage remains low in many countries.

An important indicator for educational progress in a country is educational attainment of the adult population. Graph 8, below, presents the highest level of educational attainment in the population of 25 years and older, as a percentage of the total population of the countries in the region.

Graph 8. Educational attainment. Population 25 years and older.



Source: Data base of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).

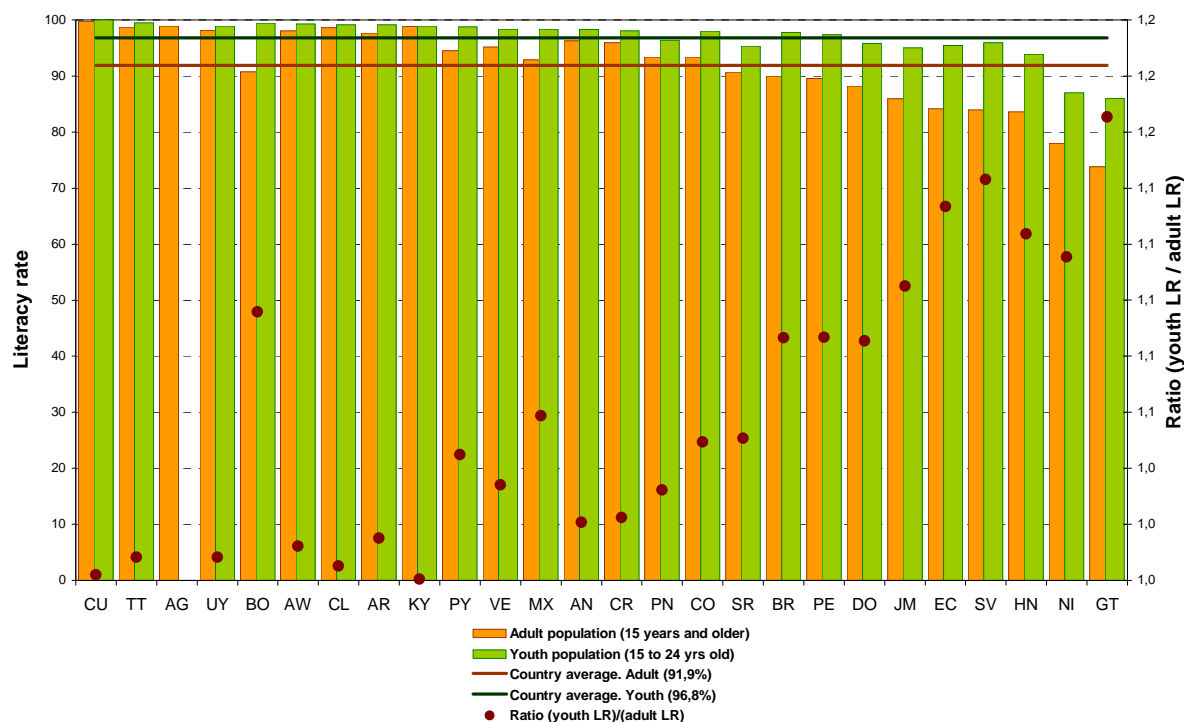
4.4 ADULT LITERACY

Next, we show literacy rates of the young population and the adult population, which reflect the achievements of primary education and literacy programmes.

Graph 9 illustrates major improvement in literacy in the young population. Especially remarkable is the variation in those countries whose adult populations are less literate.

When the ratio of the literacy rate in the relatively young population (15-24) to the literacy rate in the entire adult population (defined as 15+) is greater than 1, the young are more literate than the adults. The country average for the region is 1.07, showing the progress that has been made. The region shows a consistent increase, given the comparative literacy rates of young people and adult populations. The average difference between the two groups is 4.9%.

Graph 9. Literacy rates. Comparison between youth and adult population. 2008.



Source: Data base of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).

However, it has to be stressed that functional illiteracy is still considered a challenge in the region. Therefore, a broader concept of literacy has to evolve in response to changes in patterns of communication in modern society and the demands of the workplace. Rather than assuming a divide between literate and illiterate, researchers propose a continuum, with differing levels and uses of literacy according to context. Thus, there is no single notion of literacy as a skill which people possess or not, but multiple literacies.¹⁰

This broader vision of the concept of literacy sets out great methodological challenges for its measurement. One has to abandon the classic dichotomy of literate/non-literate as well as move away from measurement based on self perception of the individual. The Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP)¹¹ faces this challenge. This initiative will help further understand the occurrence and nature of illiteracy in the region.

¹⁰ UNESCO. 2008. *The Global Literacy Challenge. A profile of youth and adult literacy at the mid point of the United Nations Literacy Decade 2003-2012*. Paris, UNESCO.

¹¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2009. *The next generation of literacy statistics. Implementing the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme*. Montreal, Canada.

4.5 GENDER PARITY AND EQUITY LEVELS ON OTHER TOPICS

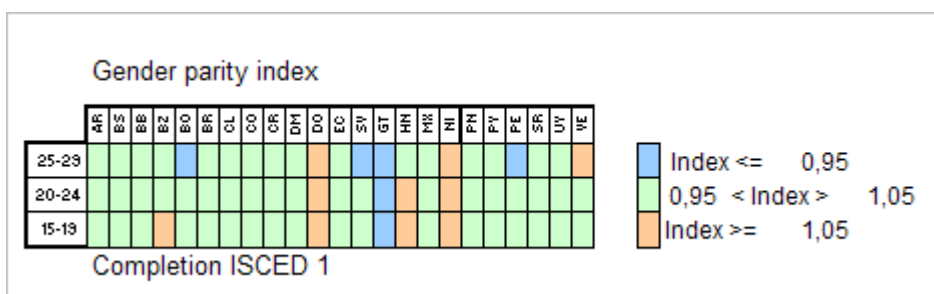
Below we are going to present information on gender parity concerning the conclusion of primary and secondary education and literacy as well as on equity in the completion rates of income groups, inhabitants of different residential areas (rural/urban) and ethnicity.

4.5.1 Gender parity

The tables presented show gender parity rates for three age ranges in each country in order to show how the situation has changed, in this respect, over time. In the case of primary education the three age ranges are 25-29, 20-24 and 15-19 years. For secondary education the age ranges are 30-34, 25-29 y 20-24 years.

As defined by UNESCO, a level of parity in the completion rates below 0.95 (represented in blue) shows higher completion among the male population. A level of parity in the completion rates of over 1.05 (represented in pink) indicates higher completion among females. And green shows some level of parity.

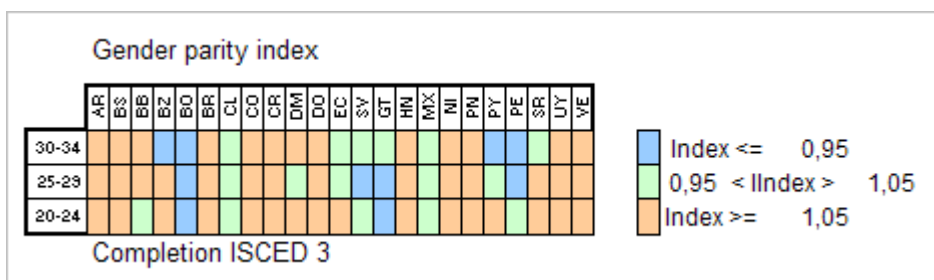
Table 10. Gender parity index. Completion ISCED 1 by age groups. 2008.



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

As one can see, some countries with low levels of gender parity in the oldest age group show improvement in the younger population. This is the case in Bolivia, El Salvador, Peru and Venezuela. It should be noted that gender parity has not improved in Guatemala or Nicaragua.

Table 11. Gender parity index. Completion of ISCED 3 by age group. 2008.



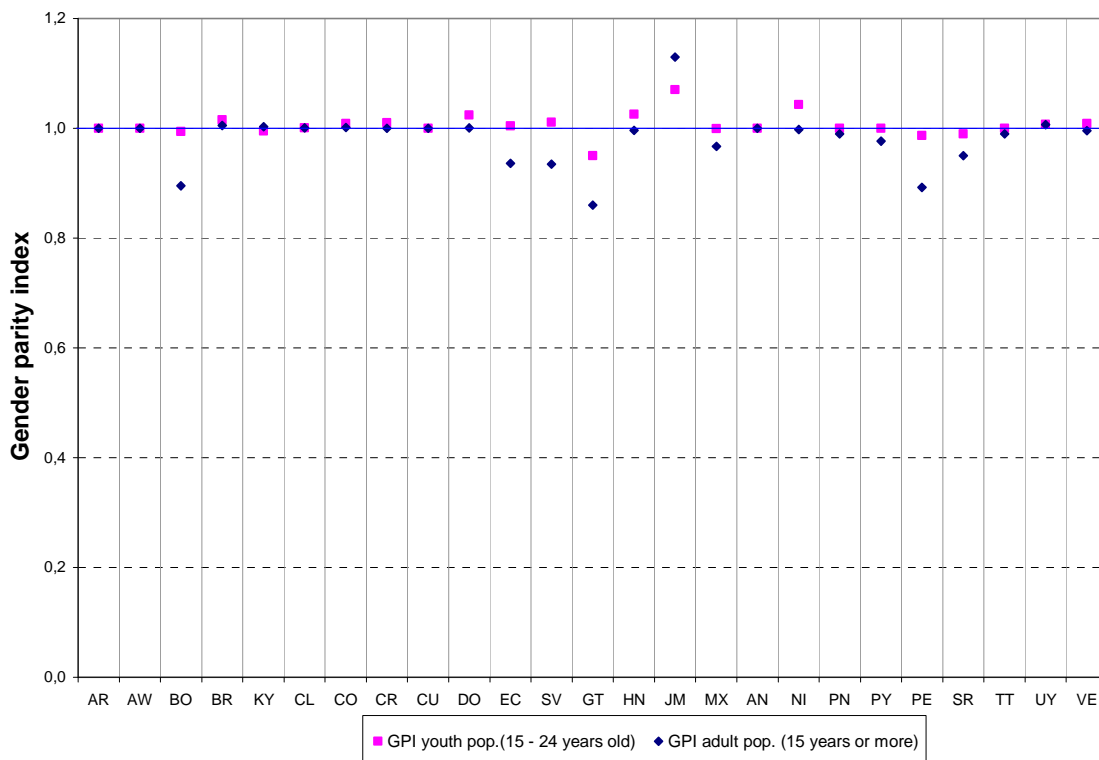
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

This situation of inequity to the disadvantage of the male population in the region is distinctive. The high level of gender parity in access to and completion of primary education is

striking. However, the situation at the secondary level in most of the region's countries is to the disadvantage of male learners.

Graph 12 shows gender parity indices for literacy rates in the young population and the adult population. As in the cases discussed above, values greater than 1.05 indicate that the female population is at an advantage, while values less than 0.95 indicate that the male population is at an advantage.

Graph 12. Gender parity index of literacy rates. Comparison between youth and adult population. 2008.



Source: Data base of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).

As can be seen, gender parity in literacy is quite high in the region, especially among the young. The country average gender parity for literacy is 0.98 in the adult population and 1.01 in the young population.

Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador and Peru have inequities, with the male population at an advantage in the adult population, but all of the mentioned countries show parity in the young population.

4.5.2 Parity issues on other topics

Social inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean is a problem that hasn't been resolved yet. Until today, there is a close relation between household income, the educational achievement of children, and the kind of employment they will have, based on their level of education. Data from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) show that only Argentina and Chile fall in a desirable range for the youngest two age groups when comparing the lowest and highest income quintiles of the population. For secondary education, no country shows parity in terms of the two extreme income groups.

The difference in primary completion rates for rural and urban areas continues also to be very significant in the region. Only Chile, Ecuador and Uruguay show residential parity for the youngest age group. For the completion of secondary education, no country has a situation of parity in any age group.

With regards to ethnicity¹², only a few countries collect disaggregated educational information. Within these countries, only Brazil and Chile show ethnic parity while Nicaragua experienced a decrease in this respect. In secondary education no country shows parity concerning ethnicity.

4.6 IMPROVING ALL ASPECTS OF THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Although the quality of educational systems cannot be reduced to academic achievement for measuring purposes only, levels of learning play a central role in evaluating the quality of education, and the findings of large scale assessments of learning are usually regarded as useful proxy measures for this.

In the last twenty years, after having implemented their national assessment systems, several Latin American countries joined regional and international assessment programmes. Amongst them are the SERCE and PISA studies, whose results will be presented in the following chapters.

4.6.1 Achievements in primary education – the SERCE Study

The last evaluation carried out by the Latin American Laboratory for the Assessment of Quality Education (LLECE by its Spanish acronym) was the Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (*Segundo Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo*, or SERCE).¹³ The SERCE study is a standardized international evaluation of achievement among primary students in 16 Latin American countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. Approximately 5,000 students, between 140 and 370 classrooms and 200 schools are evaluated for 3rd and 6th grade in each country. LLECE is part of the Regional Bureau of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean, OREALC/ / UNESCO Santiago.

The disciplines evaluated are reading, and mathematics among third- and sixth-grade students, and science among sixth-graders (in this case the evaluation was undertaken in eight countries only). The tests take two approaches. The first, which is curricular, focuses on areas of knowledge and processes common to the region's curricula. The other approach focuses on life skills as defined by UNESCO, and is based on the notion that what is taught at school must contribute positively to life beyond the period spent in school.

¹² It is important to highlight that the terms "indigenous" or "non-indigenous" are not used in an anthropological sense but in an operational way, in order to differentiate ethnic groups which traditionally have been in a disadvantaged situation concerning access and completion of educational levels, and those who have been in an advantaged position.

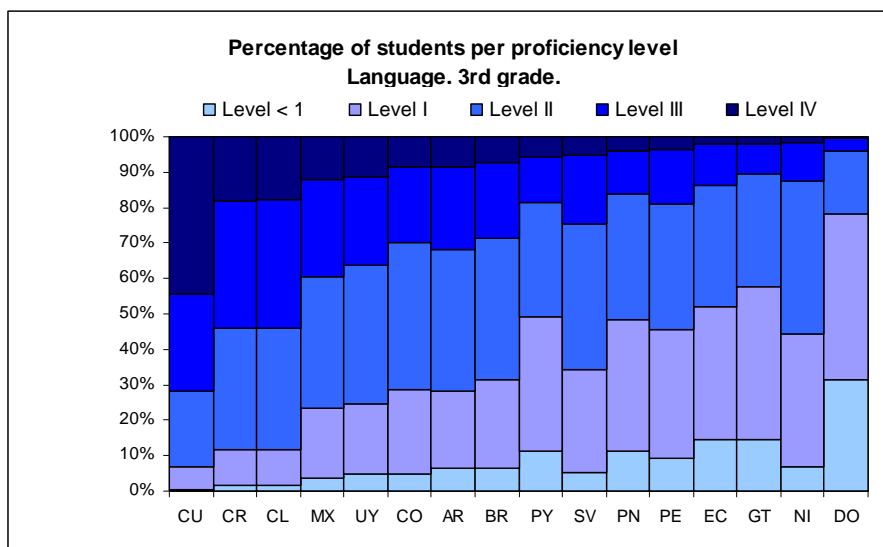
¹³ UNESCO-OREALC. 2008. *Los Aprendizajes de los Estudiantes de América Latina y El Caribe. Primer reporte de los resultados del Segundo Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo (SERCE)*. Santiago de Chile, UNESCO/OREALC.

The paragraphs below present the SERCE findings. They refer to four proficiency levels that reflect what students are capable of doing in each of the areas and grades evaluated. The graphs show proficiency for each country in blue. Dark blue shows the percentage of students at level IV, while light blue shows the percentage of students who have achieved at least level I.

The percentage of students who have reached the highest level of reading comprehension ranges from 0.6% (Dominican Republic) to 44.3% (Costa Rica), while the percentage below the minimum level ranges from 0.6% (Cuba) to 31.4% (Dominican Republic). Graph 13 shows these findings.

On average, 36% of third graders do not achieve at least level II performance in reading.

Graph 13. Percentage of students by proficiency levels in reading. 3rd grade. 2006.



Source: UNESCO-OREALC, *Primer Reporte SERCE: Los aprendizajes de los estudiantes de América Latina y el Caribe, 2008*.

The percentage of sixth grade students who have reached the highest level of reading comprehension ranges from 1.4% (Dominican Republic) to 50.7% (Cuba), while the percentage below the minimum level ranges from 0.2% (Cuba) to 4.5% (Ecuador).

On average for the countries evaluated, 23.3% of sixth grade students haven't reached at least level II in reading comprehension.

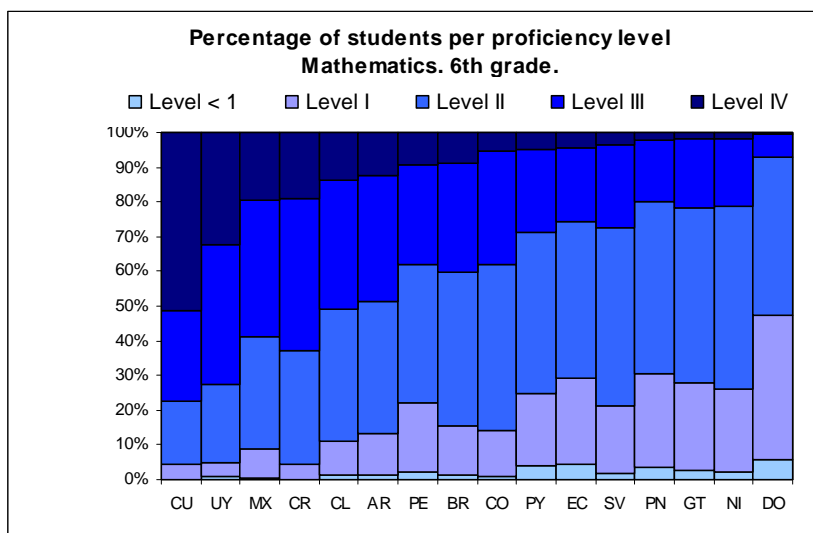
In third grade in mathematics, the percentage of students at the highest level ranges from 0.1% (Dominican Republic) to 54.4% (Cuba) and the percentage of those under the minimum level ranges from 1.1% (Cuba) to 41.3% (Dominican Republic).

On average for the countries evaluated, 49.2% of third graders have not reached at least level II in mathematics.

The percentage of sixth grade students who have reached the highest level of performance in mathematics ranges from 0.2% (Dominican Republic) to 51.1% (Cuba), while the percentage of those under the minimum level ranges from 0.1% (Cuba) to 5.7% (Dominican Republic). Graph 14 shows these findings.

On average for the countries evaluated, 19.4% of sixth grade students haven't reached at least level II in mathematics.

Graph 14. Percentage of students by proficiency levels in mathematics. 6th grade. 2006.



Source: UNESCO-OREALC. *Primer Reporte SERCE: Los aprendizajes de los estudiantes de América Latina y el Caribe, 2008.*

Only eight countries participated in the evaluation in the sciences: Argentina, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. This test is used only for sixth grade. The percentage of students who have reached the highest level ranges from 0% (Dominican Republic) to 34.7% (Cuba), while the percentage of students under the minimum level ranges from 0.3% (Cuba) to 14.3% (Dominican Republic).

On average for the countries evaluated, 1% of sixth-graders have reached level IV in the sciences, and 43.9% have not reached at least level II.

Factors associated with learning achievement

SERCE provides a look at the main variables that explain student performance in the region. It is based on an analytical context-input-process-product model, which holds that schools, resources and learning are mediated by the social context surrounding them.

The factors associated with learning are presented in two groups: variables that represent contexts, inputs or processes of the schools and those of the students that have an effect on learning.

Table 15. Percentages of occasions in which factors are associated strongly with students' learning in all areas and grades evaluated.

	School variables	Positive	Negative
Context	Rural school	5,4%	10,8%
	Urban private school	56,8%	2,7%
	School's socioeconomic level	83,8%	0,0%
Input	Number of student computers per grade s	25,7%	0,0%
	Infrastructure	16,2%	0,0%
	Services	29,7%	0,0%
	Teacher has a second job	0,0%	2,7%
	Teacher's years of experience	5,4%	1,4%
Process	School climate	70,3%	0,0%
	Management of the principal	21,6%	0,0%
	Teacher performance	8,1%	0,0%
	Teacher satisfaction	2,7%	0,0%
	Student variables		
Context	Girl	21,6%	47,3%
	Indigenous origin	0,0%	41,9%
	Child labour	0,0%	45,9%
	Student's socioeconomic level	98,6%	0,0%
Input	Student has repeated grades	0,0%	98,6%
	Previous years of schooling	41,9%	0,0%
Process	Climate among students	94,6%	0,0%

Source: OREALC-UNESCO. 2010. *Factores Asociados: Al logro cognitivo de los estudiantes de América Latina y el Caribe*. UNESCO, Santiago de Chile.

Overall analysis of school factors shows that school climate, infrastructure, services and the availability of books in the library are consistently positively related to achievement in almost all areas and grades evaluated.

School climate contributes the most to students' success. Its impact is greatest in sixth-grade reading and science and in third-grade mathematics. This underlines the importance of harmonious, positive human relationships within schools as an essential element of an environment that fosters learning.

Among the classroom variables, only the teacher's experience has a consistently positive impact on student performance.

Context variables such as average social and cultural class, gender, speaking an indigenous language, prevalence of child labour, number of years of prior schooling and the student's socioeconomic and cultural level correlate consistently with achievement.

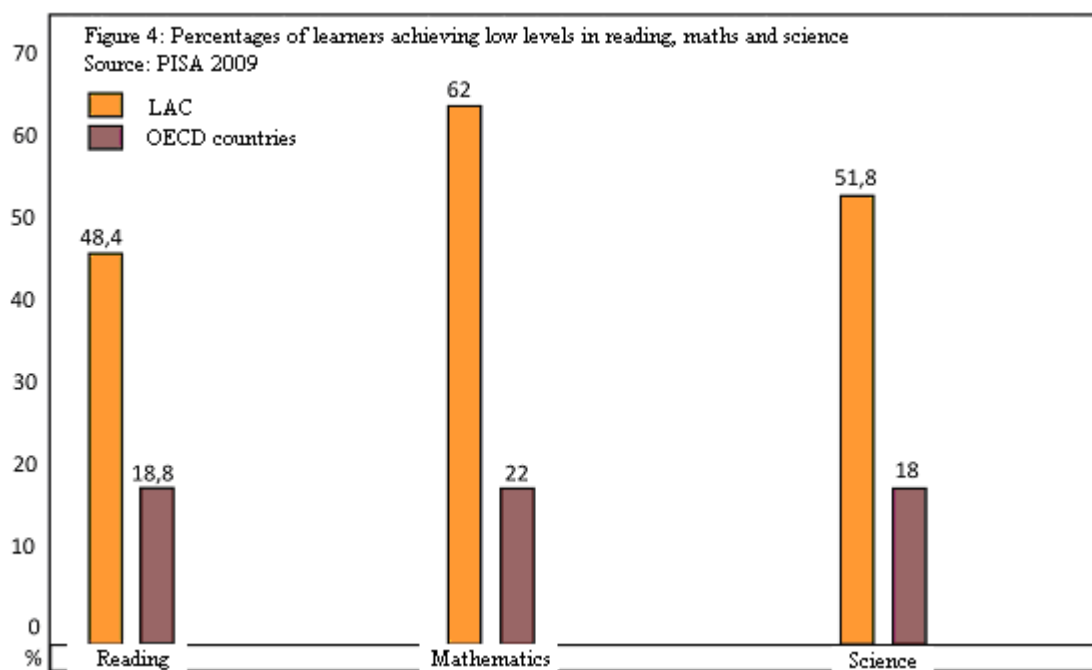
Socioeconomic and cultural level is one of the most important variables explaining achievement.

Class repetition is extremely negatively associated with learning achievements, which again puts the usefulness of this practice into question.

4.6.2 Achievements in secondary education – the PISA Study

Eight Latin American countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay) and one Caribbean state (Trinidad & Tobago), and thus three more than in 2006¹⁴, participated in the 2009 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) study, which evaluated the ‘life skills’ in the domains of reading, mathematics and scientific literacy of 15-year-old teenagers, regardless of their school year. This is called the ‘life skills’ approach, which can thus be distinguished from the curriculum based approach, which aims at assessing learning outcomes not by age but by school grade (as is the case, for example, with LLECE). In spite of this, the study presents us with a snapshot of students’ performance at secondary school level, as most members of this age group will be enrolled in secondary education.

When looking at the results of PISA 2009, the data reveal that the countries from the region are doing relatively poorly, overall. All participating countries score below the OECD average on all areas tested; the highest scoring country from the region, Chile, scored below countries like Russia, Turkey and Spain on all areas.



From a regional point of view, however, we see a more fine-grained picture emerge. Overall, Chile, Uruguay and Mexico are the highest scoring countries in the region, with Trinidad & Tobago, Colombia and Brazil following closely. Incidentally, Trinidad & Tobago is the only participating Caribbean country. Argentina, Panama and Peru are among the lowest scoring countries, with Peru and Panama in 3rd respectively 4th position from the bottom.

Incidentally, the order of countries within the region stays similar whatever the area. The only slight difference emerges within the area of mathematics, in which Uruguay achieves the highest overall score; in addition, Argentina does seem to be doing somewhat better in mathematics than in other areas. In summary, however, the results emanating from PISA 2009

¹⁴ The ‘new’ countries were Panama, Peru and Trinidad & Tobago.

indicate that there is still significant work to do in improving the quality of education in the LAC Region.

The PISA study again points to the fact that the distribution of knowledge in school pupils tends to reproduce the same inequalities which appear when the income distribution is examined.

On the other hand, there is quite a proportional relation between the effective learning results measured by the PISA study and the investment sum per student that characterises each participating country. However, it is also true that unequal levels of knowledge appear between countries that spend similar amounts per pupil; this shows that the correlation between investment and learning is strong, though not absolute. It is therefore necessary to acknowledge the existence of a certain intervention margin in order to optimise the resources available. Hence, in most Latin American countries, not only is there a lack of resources, but also a low degree of effectiveness in their management and use.

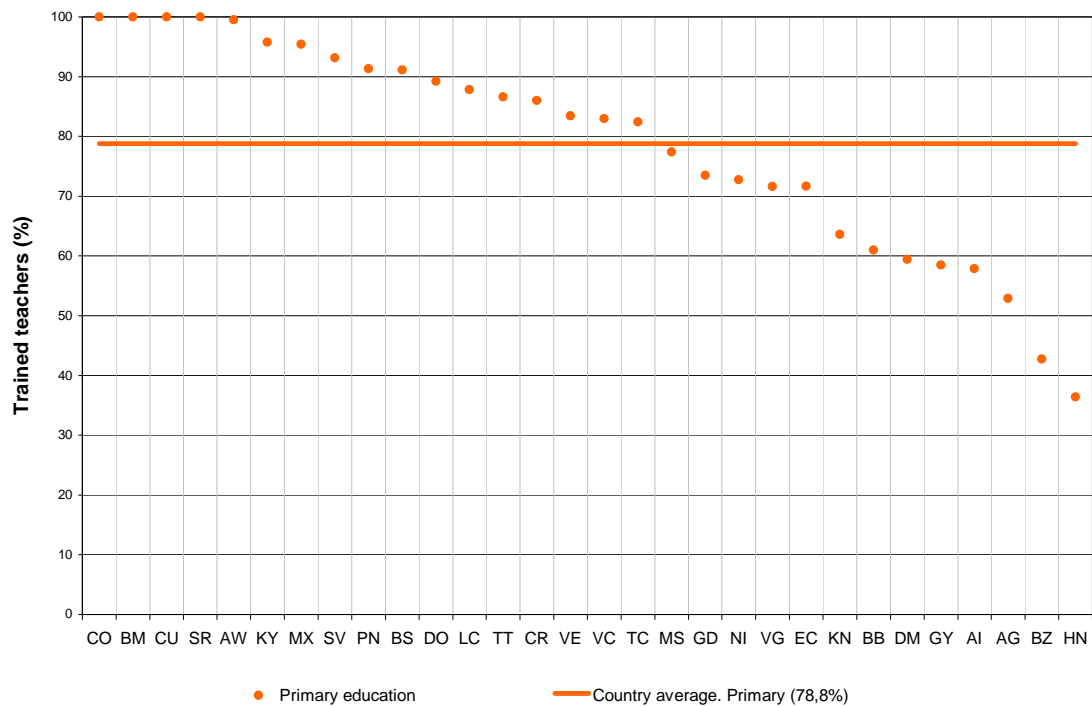
4.6.3 Teachers' qualifications

There is consensus among the region's countries regarding the importance of teachers' qualifications in the context of the education reforms that several of them have introduced. As a result, governments have made and continue to make significant investments in both initial and in-service training for teachers. The following information shows data on the proportion of teachers who has received the minimum organized teacher training (pre-service or in service) normally required for teaching at the relevant level.

Graph 16. shows the proportion of teachers who meet national training requirements for primary education. As of 2008, the percentages ranged from 36.4% to 100% in the countries for which information was available.

On average 78.8% of teachers in the region are trained. In ten countries, over 90% of teachers were certified, while fewer than 50% were certified in two.

Graph 16. Percentage of trained teachers in primary education. 2008.

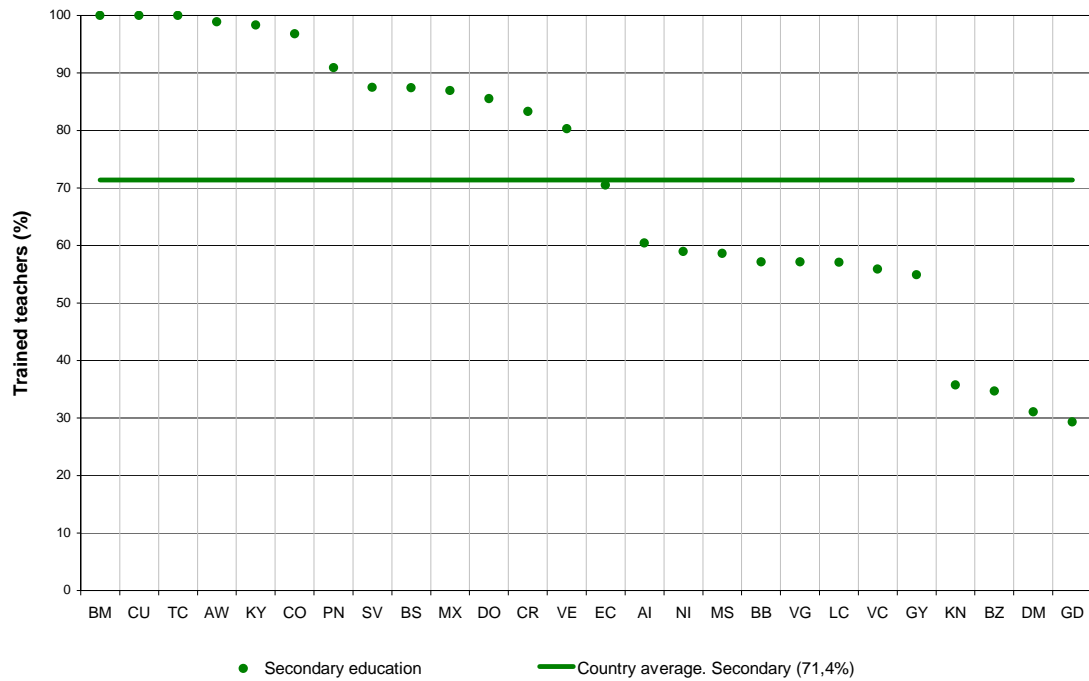


Source: Data base of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).

Graph 17 shows the percentage of teachers that meet national training requirements for secondary school. It ranges from 29.3% to 100%, with a country average of 71.4% for 2008.

Seven countries stand out with over 90% of secondary teachers meeting training requirements while, in another four, fewer than 50% meet requirements.

Graph 17. Percentage of trained teachers in secondary education. 2008.



Source: Data base of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).

The two graphs above show that, overall, a lower percentage of secondary school teachers meet training requirements.

5. TOWARDS 2015 AND BEYOND: CHALLENGES AND COMMITMENTS TO BE RENEWED

This part outlines the most pressing problems and mayor challenges of the educational situation in the region. As mentioned previously, the main topics of concern of the period between Jomtien and Dakar (1990-2000) are still relevant, in spite of a general improvement on most issues.

Some of the pending problems of the region have to be addressed with more emphasis in any post-EFA agenda, which might be developed for the period after 2015.

Early Childhood Care and Education

The improvement of ECCE is a highly important issue, as it effects both achievement and attainment in education. Net enrolment rates in pre-primary education reflect a consolidation of ECCE offerings in Latin America and the Caribbean. Average net enrolment was 65.3% in 2008. This means that a lot of countries have undergone successful actions to expand the provision of ECCE.

Most countries have reached gender parity in enrolment in pre-primary education. However, there are major disparities of pre-primary enrolment rates between countries, as well as between socioeconomic groups and different geographical locations (rural and urban areas). That means that pre-primary education frequently doesn't reach those who most need it, on a large scale. Moreover, many countries still lack sufficient numbers of qualified pre-primary teachers.

A follow-up to EFA, after 2015, might go beyond the need for quality pre-primary education with high levels of parity, to include a focus on early childhood programmes for children from 0 to 3 years. This is a key issue in order to establish a more comprehensive concept of ECCE, so as to accompany children from birth to the first grade of primary education.

Primary Education

A high proportion of children in the age for primary education access this level of education at some stage in their lives. The majority of countries in the LAC region have net enrolment rates around 95%. Despite this high rate, there has been virtually no advance in this regard over the last eight years. The net intake rate, which shows what proportion of children enter primary school at the theoretically appropriate age, is still lower than desirable, which should be a matter of concern for the region, since late entry increases the probability of early school leaving.

Despite these challenges, a high number of Latin American and Caribbean countries approach universal conclusion in primary education. Almost a third of countries exceed completion rates of 95% in its youngest population. It should be highlighted that during the time period analysed here, some countries with budget deficits made an important progress in completion of primary education between generations. However, completion rates of primary education between countries are very uneven. Therefore, the problem of not concluding primary education is still current in a lot of States, putting into question the fulfilment of the second EFA goal in 2015.

Repetition of first grade is still a problem in the countries. Repetition and dropout are complex phenomena and often related to poor quality in education. The establishment of public policies to address this problem might be an issue in any follow-up to the EFA initiative.

Secondary Education

The majority of countries made significant progress in access to secondary education in the period analysed. A third of the countries in the region have reached 80% access to secondary education in the youngest group or more. The country average increased more than 7 percentage points in the last 8 years. As in primary education, the countries with low rates are those facing more social demands as a result of demographic growth and dependency rates, as well as high proportions of rural populations and relatively low levels of human and economic development. However, some of these countries have increased significantly their net enrolment rate in secondary education.

Completion rates in secondary education show that much still has to be done to promote this level of education, as, on average, less than half of the youngest generation (15-19) complete secondary education. In older age groups these rates are even lower. Besides this, there are strong differences in access and conclusion of secondary education between the countries.

Therefore attempting for universal secondary education might be part for a follow-up to the EFA initiative, beyond 2015.

Postsecondary education

Access rates to postsecondary education are still low in almost all countries in the region, comparing enrolment rates between 2000 and 2008, though we note an improvement in terms of access to this educational level of education. Therefore, the fulfilment of lifelong education is still a strong remaining challenge in the region and will still be beyond 2015.

A follow-up to EFA programme may explore the need for more possibilities of access to postsecondary education.

Adult literacy

In all the countries studied, the proportion of complete illiterates is smaller in the younger population than in the older population cohorts. The expansion of primary and secondary education in recent decades has brought illiteracy rates down. Parity in terms of gender has also improved recently.

Gender parity and other equity issues

Most of the region's countries have reached gender parity with regard to access and completion of pre-primary and primary schooling, and concerning literacy rates, especially in the younger population. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that secondary school completion rates show an increasing tendency to favour girls over boys in many countries. All the region's countries have improved their primary education as regards parity in terms of areas of residence, income levels and ethnicity. Nevertheless, inequalities between certain social groups continue to pose a tremendous challenge for the region. It has to be stressed, that no country has reached parity as regards completion of secondary education. Here, there are still major discrepancies in all age groups between the mentioned population groups.

Many of the region's countries have high levels of economic inequality. Thus, it is no surprise that there are major disparities in the completion of primary and secondary education in the region as a function of income differentials. Balance between socioeconomic groups in the younger age range is better than in older age range, but the gaps remain extremely high. Therefore, the issue of equity has to be included in a post-EFA education agenda, by all means, as far as Latin America and the Caribbean region is concerned.

Learning achievements and quality education

The SERCE as well as the PISA study show that learning achievements in primary and secondary education in the region are low. In reading, mathematics and sciences a much too high number of children don't reach the minimum levels to advance socially in the future. Therefore the issue of the improvement of learning achievements has to be a priority in the future. There are also high levels of disparity between certain groups in terms of learning achievements, as the associated factors of the SERCE study show. Children from marginalized communities are likely to have lower achievements, which should be an issue to be taken into account.

The issue of teacher education and training is directly linked to learning achievements. There are significant differences concerning the number of trained teachers between the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. This indicates clearly that in a lot of countries greater efforts are required to increase the professional level of teachers in order to be able to provide quality education for all. Quality education and learning achievements are directly linked, but the concept of quality in education should go beyond academic performance.

It is suggested that a follow-up to EFA will consider the concept of quality of education holistically, taking into account such elements as health, security, safety, etc. It should also address modes of educational delivery (e.g., student-centred learning) as well as educational assessment as a central element of both the measurement of education quality, as well as of quality of education itself.

Finally, a new understanding of Education for All might look into access to tertiary education. This is of specific importance to a region such as LAC, where a majority of countries is classified as MICs.

6. ACCELERATING EFA: OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNESCO IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

- The Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean (PRELAC) will be evaluated in 2011, in order to establish a renewed vision and, consequently, an operational action plan in the LAC Region.
- More regional partnerships should be established to increase results, accelerate progress, protect gains and improve educational planning (UNESS, UNDAF) within UNESCO and UN agencies and beyond (World Bank, OAS, OEI, PREAL, etc.).
- A greater understanding of the quality of education and its implications will contribute to improve educational policy making and planning across the Region, for example based on data from the Latin-American Laboratory for Evaluating the Quality of Education (LLECE) data.
- To enable a greater amount, and higher quality of evidence-based education policy making and planning across the Region, by activities in the fields of indicator development, capacity building and advocacy in terms of information gathering and statistics throughout the region, for example as done within the framework of the regional system of statistical information (SIRI).
- A regional initiative on teachers concerning quality of teaching, accreditation and certification will be set up this year, emphasising the pivotal role of teachers in improving quality education.
- New funding modalities for education might be explored through smarter financing of education in the Region, for example:
 - The trend of South-South Cooperation, and the fact that an increasing numbers of Middle-Income Countries (MICs) in Latin America and the Caribbean are becoming donors in their own right, affords interesting opportunities for sourcing additional funding.
 - The trend of increasing importance of public – private partnerships, as well as the ‘Global Compact’, affords important opportunities for complementary financing of education in the region.
- Raising the profile of the concept of inclusive education may afford an umbrella to address a number of challenges with which the region is faced, including improving quality access to children of indigenous backgrounds, rural populations as well as learners with special educational needs (SEN).
- Further interventions, strategies and projects are planned in inclusive education, adult learning and education, sexuality education, HIV/AIDS, culture of peace and school violence, school leadership, ECCE, disaster risk reduction, ESD, etc.

7. TOWARDS 2015 AND BEYOND: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICIES AND ACTIONS

As a consequence of the issues mentioned in the previous chapter, we present a list of policies and actions that may be undertaken in order to further improve the educational situation of the region.

Early Childhood Care and Education

- In Latin America and the Caribbean more educational establishments for early childhood education are needed, especially in rural and low income areas. This issue has to be addressed as urgently as possible, as it is a root problem of low levels of learning in the region. Evidence points towards a high impact of absence from ECCE in later educational stages.
- The provision of ECCE services has to go beyond pre-primary education, covering the time from birth to the access to primary education.
- More well trained teachers and more comprehensive and inclusive curricula are needed for the education of the youngest in the region.
- More information and data on ECCE for decision making is needed in the region.

Primary Education

- Children who do not access or complete primary education, have to be taken care of urgently. The UIS/UNICEF joint initiative *All Children in School by 2015*, which, in Latin America and the Caribbean, focuses on the 5% of primary-school age children who are out-of-school, stresses the need for policies and programmes to effectively address the problem and reduce the inequalities that remain in many countries. Besides that, available resources are not always efficiently used and there has been no systematic analysis to identify the bottlenecks and explain why well-intentioned policies are not always yielding robust results.
- Making sure that timely entrance in primary education is guaranteed is essential for adequate progression.

Secondary Education

- The access to and completion of high quality secondary education has to be improved, especially in rural areas, within low income communities and students belonging to ethnic groups.
- Access to postsecondary education has to be improved especially by lowering financial barriers.

Parity in education

- Social inequity in Latin America and the Caribbean is a problem that education still hasn't helped to level enough. Until today, there is a close relation between household income, the educational achievement of children, and the kind of employment they will have, based on their level of education. To a large extent, this in turn determines household income levels of the following generation, where inequalities tend to be reproduced from generation to generation.
- Good schools without financial barriers, the quality of which should be duly guaranteed by the State, can effectively contribute to decreasing existing education gaps between those

with the least and the most income; between rural and urban and between indigenous and non-indigenous populations, and thus become true channels for mobility.

Adult literacy

- As functional illiteracy is still a problem in Latin America and the Caribbean, new and more sophisticated methods of measurement will be necessary in the future. In this sense the experience of the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP) of UIS may be a critical input for the region.

Learning achievements and quality education

- The issue of quality education for all, embracing better learning achievements and higher levels of equity, has to be addressed with more vigor.
- The quality of teachers is directly linked to quality education in general. Issues such as the improvement of initial and in service training of teachers have to be approached urgently. Also, mechanisms to attract high performing students to pedagogical studies should be established, along with programmes to send the best teachers to schools in marginal areas which are most in need for quality teaching.
- School organization, infrastructure and school materials are issues which are well-known to be related to quality education and have to be urgently improved especially in low income and rural areas.
- As illustrated by the SERCE study, a good social school climate and a feeling of school community where diversity is respected have positive impacts on learning outcomes. In this sense it is important to strengthen educational leadership and managerial capacities of the school principals, in order to ensure a healthy institutional atmosphere.

Other important issues

- Special educational needs (SEN) and inclusive education are topics which require continuous attention in the region.
- Violence in schools is an ever-increasing problem in the region and threatens EFA progress and gains. Effective initiatives and policies are urgently needed to address this problem.
- School leadership is an important factor for change in schools and classrooms and should be further investigated and improved.
- Education in emergencies and disaster preparedness may be enhanced in the region.
- The use and teaching of ICT in schools is still an issue that can be improved and fostered.
- Curricula and educational programmes have to be revised concerning their relevance to student's lives and social circumstances. In an ever-increasing pluralistic world, educational planning concerning contents and didactic methods have to be flexible in order to attend to students with different needs, desires and expectations.