



# EDUCATION FOR ALL.

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

2012



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Quality  
Education  
for All



SEP

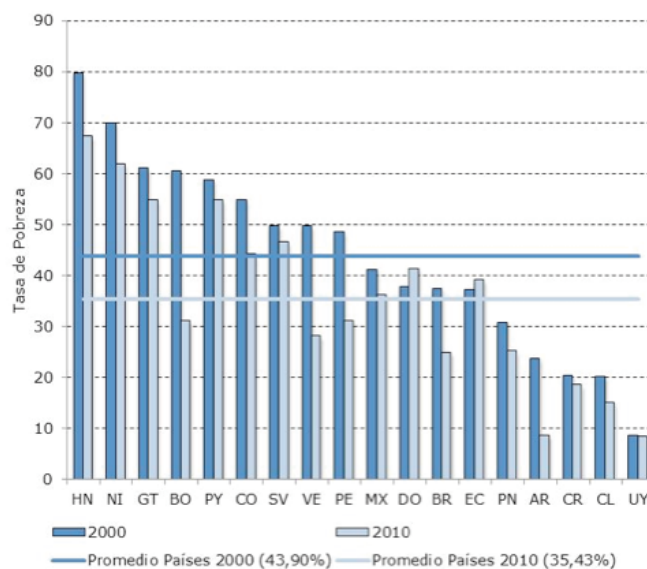
SECRETARÍA DE  
EDUCACIÓN PÚBLICA

# Can the LAC region reach EFA goals at all levels of education by 2015?

## I. Facts, Figures and Trends

The LAC region is one of the most highly unbalanced in terms of income distribution. An average of 35.4% of its population lives in poverty. Although poverty has been decreasing since 2000 and 2010, in

approximately 20%, poverty continues to be an obstacle for educational attainment. Evidence shows that only in 2 from 18 countries with data, there was a slight increase in poverty rates.



Source. ECLAC Data base

Demographically, most of the LAC countries are diminishing its population growth which means that potential demand for education decreases. Effects of this phenomenon have been considered as a window of opportunity for the region. Many countries will be able to

invest on universalizing primary and secondary education and investing in the improvement of early childhood care and education as well as in improving quality in primary and secondary levels.

In educational terms the LAC region has made significant progress towards reaching the EFA goals but not all the countries walk at a similar pace.

Many of them will not be able to reach the goals by 2015, particularly those related to improving the quality of education and learning for all. Few will be able to invest in early interventions and school health, school attendance and abilities to learn.

The LAC region has succeeded in reaching the goal of gender parity, and thus complying with one of the Global

Millennium Development Goals. Compared with other regions it has almost eradicated gender inequalities particularly in school coverage and learning achievements, particularly at primary level.

Overcoming inequalities, though, both in income distribution and educational opportunities, continues to be a big challenge for the region.

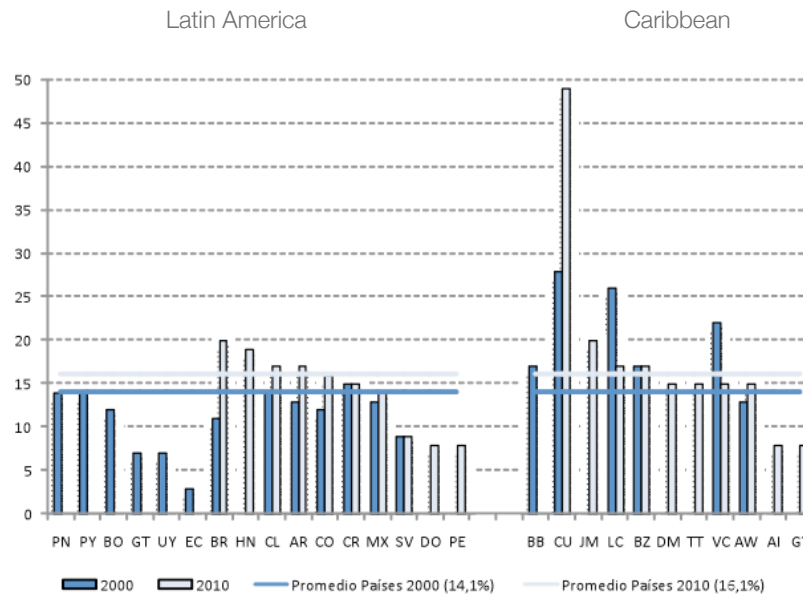
## Public Spending in Education

Public spending on education has grown steadily in Latin America over the past two decades, both as a share of total public expenditure and as a percent of GNP. On average, the region went from spending 4.5 percent of GNP in 2000 to 5.2 percent in 2010.

7 out of 19 countries did not follow this trend as public spending per student decreased between 2000 and 2010. While in some countries, like Argentina and Peru public spending in education roughly reached 3% of the GNP others reached almost 6%. Cuba, an exception, raised its percentage over 12%. Intraregional disparities are high. While in Costa Rica and Aruba the educational budget was equivalent to 20% or more of governmental expenditures, in several countries it was approximately 10% and less, like in Dominica and Montserrat.

In tertiary education, public spending per pupil decreased from a 43.5% of the GNP per in 2000 to a 29.7% in 2010. In spite of this, the public spending per pupil in higher education in 2010 was twice the equivalent in primary education. In 2000 the average was three times higher.

Public Spending per Pupil in Primary Education as a percentage of the GNP per capita



Source: UNESCO-UIS Data Base

### Slow progress in expanding early childhood care and education

Pre-school enrolments, which cover nearly 70% of the eligible population in Latin America, are well above the world average (around 48 percent). The net enrollment rate, being 55,5% in 1990 increased up to 66% in 2010. This trend could be traced in 22 of the 26 countries with data.

The regional situation is highly heterogeneous. Average school life expectations for the LAC region being, in average, 1.8 years in 2010 just increased in an average of 0.3 years during the last decade. While in Cuba or Jamaica, children had access to 3 years of pre-primary education by 2010, a third of the countries, with data, average expectations for schooling in this level reached approximately one year. Despite progress observed in coverage, on regional bases, there is a huge disparity among countries harm boys and girls from poorer households.

A prospective exercise to anticipate the situation of the LAC countries by 2015 shows that, although the region shows progress since 1998, when enrollment covered 53% to 2010 when coverage had reached 70%. Based on these figures most probably, by 2015, the gross enrolment rate in pre-primary education reaches a regional average of approximately 77%.

## Universal Primary Education: quantity with no quality

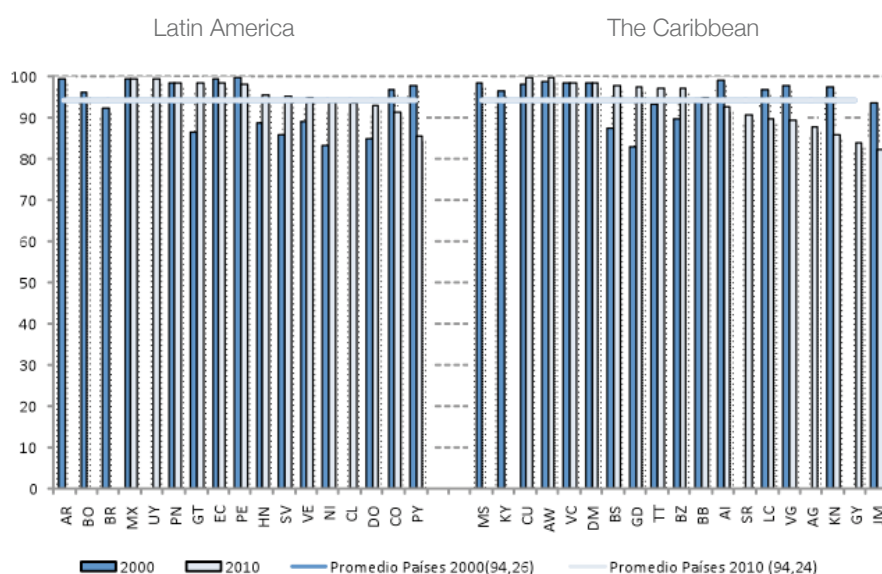
A larger number of children and youth – on average 94% - attend school today but quality remains and overriding challenge. Educational progress in the last decade is highly unequal among countries and, on current trends, the goal of universal primary education is unlikely to be met by 2015 in the LAC region.

In most countries, all but the poorest and most isolated children enrol in primary school. Enrollments at the secondary and tertiary level have also expanded significantly. Tertiary enrollments nearly doubled from 22 percent in 1999 to 41 percent in 2010.

While some countries increased enrollments for primary school age children (Granada, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Bahamas, with percentages of 10% and more), others suffered significant shortcomings in the same period (Paraguay, San Kits y Nevis, and Jamaica). In 7 among 26 countries with data, the number of primary school children evidence an important fall in their net primary enrolment ratios during the last decade.

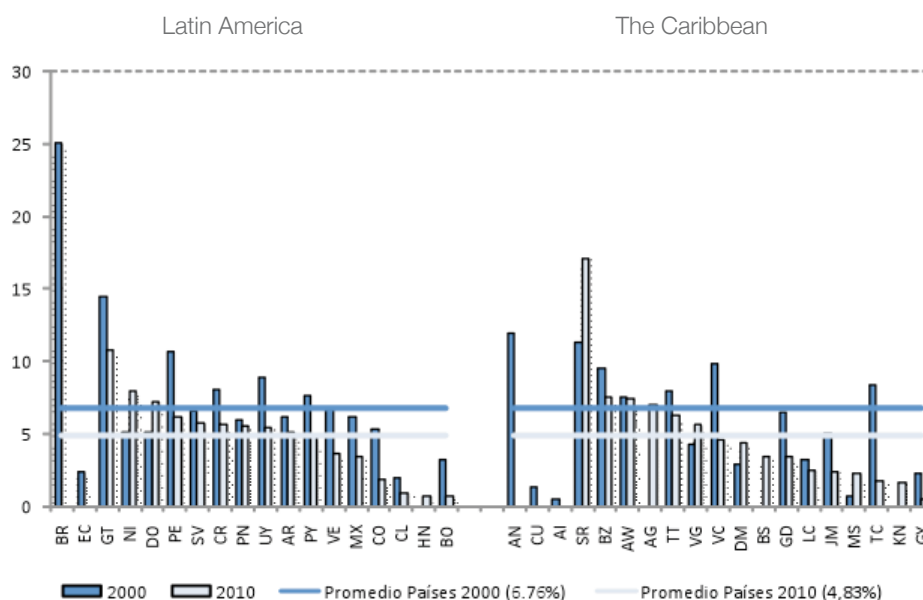
Poverty has a negative effect on schooling. Analysis from household surveys data in LAC show little differences in student's attendance to primary school according to family income. By 2010, the gap between the richest and the poorest quintile was 3%. Progress, with respect to the year 2000 when the gap separating richest and bottom quintile was 7%. Countries like El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras made important progress in reducing the gap and made an important effort to increase school coverage to enrol children from the poorer areas at the correct age and involve parents in school management.

Net Enrolment Ratios in Primary Education



Source: UNESCO-UIS Data Base

## School failure in primary education (%).



Source: UNESCO-UIS Data Base

Drop out and failure in school achievement seriously affects the possibilities of primary and secondary completion.

Survival rates in 5th grade had an average increase of 83.5% to 91.8% among 2000 and 2010. Important progress has been made in decreasing droppers in 15 from 18 countries with comparable data. Outstanding examples are the cases of Costa Rica and Venezuela. Disparities continue to be significant in the region: while in some countries – like Argentina, Chile and the Dominican Republic - primary drop-out rates diminished to 1%, in countries such as Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua, primary school drop-outs represent an approximate 15% of enrolled children.

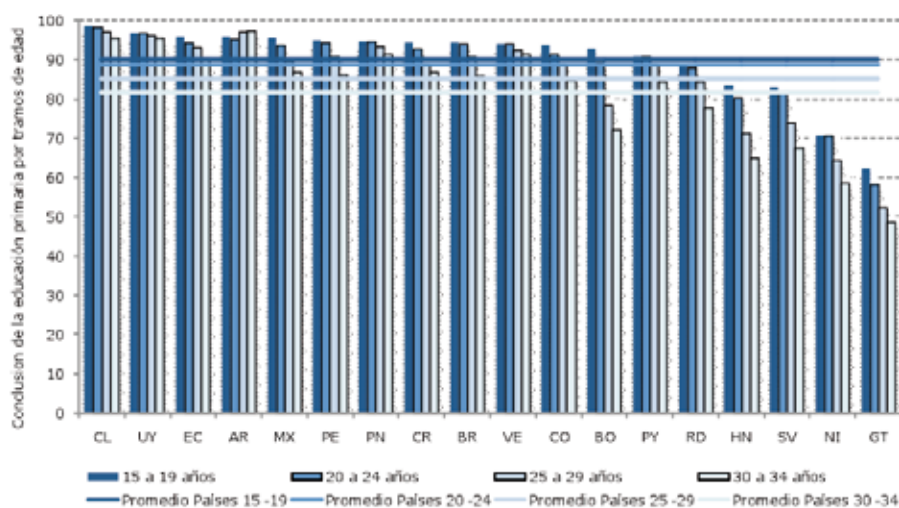
Household surveys (2010), show that the average rate of primary school completion in the LAC region countries increased from an 81.6% for the population among 30 to 34 years of age up to a 90.2% for those aged 15 to 19 years of age. In the younger generation, approximately one out of 10 students did not complete primary education and in less developed countries, such as Nicaragua and Guatemala, almost a third of their population.

Chances for no completion in primary education is 7 times higher for a student from the bottom quintile than for one of a richer household. By 2010, in average, while 96% of richer households aged 15 to 19 years of age had completed primary education only 73% of their peers in the bottom quintile had done so.

Most of LAC students attend public schools. Private education accounts for 30% of school enrollment at this level and available data show that the system is highly segregated. Public schools lack innovative and safe learning environments, good working conditions, labs.,

playgrounds, libraries, books and materials as well as good teachers and teaching. Nonetheless, once socioeconomic disparities are controlled, evidence shows that private schools do not, in average, perform better than public ones in terms of learning achievement.

Primary School completion according to age groups (18 countries)



Source : ECLAC data base

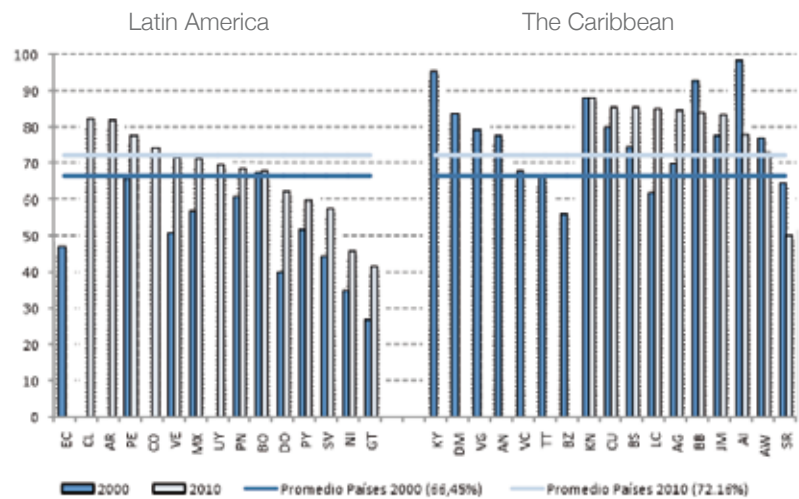
## Expanding secondary education

Coverage of secondary education in the LAC region is not yet universal. Except for some countries, there has been no relevant changes in the decade. By 2010, 21,7% of youngsters aged 20 to 24, belonging to the bottom quintile in their countries, had completed secondary education. By contrast, 78,3% of peers belonging to the richest quintile had completed this level.

Average for 24 countries with data was 72,2%, slightly higher than the 66,5% on the year 2000. By 2010 the situation was heterogeneous in this level with some countries having net rates below 50% and some, over 80%.

Net rate enrollment in secondary education (32 countries included, in %).

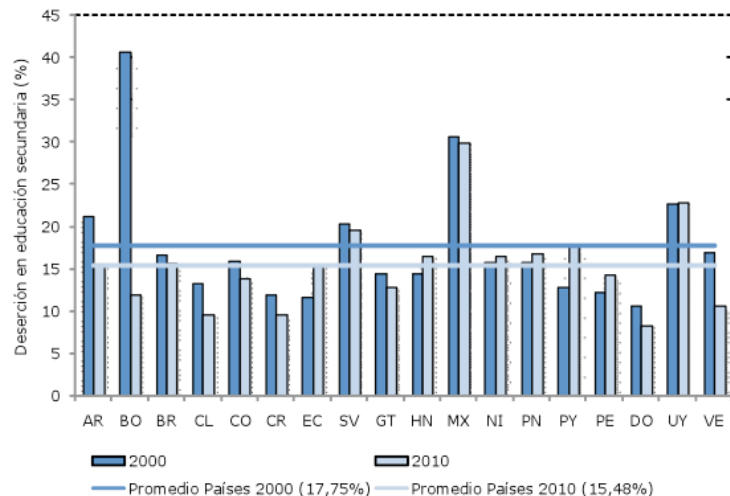
Fuente: Base de datos UNESCO-UIS.



In 18 countries with data, the average rate of droppers in this level slightly fell from a 17.8% in 2000 to a 15.5% in 2010. On a one year bases, this means that one out of 6 students in the region dropped out from secondary education.

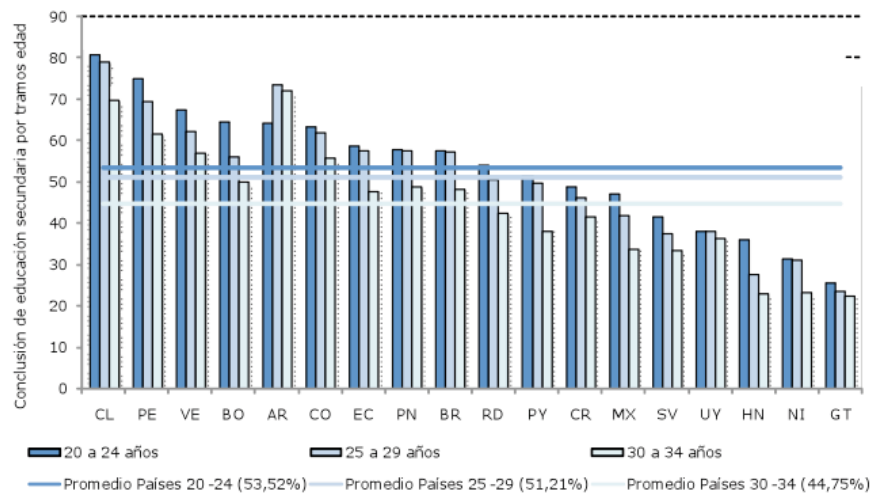
Drop-out rates in secondary education (18 countries included)

Source: ECLAC database





Secondary education completion by age groups (total population) (18 countries included)



Source: ECLAC Data Base

## Higher Education

Grew steadily and, in several countries began to lose its elitist character. In spite of this expansion it continues to be unequally distributed and, in average, only a 0,7% of the poorer quintiles aged 25-29 completed university studies. In the richest quintile, 18.3% did so.

## II. LAC Progress towards the EFA Goals

Despite efforts made over the last decade in spending and enrollments, most LAC systems —from early childhood to tertiary—provide low-quality education that does not meet national and regional challenges.

### Rural/urban education gap is the most important factor explaining education differentials.

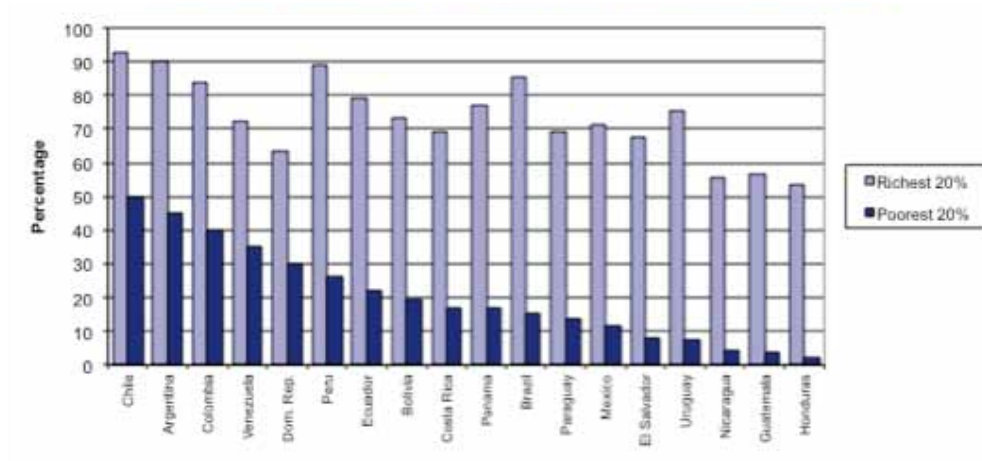
Poor children tend to enroll at lower rates, leave school earlier, and score significantly lower on student achievement tests than wealthier peers.

Low levels of enrollment and completion are concentrated not only in certain regions but also among certain groups of the population. Completion rates are lowest for children from poorer households. Although enrollment may be almost universal, high repetition and drop-out rates lead to low completion rates. In both cases poor students are much

more likely not to complete school as are children in rural areas, children from ethnic and linguistic minorities, children with disabilities, and children affected by armed conflict.

Ethno-linguistic diversity creates serious challenges vernacular language barriers have a significant impact on access to education, especially for girls in rural areas, where local languages predominate.

Population Aged 20-24 that has completed Upper Secondary Education, Poorest 20% vs. Richest 20%, 2005(included)



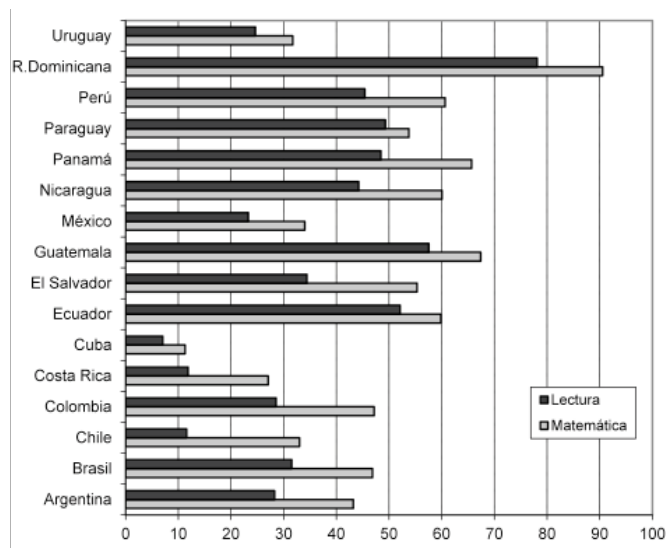
Source: UNESCO/PRELAC (2007). The State of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean.

### Institutional problems prevent many children who attend school from learning

Internationally comparable assessments of learning achievement in math, reading, and science indicate that most developing countries rank far behind developed countries.

According to Unesco’s SERCE study 2006, there are deep

disparities in the way educational systems reduce or amplify among socio-economic groups in learning achievements. The exception being Cuba that reduced disparities in learning achievements more than any other country in the region.



Source. SERCE-2006, in % (16 countries according to LLECE), Unesco.

## Institutional problems prevent many children who attend school from learning

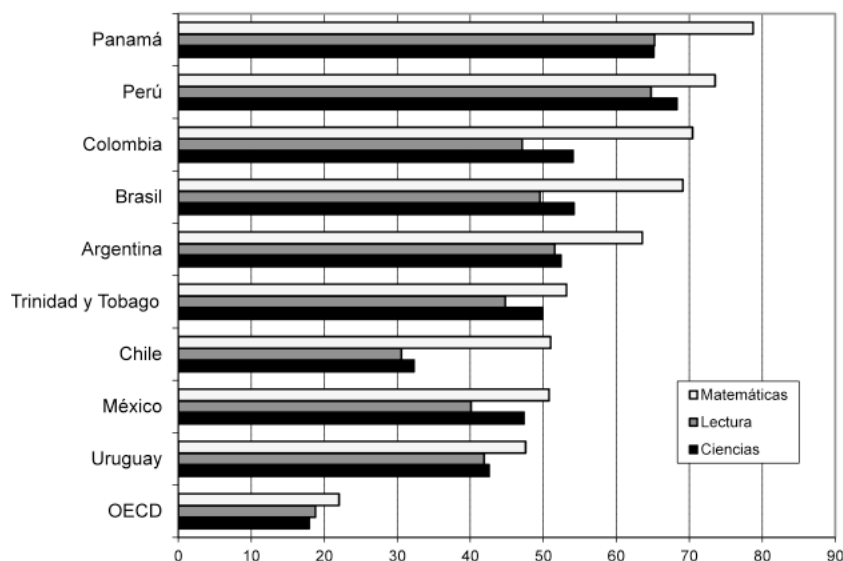
In the secondary level, student performance has been internationally measured by PISA, an international OECD test that evaluates student performance aged 15 years. PISA, provides a good comparative standard, external to the region. The disadvantage is that only a few group of countries participates in this evaluations.

According to PISA outcomes 2009, in average, among the nine latinamerican countries who participated in the test, 58% of students in maths, 45% in reading and 48% in sciences, performed under the minimum level of achievement in each of the evaluated items. OECD schools,

and their students, who did not reach this minimum level of performance reached 22% in maths, 19% in reading and 18% in sciences.

Social origin and socio economic status of households strongly influence learning achievements and school environments in the LAC region. Nonetheless, the weight of this inequity over student's achievement varies among countries. PISA tests, for those countries that participated in them, analyses this effect by looking at student's performance in reading, math and sciences.

15 year old students who did not reach Level of Performance II in Reading, Math and Sciences in PISA 2009. Results for 9 latinamerican countries participating in the study compared to OCDE average.



Source: PISA-2009, OECD 2010.

## Teachers: Key to learning improvements and attainment

Recruiting, training, placing, keeping, paying and supporting good teachers in most countries is inadequate. Lack of prestige, low standards, inadequate training, lack of merit-based incentives, little support for teachers on a daily basis, and unwieldy management mechanisms for evaluating, hiring and firing teachers further complicate efforts to improve teaching and make it an attractive career.

Based on indicators of availability and training, the LAC region in 2010 was characterized as living in an intermediate situation. Near to the average when compared with other regions in the world. In primary education, the average number of students' per teacher had decreased in 4 students since 2000. This improvement pattern could be observed in most of the

countries, except Colombia. Here, the relation teacher/student increased in primary but, particularly, in secondary education.

Concerning management challenges and institutional policies, these go far beyond teaching. In overall terms, education systems suffer from a chronic shortage of qualified personnel, from school principals, district or regional managers to Ministry of Education staff. Few education systems have established consistent, transparent accountability mechanisms that set clear goals and then hold students, parents, teachers, principals, and ministries responsible for meeting those goals and performing at the highest level.

### THE LAC TEACHERS

- There are 6,4 million teachers in LAC for primary and secondary education, mostly women (78% in primary level, primario, 78% son mujeres; en el secundario, 57%).
- Number of students served by one teacher has important variations. The regional average in the primary level is 23 students per teacher. In lower secondary 18 students per teacher and in higher secondary 15 per one.
- Teacher training program, are diverse and heterogeneous. Quality varies. There are formal and non formal programs to prepare school teachers. In service training has no regulations and seldom attend demands. There are also differences in the number of teachers who have been trained at university level and are certified to teach.
- By 2008, in average, 74,6% complied with the national certification requisites to teach at primary level, while only 64.4 met this measure in the secondary level.
- Most of the teachers in the region speak of themselves as belonging to middle class or low middle class sectores, they have a low consuming capacity in cultural life and are not happy with their working conditions but reasonable happy with their profession.
- 28% of those teachers employed to teach sixth grades in primary education develop an additional activity to complement their income. This makes it difficult to count upon them for participation in school activities or continuous training programs inside the school.

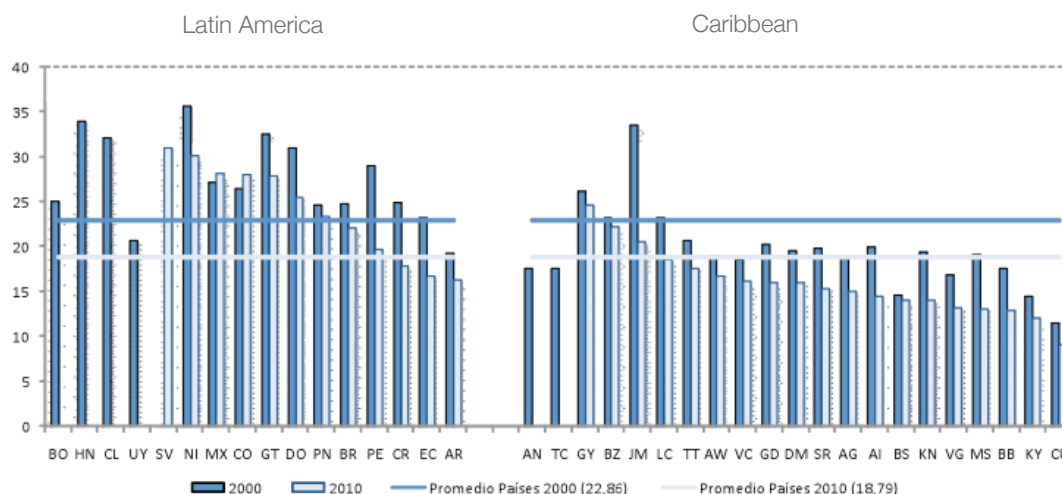
Towards 2010, 78% of primary education teachers and 70% in the secondary level had certified teaching degrees. Nonetheless, in the LAC region, there are huge

diferencias in the level of the teaching profession and teaching performance. This is a serious obstacle towards developing a teaching profession.

In several countries more than a fifth or half of the teachers do not have certified credentials to teach and requirements, either to enter or perform in the teaching profession are low. In some countries, teaching training to enter the profession takes one or two years. In other countries (namely Nicaragua and Guatemala) training takes place at institutions in the secondary level, teacher

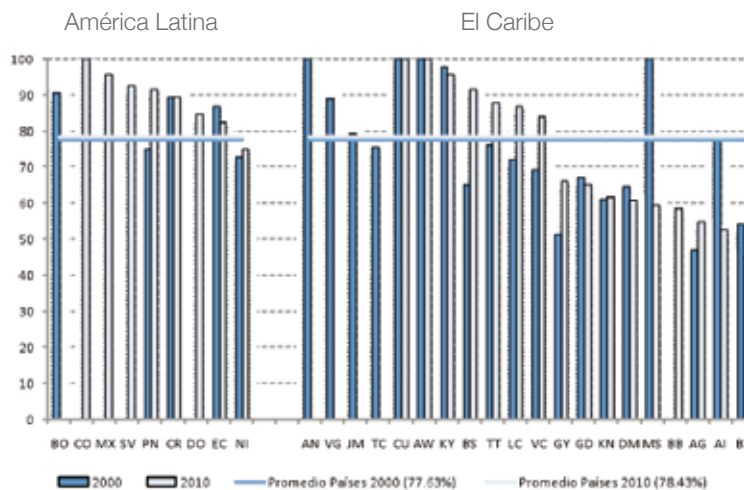
training schools or universities who do not perform at the highest levels of performance. There are, in general terms, no regulations for the teaching profession, no norms to follow to ensure teacher's performance. Low quality in initial and continuous training is also a constant.

Teacher/Student Ratio in primary education (37 countries)



Source: UNESCO-UIS Data Base

Certified Teachers in primary education (%)



Fuente: Base de datos UNESCO-UIS

## Learning Environments and School Attainment

Learning environments, together with teacher's effectiveness is one of the most important and consistent elements to predict primary student's learning or academic achievement.

In LAC school environments, as well as its perceptions by students, have proved to be in a significant correlation with student learning in third and sixth grade, in reading, math and natural sciences. Evidence also indicates that the effects of healthy or innovative school environments seems to be slightly higher for pupils in third grade rather than sixth grade. More in maths than in reading.

PISA-2009 also explored the relations among school environments and student's achievement in reading. In this case, school environment included, besides the quality of school relationships and discipline, the principal's

leadership, motivation of teachers towards students and relations among parents and the school, particularly in the academic field.

PISA found out that the quality of school environments is directly related with the context in which the school works, its socio-economic characteristics, the way in which both elements interact: students who attend better schools tend to enjoy a better climate and the combination of both has a positive effect on their academic performance

## Use of information and communication

Access to technologies at home in the LAC region is strongly associated to the socio-economic status of student's families. For this reason, the introduction boys and girls to the dynamics of societies based on knowledge and information is limited to certain social groups in certain countries.

Facts reveal that access to personal computers with educational software and internet were available for only a 15% of LAC households. The indicator had raised to 19.1% by 2006. Absolute lack of ITCs at households decreases from 66% to 52.5%, in the same period but continues to prevail. While indicators for a group of countries (particularly Chile and Uruguay in the southern cone) approach them to OCDE average, others are quite far from the latinamerican average.

By 2006, 40% of the schools had access to ITCs in the LAC region. While Cuba or Chile have more than a 90% of schools equipped with different media, Nicaragua and

Guatemala only have ITC in 10% of theirs. Private schools, serving higher income groups, have better indicators for ITC access than their public peers. Only Cuba, Chile and Uruguay count upon trained teachers who use ITCs daily thus being in a better position to work with them in the classroom.

The region, in this field, has the huge challenge of introducing ITCs to learning. Countries must not only improve access but train teachers to work with them in the classroom, prepare contents and materials, programs and curricula demanding intensive use of new technologies.

### III. Social and Educational Disparities

#### Gender Parity

The gender parity index indicates how females perform in relation with males. In primary education gender parity in the region reached egalitarian values (near to one) for the past decade. Towards 2010, only four countries (from 127, with data) still had gender disparities in primary schooling.

Gender parity in access to secondary education is unequal, but against young males. Average index of gender parity in the net enrollment rate in secondary education in most of the countries was 1.05 by 2010 (5% in favor of females). Progress had been made since 2000 when the index was 1.08. While 2 out of 23 countries, still had unequal status for girls, lack of equity against males could be observed in 13 out of 23 countries.

SERCE 2006 demonstrated that girls, on average, perform better in reading both in 3rd and 6th grade, while boys performed better in math and sciences (6<sup>o</sup> grade only). The gap in favor of boys was higher in math and

more systematic than the gap for girls in reading. According to PISA 2009, while girls tend to perform better than boys in reading, males performed better than females in math. There were no average differences among the groups.

In higher education, although access of women has improved on regular bases, gender parity index has not changed when looking at the professional careers chosen by females who, in addition, receive less compensations and lower salaries once in the labor market..

#### Social Origin and Cultural Diversity

Schooling and learning opportunities is lower for children coming from poor households, particularly indigenous people and afro descendants in the LAC region.

Significant differences exist in school retention and attainment among children coming from indigenous households in primary and secondary education when compared to children from non indigenous and urban households. At primary level, only Cuba, Brasil and Chile have completion rates higher than 90%. At secondary level, Chile exhibits a smaller gap as data shows that 60% of boys and girls from indigenous households complet secondary education vs. a 75% of non indigenous population. Panamá y Guatemala increased their index of ethnic parity in the younger groups where

numbers were raised from 0.63 to 0.75. Nicaragua, on the contrary, stepback in the ethnic parity index among the younger population. In relation to completion of the first cycle in secondary education, indexes vary from 0.45 to 0.95 for the population aged 30 to 34 years of age. Paraguay and Panamá exhibit the highest disparities among older groups, even when progress may be seen in the younger population in both countries. Other regional reports agree upon the fact that children coming from indigineous households perform lower in terms of learning attainment, particularly in standarized tests. In tertiary education, there is some progress in the region concerning coverage and access.

## Youngsters and Adults. Lifelong Opportunities in Education

Literacy rates in the LAC region are relatively high (average of 89.6%). These continued to increase reaching, by 2010, an average of 89.6%. Only 4 countries out of 23, with data, still had literacy rates below 90% and only one of them, Guatemala, lower than 80%.

Expansion of primary and secondary education in past decades has lowered illiteracy rates. The main issue remains functional literacy and, particularly tackling the digital divide among adults and youngsters, men and women.

There is no comparable information to evaluate this wider vision though recent studies on this concern have indicated that the region, as such, will face important challenges in the near futuro. Such a trend is illustrated in the expansion and innovation on training programs for

youngsters and adults as well as availability of skills and learning opportunities for the young. Formal secondary schooling should be the most effective way to develop the skill needed for work and life but the LAC region has not made much progress in this direction yet.

## Reaching 2015 and Beyond.

### *Some countries will reach the goals.*

Others will not. Countries that are unlikely to achieve the goals of universal primary education, at all levels, by 2015 face two main challenges. First, they must significantly accelerate enrollment and improve their ability to keep children in school. Second, they must

improve learning outcomes and educational attainment enough to have an economic and social impact. These countries need to simultaneously increase access and improve quality.

### *Improving early childhood care and education is highly important*

as it establishes solid bases of future educational attainment. Disparities in both primary and pre-primary enrollments should be tackled and completion of universal primary education promoted in those countries with high repetition and dropout rates. Public policies to meet this goal should be developed and improved particularly in low income countries.

In the secondary level, much work needs to be done as, on average, youngsters aged 18 to 24 years of age from poor households, seldom access or complete secondary education. Post secondary education is still low and the achievement of lifelong education is a great challenge in the region.



***Learning improvement should be given priority.***

Even systems with modest standards can keep squarely focused on the teaching-learning process. This includes recruiting teachers based on content mastery; training teachers for “student-centered” or active learning instruction; measuring student learning outcomes (and giving teachers the same tests); designing good-quality curricula (in terms of both content and values), books, and materials, and

producing them in a cost-effective manner; using local language instruction for the first three to four years of schooling; implementing inexpensive but effective models of in-service teacher training (master teachers, pedagogical advisers, rural teacher self-help networks); and creating performance incentives for teachers that are linked to school and student attainment.

***Focus on equity.***

Benefits of system expansion should be shared by setting clear rules for the distribution of resources across different regions and schools; by monitoring outputs and outcomes across schools and regions; increasing support and skill-specific capacity building that targets the lowest-performing regions and schools; develop condensed accelerated programs to get

drop-outs back in school and up to grade level; provide targeted subsidies to get and keep vulnerable children in school; and introduce cost-effective programs to enhance early child development (health programs, nutrition programs, and early stimulation of infants and young children).

Specific interventions have shown, in some settings to get hard-to-reach children into school. These include instituting conditional cash transfers, using schools feeding programs as an incentive to attend school, and implementing school health programs to reduce absenteeism. Several interventions have proved particularly successful. Maternal education is a key

determinant of children’s attainment. Some data suggest that support for mothers may help increase school participation by their children as well as parents and community involvement should be considered an important complement to interventions to increase access and retention at the primary school level.