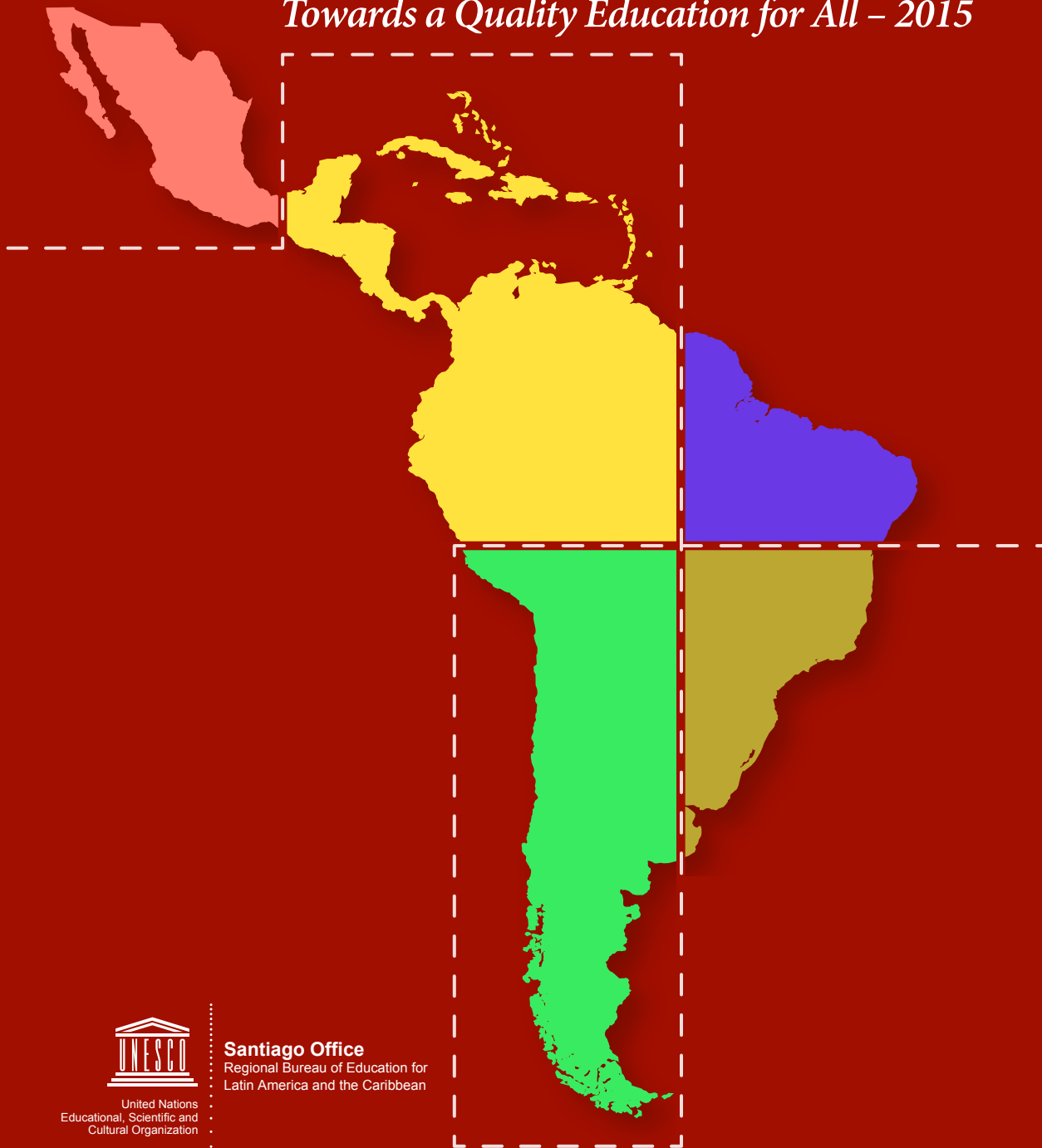


# The State of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: *Towards a Quality Education for All – 2015*



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

**Santiago Office**  
Regional Bureau of Education for  
Latin America and the Caribbean



**The State of Education in  
Latin America and the Caribbean:  
*Towards a Quality Education for All – 2015***

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## FOREWORD

In 2000, the countries of the world agreed to make sustained efforts to achieve Education for All (EFA). Since then governments, civil society groups, cooperation agencies, development banks, and other stakeholders have worked in their various areas of action with the joint objective of achieving the six EFA goals by 2015.

Agreements on the need for a shared global agenda to provide for an unprecedented boost for education began in 1990 with the World Declaration on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand. In 2000 a strategic framework for action was built in Dakar, Senegal, and six specific objectives were set, to be achieved in fifteen years, by 2015.

The six Dakar goals include early childhood care and education, universal primary education, learning by young people and adults, literacy, gender parity, and education quality. UNESCO coordinates and spearheads international efforts to reach these goals, while also monitoring progress and bolstering global, regional, and national actions.

In order to garner knowledge of the fruits of the efforts made by States and many other education stakeholders, the UNESCO Regional Bureau of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean conducts a process to review advances made and pending challenges in the region.

There can be no doubt that the six Dakar goals have served as yardsticks for progress. Improvements have indeed been achieved that place the region in a very different context to the year 2000, albeit with major differences both between and within countries. However, the advances made have brought with them new challenges, emerging issues, and fresh obstacles.

This publication sets out to leverage the progress made so far, and to recognise efforts made. It also aims to survey emerging challenges for the post-2015 education agenda, which must certainly generate a new vision of education in the region. Indeed, quality education for all people throughout their lives, as a fundamental and universal right, is facing a landscape of profound changes at the dawn of the 21st century. This must be understood, and a new paradigm built for our times.

It is our hope that the information and commentary prepared for this document may serve to nourish thinking regarding the new education agenda: an agenda that will help people to take an active and responsible role in the knowledge economy; an agenda that contributes to the development of new education practices that put learning at the forefront; an agenda that addresses the new challenges facing teaching, including those brought about by new technologies; an agenda that fosters collaboration in refining teacher training and the design of public policies to ensure the implementation of reforms that have a comprehensive impact on education systems.

An awareness of the region's education situation and pressing hurdles, their characteristics and challenges, is vital in creating and evaluating public policies. Recording achievements and identifying shortfalls with an eye on the future is the spirit behind this document, to contribute to achieving Quality Education for All - the goal that draws together all of UNESCO's efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Jorge Sequeira**

Director

OREALC/UNESCO Santiago



### 1. Information and data reference period

The reference year for education and finance data which are presented in this publication is the academic or financial year ending in 2010 or the most recent year available within the period 2008 to 2009. Where trends over time are presented, data are used from the year 2000; if such data are unavailable, from 2001; and if such data are also unavailable, from 1999.

Literacy indicators are the most recent available within the 2008-2010 period, or estimates from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).

Where a given reference period is spread across two calendar years, the later year is cited. For example, the school year 2009/2010 is presented as 2010.

The reference year for data taken from the 2011 Human Development Report is 2010. Data from the OECD PISA study refer to 2009.

References are also made to the Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Reports published in 2002, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012, for which the reference years should be checked on a case-by-case basis..

### 2. Information sources

#### a) Education

Data on education financing, literacy, and school enrolment and progress are taken from the international database on education maintained by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). Please check the reader's guide in the 2012 Global Education Digest for more information on UIS data: <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/GED%20Documents%20C/GED-2012-Complete-Web3.pdf>

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<sup>1</sup> In some cases this Reader's Guide presents the same information as the Reader's Guide in the 2009 Global Education Digest, an annual publication of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).

The data used to calculate completion rates and parity indices are taken from household surveys conducted by the countries, and processed by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), as well as being treated in accordance with international education standards defined by UNESCO. Please refer to the Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2012, for further information on the sources of data processed by ECLAC.

[http://interwp.cepal.org/anuario\\_estadistico/anuario\\_2012/default.asp](http://interwp.cepal.org/anuario_estadistico/anuario_2012/default.asp)

Results are presented from the Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (SERCE) implemented by the Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE), managed by OREALC/UNESCO Santiago. SERCE publications can be checked at the Regional Bureau of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean website:

[http://portal.unesco.org/geography/es/ev.php-URL\\_ID=10656&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/geography/es/ev.php-URL_ID=10656&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

The LLECE homepage is available at:

[http://portal.unesco.org/geography/es/ev.php-URL\\_ID=7732&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/geography/es/ev.php-URL_ID=7732&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

Data from the OECD PISA study (2009) are also presented for the nine countries in the region that participated in that study. For more information, visit:

[http://www.oecd.org/pages/0,341,en\\_32252351\\_46584327\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_0\\_0.html](http://www.oecd.org/pages/0,341,en_32252351_46584327_1_1_1_1_1_0_0.html)

Other information sources used include: UNDP, 2011 Human Development Report and the EFA Global Monitoring Reports from the years listed above.

All data sources used required processing in accordance with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 97), in order to guarantee comparability between countries regarding education levels in the region. (See also section a) of the technical notes).

For details on the documentary analysis information sources used in the chapters on Relevance and Pertinence of education, see Annex C of this publication.

## **b) Population**

Population statistics are provided by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs' Population Division, based on the 2008 Revision of the World Population Prospects. The Division provides these data to the UIS for use calculating indicators, but does not provide data by age range for countries with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants. Where information was not available from the Population Division, national data or UIS estimates were used. Please visit:

<http://www.un.org/esa/population/unpop.htm>

## **c) Economics**

Economic information was provided by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). For more information, see:

<http://www.cepal.org/publicaciones>

<http://www.cepal.org/estadisticas>

## **3. Technical Notes.**

### **a) International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 97).**

UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education or ISCED (UNESCO, 1997) is a key tool in ensuring cross-country comparability. The education levels used in this report are defined in accordance with this standard, subject to adaptations developed in each country for the purposes of reporting statistical information to the international database maintained by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), based either on the questionnaires applied by the Institute or on questionnaires used jointly by the UIS, Eurostat, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Please visit the UIS website:

[http://www.uis.unesco.org/ev\\_en.php?ID=7433\\_201&ID2=DO\\_TOPIC](http://www.uis.unesco.org/ev_en.php?ID=7433_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC)

### **b) Education data and indicators**

In order to ensure comparability between countries, the decision has been taken to use indicators and methods calculated by the UIS, in accordance with known international standards:

[http://www.uis.unesco.org/template/pdf/EducGeneral/Indicator\\_Technical\\_guidelines\\_SP.pdf](http://www.uis.unesco.org/template/pdf/EducGeneral/Indicator_Technical_guidelines_SP.pdf).

Additionally, in the Education Situation 2010 indices and calculation methods applied by the Regional Education Indicators Project (PRIE) were used. The document "Construction and Usage Methodology" (2009) is available at the OAS' PRIE website:

<http://portal.oas.org/portal/topic/sedi/educaci%C3%B3nycultura/prie/documentos/tabid/1380/language/en-us/default.aspx>

The tables and graphics were prepared based on available information for each indicator used. Therefore, not all countries appear in all graphics and tables.

### **c) Averages across all countries**

This publication includes averages across all countries for certain indicators, without weighting for population, as a reference measure for comparison with the individual values for each country.

This is not the same as a regional average, which includes a population weighting factor for the regional total.

The decision to use un-weighted country averages instead of regional averages as reference points is based on equal valuation of the results of each country in the different parameters analysed, regardless of their demographic weighting in the region.

### **d) Net enrolment rates**

The net enrolment rate (NER) represents the number of pupils or students in the theoretical age group for a given level of education enrolled in that level, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group, and in this report is used to monitor access at the pre-primary and secondary levels.

Access to primary education is monitored in the Education Situation 2010 using the adjusted primary net enrolment rate. This rate represents not only enrolment in the primary schooling age group, but also children who are at the official age for primary education but enrolled at the secondary level, expressed as a percentage of the total population in the primary age group.

A high net enrolment rate (NER) is indicative of good coverage of the population at the official school age. The theoretical maximum is 100%. An increase in this percentage reflects a progressive improvement in coverage at the education level in question. Comparing the net enrolment rate with the gross enrolment rate can highlight differences arising from the incidence of early and late enrolment. If the NER takes a value below 100%, then the remainder - the difference between the

value and 100% - provides a measure of the proportion of children not enrolled at the education level in question. However, as some children or young people may be enrolled at other levels, this difference should not be considered indicative of the percentage of pupils not enrolled in the education system as a whole. For example, the adjusted primary net enrolment rate is calculated as a percentage of children in the official entry age range who are enrolled in either primary or secondary education.

However, the calculation of NER values close to 100% may present difficulties if:

- the primary education enrolment reference date does not coincide with the birth age of the cohort eligible for enrolment at that education level;
- a significant proportion of the population starts primary education earlier than the established age, and therefore also completes this level early;
- if the entry age for primary education is increased but the duration remains unchanged <sup>2</sup>.

### **e) Education level completion rates**

Primary and secondary education completion rates are expressed as percentages of the population who have completed at least the primary or secondary level, out of the total population in the corresponding age group.

The reliability of this rate is founded on the fact that it is calculated using information from just one source. Trend analysis can be conducted by using different waves or years of household surveys, or by comparing the situation of different age groups in the same information source.

While this index is ideal for describing schooling levels in the population, it is restricted inasmuch as that it refers only to the results obtained from actions taken in the past to achieve this goal, and cannot gauge the current performance of education systems. Another limitation is related

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<sup>2</sup> UNESCO/UIS. 2009. Education indicators, technical specifications Montreal, UNESCO-UIS.

to the lack or infrequency of household surveys in some countries, preventing the monitoring of changes<sup>3</sup>.

### **f) Indices for parity in completion of education levels**

Parity indices are used to analyse equity of opportunities in education. This index is calculated by dividing the quantity for the historically less favoured population by the quantity for the historically more favoured population. Thus, this index provides a measure of such dichotomy, and permits comparisons to be made between the behaviour of a single indicator for two sub-populations. It is applicable in cases of populations that can be divided into two comparable parts, and when the goal is to achieve a situation of homogeneity between the two sub-populations.

Using the parity index as a measure of equity, when the index takes values close to one (between 0.95 and 1.05) a situation of parity exists; close to equality between the two sub-populations, and equitable between them, as a group. Conversely, values significantly different to one reflect a situation of advantage and disadvantage between the component groups.

If the parity index is less than 0.95, the numerator group is at a disadvantage as against the denominator, while an index above 1.05 expresses the converse. Conventionally, the numerator group is selected as that which is expected to be disadvantaged<sup>4</sup>.

### **g) Ethnic categories**

The following definitions refer to the education level completion parity indices between ethnic groups in the eight countries that report statistical information in this area. It should be pointed out that in this case the categories “indigenous” and “non indigenous” are operative and not anthropological definitions. The purpose of these categories is to differentiate ethnic groups that have historically been disadvantaged in the formal education system from those that have historically experienced a more favourable situation.

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<sup>3</sup> PRIE. 2009. Methodology for Building and Use. Mexico, OEA, SEP Mexico, and UNESCO.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Bolivia:	Indigenous includes: Quechua, Aymará, Guaraní and other native groups. Non indigenous includes: Spanish, foreign, and other groups.
Brazil:	Indigenous includes: black and indigenous. Non indigenous includes: white and other.
Chile:	Indigenous includes: indigenous population. Non indigenous includes: non indigenous population
Ecuador:	Indigenous includes: indigenous population. Non indigenous includes: white, mestizo, black, and other.
Guatemala:	Indigenous includes: indigenous population. Non indigenous includes: non indigenous population.
Nicaragua:	Indigenous includes: Miskito, Mayagna, Sumo. Non indigenous includes: Spanish, English, and other.
Panama:	Indigenous includes: indigenous population. Non indigenous includes: non indigenous population.
Paraguay:	Indigenous includes: monolingual Guaraní speakers. Non indigenous includes: Spanish speakers, bilingual Spanish-Guaraní speakers, and speakers of other languages.

#### **h) Indicators of educational attainment in the population aged 25 and over**

Data on educational attainment are presented by ISCED level. The categories relate to the percentage of the population analysed who have completed the education level. Educational attainment data are derived from household surveys. As the data compiled from such surveys may be subject to sampling errors, readers are advised to exercise caution in interpreting differences of less than 5%.

The reference period for the indicators presented corresponds to the most recent year for which information is available. Among the countries included, these periods vary between the school years from 2000 to 2010.

## 4. Participating countries

This report covers 41 countries and territories, the names of which are shown below, together with their identifiers (used in graphics and tables).

Latin America		Caribbean	
AR	Argentina	AI	Anguila
BO	Bolivia	AG	Antigua and Barbuda
BR	Brazil	AN	Netherlands Antilles
CO	Colombia	AW	Aruba
CR	Costa Rica	BS	Bahamas
CU	Cuba	BB	Barbados
CL	Chile	BZ	Belize
EC	Ecuador	BM	Bermudas
SV	El Salvador	DM	Dominica
GT	Guatemala	GD	Granada
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	St Kitts and Nevis
VE	Venezuela	VC	St Vincent and the Grenadines
		LC	Saint Lucia
		SR	Surinam
		TT	Trinidad and Tobago



## 1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

### *“Education for all” and the right to education*

This report analyses the progress of Latin American and Caribbean countries in fulfilling the six education for all goals identified in the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000. It also identifies a series of relevant challenges and issues that should be part of a discussion on an agenda for after 2015, the deadline governments set for achieving the goals from the above-mentioned Framework for Action.

Generally speaking, the report identifies several major regional advances in achieving the education for all goals; we have even systematically applied stricter criteria than those explicitly mentioned in the Dakar goals, which suggests that the region can and should set itself more ambitious goals. Furthermore, our comparative analyses with other countries indicate that Latin America as a whole tends to post better progress in basic aspects of education when countries’ contextual differences are taken into account. However, the report emphasizes at least three critical aspects. First, the achievements mentioned are not replicated across all countries: there are marked differences within the region, and many countries are far from achieving even the basic Dakar goals. Second, internal inequalities are extremely acute in almost all the region’s countries, with social class, poverty status and place of residence being the most common manifestations of such inequality. Even where the most disadvantaged have advanced in absolute terms, their situation in relation to the most privileged has not improved significantly. Lastly, education progress should increasingly be judged according to new criteria relating to quality, rather than the mere expansion of education. We apply a broad notion of quality that includes not only achievements but also conditions and processes, and not only academic aspects but also psychosocial and citizenship aspects. This is definitely the dimension in which the region is lagging chronically behind.

From a historical perspective, the international commitment to “education for all” is simply the current manifestation of a long process in which the international community and governments have extended people’s right to education, endowed it with substantive content and made it increasingly enforceable. In this process, the very notion of the right to education has changed from the idea of compulsory education to a more ambitious and multidimensional concept (UNESCO and UNICEF, 2008).

According to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.” A similar concept is expressed in Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966): “The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize that, with a view to achieving the full realization of this right [to education]: (a) Primary education shall be compulsory and available free to all; (b) Secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational secondary education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education; (c) Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education [...]”. Lastly, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) has practically the same provisions as the 1966 Covenant in terms of accessible, free and compulsory education at various levels.

The notion of the right to education has been closely linked to the idea of guaranteeing universal access to school by means of laws on compulsory schooling. This basic vision of the right to education as the right to schooling and the obtaining of a school certificate has proved insufficient. Education policies and the international community have moved to redefine the right to education as the right to learn. This implies, inter alia, that receiving a quality education must be seen as part of the right to education. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international texts provide three “permanent” criteria for defining the right to learn or to receive a quality education: (i) maximizing each person’s capacities; (ii) promoting the values enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: equality of people, respect for diversity, tolerance and non-discrimination, promotion of the common good; and (iii) equipping students with the capacity and knowledge needed to become a socially competent person.

The changing nature of the concept of the right to education means that there will always be academic debate and political conflict on how to define the practical scope of the right to education for each era and society. In particular, the contemporary vision of the right to education has three components: right to schooling (access, promotion and

completion from school cycles considered fundamental), right to learning (that is socially relevant and based on each person's capacities), and the right to be treated with dignity and have equal opportunities (UNESCO and UNICEF, 2008).

The Dakar Framework for Action expressed a more ambitious conception of the right to education. In Jomtien in 1990, the World Declaration on Education for All established the need for all children, young people and adults to have access to education, as it was considered a fundamental right that makes it possible to satisfy basic needs to learn and take part in society. This Declaration was confirmed in the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action, when countries reaffirmed their collective commitment to providing education for all. The six goals of education for all were established to be achieved by 2015 (Dakar, 2000):

- 1 Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
- 2 Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
- 3 Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.
- 4 Achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
- 5 Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.
- 6 Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

UNESCO has monitored progress and fulfilment of these goals at the world level and also in various world regions, with its annual publication of the Education for All Global Monitoring Report since 2002. Each Report presents progress towards the education for all goals and discusses a central theme affecting the achievement of the goals by 2015<sup>5</sup>. This report was compiled using the Global Monitoring Reports from 2002 to 2012, as well as other publications from various United Nations agencies on many topics related to the education for all goals. For identifying and analysing post-2015 challenges, the above was supplemented with academic literature on specific topics. For statistical purposes, the most up-to-date databases available were used, mainly those of UNESCO, but also those of other international cooperation agencies (particularly the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the World Bank).

In order to analyse the situation of Latin American and Caribbean countries in terms of fulfilling the six education for all goals defined in the Dakar Framework for Action, the same rationale used by UNESCO for monitoring purposes was generally continued. The most recent available information was used, which corresponded to 2010. In many cases, changes since the signing of the Dakar commitment in 2000 were also monitored, and statistical analyses of all world countries were carried out with a twofold purpose: to identify factors associated with achieving some of the basic education for all goals, as well as putting the situation of Latin American and Caribbean countries into context. However, there are many countries with incomplete information. Annex 4 briefly explains the procedure followed in such cases<sup>6</sup>.

The report is structured as follows (in addition to this introduction that ends with a brief summary of the main contents). First, the report provides basic information on the socioeconomic context of the region's countries, and the financial efforts made by governments in terms of education. There follows an analysis of the eight themes we have identified

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<sup>5</sup> The topics covered by the Reports over the past decade have been Gender parity (2003-2004), Education quality (2005), Literacy (2006), Early childhood (2002), Governance (2009), Marginalization (2010), Conflict (2011) and Youth, skills and work (2012). In 2002 and 2008, the Reports provided a review of progress towards achieving the education for all goals.

<sup>6</sup> Although the report includes many graphs, the text is written so that it can be read without reference to these.

as being key for education in Latin America: early childhood, primary education, secondary education, education quality, higher education, gender equity, intercultural bilingual education and lifelong learning. These sections include examples and analysis of some education policies or trends, followed by national case studies from recent years. The Dakar goals linked with these themes are analysed within the relevant sections, without there always being a direct link. In other words, some goals are discussed in more than one section, while all sections tackle broader themes than those established in the goals. We expect that it is precisely this type of analysis that will take the discussion of the permanent purpose of education for all beyond 2015, and beyond the specific formulation of Dakar, in a way that reflects this report's position on the changing and multidimensional nature of the right to education.

## **1. Introduction and summary**

The notion of the right to education has evolved and become more complex. It is now acknowledged that the right to education includes the right to schooling, the right to learn and the right to be treated with dignity and have equal opportunities. Although the goals of education for all, expressed in the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action, took a multidimensional perspective on the right to education, this approach must be assessed and adjusted with a view to defining a post-2015 agenda of commitments to the right to education.

## **2. Development trends in Latin American and Caribbean countries**

During the decade from 2000 (and in several cases during the 1990s), most of the region's countries achieved considerable progress in key areas such as overall development, economic growth and – to a lesser extent – poverty reduction. All of this generated a favourable context for education progress. Another favourable condition, which did not apply across the board in the region, was the demographic change that reduced the potential demand for education. However, persistently high levels of inequality and poverty, as well as the high proportion of people living in rural areas, posed additional difficulties to the expansion of quality education throughout most of the region.

### 3. Public investment in education in Latin America and the Caribbean

There was a slightly positive overall trend in the region's public education spending over the past decade (rising from an average of about 4.5% of GDP to 5.2%), yet without a significant increase in the priority given to education within public spending. The increased spending appears to be mainly due to an expansion of education services, as the proportion of public spending per pupil either remained the same or increased slightly in primary and secondary education, while plummeting in higher education. There are dramatic differences among the region's countries in this regard. According to analysis, public spending on education tended to be one of the main factors behind national differences in achievement of education for all goals. Available information on private spending on education in the region indicates that it tends to be proportionally higher than in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (across all levels of education).

### 4. Care and education in early childhood

Over the past decade, the region has seen significant progress in the basic conditions of survival, health and well-being in early childhood. There was also a moderate increase in access to pre-school education (average net enrolment rates rose from 56% to 66%), which places the region in a relatively favourable position in international terms. Nevertheless, situations are hugely uneven among countries, with varying levels of priority assigned to this level of education. There were also found to be startling inequalities to the detriment of the poorest people, those living in rural areas and belonging to indigenous communities.

While the agenda to expand early childhood care and education programmes remains relevant, the main challenge facing the region's countries is to make progress in ensuring that such services are of a satisfactory quality. This is because the positive effects that these are expected to have on child development do not materialize (or can even be harmful) if the programmes are low quality.

## 5. Primary education: access and completion

By 2000, the region's countries already had a high level of access to primary education (average net enrolment rate of 94%). Furthermore, the past decade has seen grade repetition and drop-out rates decrease, which resulted in most countries posting a very significant improvement rates in retention rates towards the end of cycles and completion rates, especially in those countries with a lower starting point. These advances were particularly dramatic among the poorest populations and those living in rural areas, resulting in a downward trend in internal inequalities. Despite such progress, in 2000, an average of one in ten young people aged 15 to 19 did not complete primary education (and in some countries, this figure was one in three).

The main challenge in terms of primary education access and completion is to improve conditions so that the most socially disadvantaged children and adolescents remain in school rather than dropping out. This involves social and financial support programmes for families (for instance as part of eradicating child labour), compensatory programmes for schools that serve the most disadvantaged populations, as well as better conditions for teaching and learning (such as increased time at school, improved learning resources and reduced social segregation at school).

## 6. Secondary education

Over the past decade, secondary education in the region expanded slightly (with average net enrolment rates rising from 67% to 72%), and there are signs of a slowdown in the population increase among young people completing this cycle. This is despite the fact that, in 2000, almost half of young people aged 20 to 24 had not completed secondary school. This is thought to be due to high repetition and drop-out rates, rather than to problems of access or provision. The region's countries are very uneven in terms of level of schooling among adolescents and young people: whereas in some countries secondary education has become extremely widespread, in other countries it tends to be restricted to a minority of the population. In all countries, this disadvantage has a disproportionate impact on the poorest young people and those living in rural areas, although in many countries these were the groups that had benefited the most from the progress in the previous decade.

The challenge facing secondary education in Latin America and the Caribbean is to consolidate its expansion, especially to include the most disadvantaged population groups. However, this growth agenda needs to go hand in hand with changes in the identity, internal processes and organization of secondary education. Unless such changes occur, quality and equality objectives will be seriously compromised. Without comprehensive reform, it will be difficult to expand secondary education in a way that is sustainable and meaningful for young people.

## **7. The challenge of education quality**

The multidimensional vision of the right to education, which includes the right to learn and be well treated in the school system, places education quality at the very heart of concerns. This is even more relevant given the major increases in coverage, which will increasingly place quality challenges at the heart of the region's education for all agenda. One such challenge is to adopt a wide and non-reductionist definition of the concept of "educational quality".

### **7.1. Learning achievement and quality assurance**

The academic achievements of the region's pupils are worrying in most countries with information available: an average of about one third of primary pupils and almost half of secondary pupils do not appear to have acquired basic learning in literacy. In mathematics, the results are even more unsatisfactory. Furthermore, there is dramatic inequality in academic achievement affecting the most disadvantaged pupils (especially the poorest). Educational policies should focus on providing every school with the inputs, organization and professional capacities to generate better learning opportunities for all pupils (and especially those in the greatest difficulty). Standardized external evaluation and accountability systems that have begun to expand should be conceived and validated in accordance with their contribution to improving those learning opportunities.



## **7.2. Teachers and quality of education**

The main pillar of educational quality is the professional capacity of the teachers: there can be no genuine improvement in education quality if pupils are not taught by teachers able to generate greater learning opportunities. Although only partial information is available, all the signs suggest that teaching in the region does not match the characteristics of a high-status profession: inadequate wages and working conditions, low-quality initial training and limited professional development opportunities. As a result, teaching policies constitute a huge challenge – to build a professional teaching career that will attract talented young people into teaching, train candidates appropriately, retain competent teachers (especially in the most disadvantaged areas) and make professional development into a need and a requirement. Given the systemic character of all such processes, not much progress can be made in one without improving the others.

## **7.3. School environment and its relationship to education quality**

Being well treated in school is part of the extended notion of the right to education, which means the school environment (the promotion of respectful, non-discriminatory, healthy and non-violent co-existence in the school community) becomes a relevant concern. A good school environment is part of education quality. In addition, available evidence in the region shows that a better school environment is associated with higher academic achievement among pupils and lower drop-out rates. Furthermore, evidence suggests that pupils with a higher socioeconomic status tend to attend schools with better school environment indicators, which makes it another factor of inequality. The public policy challenge in this field is to promote healthy co-existence, for instance through student participation, respectful treatment of teachers and training in non-violent conflict resolution – thereby moving away from purely punitive violence-control and disciplinary approaches.

## **7.4. Citizenship education and education quality**

Citizenship training has historically been one of the main aims of education. However, it has been given limited prominence in education policies, and in practice there remains a traditional notion divided into

strengthening national identity and passing on basic civic education. Furthermore, evidence from some of the region's countries shows that over half of Latin American young people had not learned the basics of civic education, while a large proportion tend to mistrust public institutions and not to value democracy. Paradoxically, the evidence suggests that the region's youth has a comparatively strong interest in public affairs, social justice and the inclusion of minority groups. In recent years, there have been student movements in several countries that confirm this willingness to participate and an interest in matters that affect them.

The greatest challenge in this area is to restore citizenship education as a key component of education quality, and as one of the learning objectives that pupils are expected to develop. However, this requires applying a new approach to citizenship education based on building capacities, skills and attitudes for citizen and political participation; and giving meaning to academic training so that students learn not only content but also how to improve social relations and their involvement in society. This involves not only changing the curriculum, but also changing teaching and school organization, because acquiring such skills involves direct age-appropriate student experience and participation in the civic and political, and civil and community dimensions.

## **7.5. Education and information and communication technologies**

E-skills training is more and more important in the educational sphere as a requirement for being part of the knowledge society: ICTs are not just a powerful learning resource, they are also increasingly relevant tools for life. The potential of ICTs lies not only in digital literacy, but also in promoting modern skills and improving the educational performance of students in general. In the region's countries, household access to these new technologies is largely dependent on families' socioeconomic status, which means the school system has been the main tool for narrowing this technological gap. Having said that, the gap remains large in most countries. As well as continuing to equip schools teaching the less privileged pupils with ICTs, the future challenge is also how to ensure Latin American students use them with educational potential (i.e. beyond recreational use). This involves better training of teachers, so that they can incorporate new technologies into their teaching practice.

## 8. Higher education

In the decade from 2000, access to higher education surged in the region, with average growth of about 40%. This positioned the region as a whole at the average of international trends. Although the growth trend was very widespread, there is nonetheless a huge heterogeneity among countries in terms of this level of education. The higher education growth pattern was very uneven, benefiting mainly high-income groups and urban areas.

The region's higher education challenges are numerous and varied. First, we must reverse the unequal expansion trend, which requires greater State involvement in terms of funding and compensatory policies. Secondly, countries must strengthen their university institutions (especially the large public universities) so as to generate their own capacity for scientific and technological output. The region lags chronically behind in this area. Lastly, universities must do much more to connect with the development needs of their societies, as the school system is fertile ground for such work, by researching the educational problems of the masses, supporting school improvements and reform, enhancing training for future teachers and integrating themselves vertically into the educational system.

## 9. Gender equity in education

Generally speaking, the region has achieved very satisfactory comparative indices in terms of girls' and young women's access to primary and secondary education. What is more, some countries have secondary school gender parity rates that show greater exclusion among males, who are more affected by child/youth labour and discipline/performance problems that lead to dropping out. In terms of learning achievement, the information available shows a general (but not universal) pattern of lower male performance in literacy, and lower female performance in mathematics and science.

To advance towards greater gender equity, education policies must consider the specific factors that influence drop-out rates in secondary education. Roughly speaking, this means paid work and behavioural problems among boys, and motherhood and helping with domestic work in the case of girls. Although the causes of systematic performance

differences are less obvious, available information suggests that it may be due to a combination of deeply-rooted cultural stereotypes and on-going discriminatory practices in schools. This calls for intense efforts to be made in terms of school culture and teacher training.

## **10. Intercultural bilingual education: education and diversity**

There is considerable and widespread exclusion and inequality affecting indigenous pupils in Latin America and the Caribbean – in terms of access, progression and learning achievements in various school cycles. Indigenous pupils are systematically among the most educationally disadvantaged social categories in the region, and this is often exacerbated by living in poverty in rural areas. This appears to be due to the persistence of discriminatory practices in cultural, educational and institutional terms within education, as well as the implementation of linguistic and cultural assimilation programmes – which all combine to hamper educational achievement among indigenous pupils.

Remedying this situation first involves implementing compensatory policies that address the most obvious exclusion factors (namely, lack of provision, shortage of resources and child labour). However, this will not be enough unless the cultural, institutional and educational factors are also addressed. In this context, we must promote the notion of intercultural education for all, with a view to eliminating the bias against indigenous peoples that permeates the entire education system, as manifested in the ignorance and prejudice on the part of non-indigenous populations. Lastly, we must create conditions for making intercultural bilingual education viable in some countries and areas, by implementing language policies, designing appropriate curricula and educational material, and using bilingualism and multiculturalism to train teachers, as well as training teachers to use them.

## **11. Adult literacy and lifelong learning**

In 2000, the region's literacy in the traditional sense was already comparatively satisfactory, and continued to increase slightly during the rest of the decade (with average adult literacy rates rising from 90% to 93% in that period, and only four countries with rates below 90%). In general, this increase appears to be more associated with the rate

of expansion of the education system, rather than specific policies. In 2010, the youngest population posted literacy rates of 97%. However, the concept of literacy has become more complex, as we acknowledge that the basic skills required to exercise citizenship today are more demanding than in the past.

Unfortunately, the region has no satisfactory analysis to provide an overview of the population's "literacy for the twenty-first century", although available information suggests that most countries are lagging behind. Furthermore, there should be a more ambitious vision to connect traditional literacy challenges with the notion of lifelong learning, in order to generate institutional and policy mechanisms to provide relevant educational opportunities for young people finding the education-to-work transition difficult, and for the general public needing to constantly update their skills (especially with a view to improving their job prospects).

## 2. DEVELOPMENT TRENDS IN LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES

Countries' educational progress is just one component of the process of improving living conditions in societies, in other words their development. The relationship between the two is one of mutual influence. While extended and improved education is expected to contribute to general progress, a lack of progress is in itself an obstacle to the expansion of educational opportunities. Indeed, while the academic literature points to a link between educational progress and economic, political and cultural development, the "causal" relationship appears to work in both directions (Chabbott and Ramírez, 2000). One of the reasons is that expanding access to education (especially in the twentieth century) has increasingly been perceived by society as one of the defining characteristics of a national modern State (Meyer, Ramirez and Soysal, 1992). International rights treaties and international agencies have played an essential role in disseminating this concept, with the education for all movement (Jomtien to Dakar) being the most striking example (Chabbott and Ramírez, 2000). The current view, which appears to be the best match for the human rights principles and the scientific evidence, is that education is development (rather than being a cause or effect of development) (UNESCO, 2002).

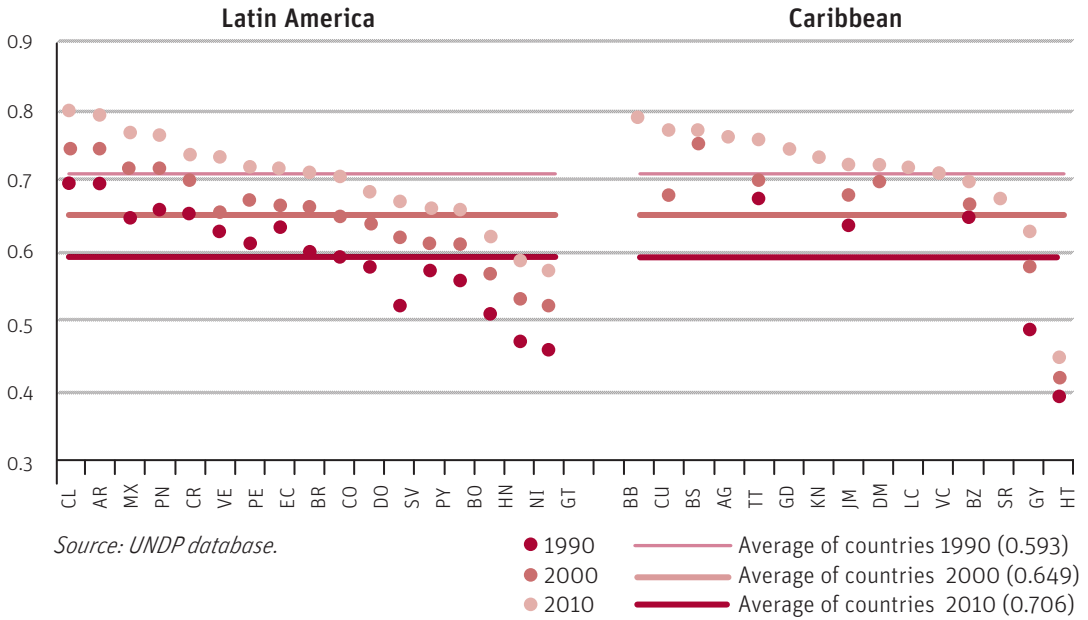
As a result, an appropriate evaluation of countries' progress in achieving the goals of the Dakar Framework for Action must consider the context of basic economic and social conditions of the education systems in the region's countries. Given that this context makes it more or less difficult for each society to achieve the education for all goals, this report will analyse the link between some of these variables and countries' level of fulfilment of education goals.

The most concise and widely used information to describe countries' overall level of development is the Human Development Index (HDI), which is estimated annually by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Index is a combined measurement of people's life expectancy, income and education<sup>7</sup>. In very broad terms, the UNDP-estimated Index shows that the last two decades (and particularly the

<sup>7</sup> In this sense, the HDI cannot strictly be considered a "context" indicator in terms of education, as the latter makes a substantive contribution to the estimation formula. This limits its use as a control variable in the regression analyses presented below.

most recent one) have seen most Latin American and Caribbean countries with comparable information go from a “medium” level of human development to “high” according to the UNDP classification. By 2010, Haiti was the only country still classed as having a low level of human development.

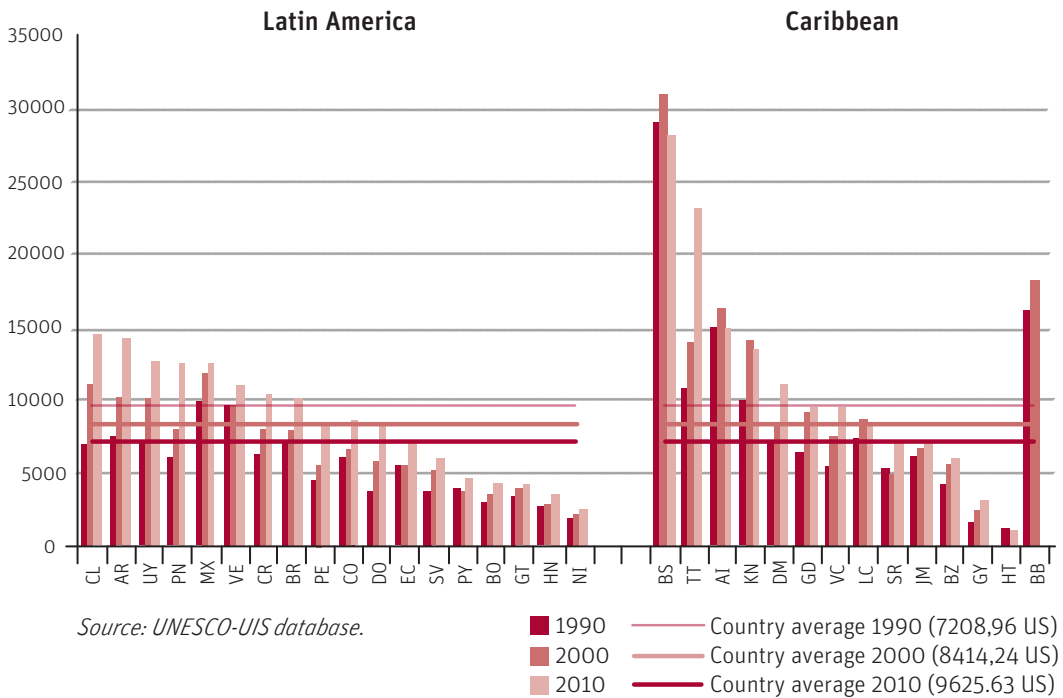
**Graphic 2.1. Human Development Index (range 0-1) (32 countries)**



More specifically, the economic situation of Latin American and Caribbean countries was relatively favourable during most of the decade from 2000, with widespread and steady growth in per capita gross domestic product (GDP), which was only interrupted by the international financial crisis that began in 2008. Before the crisis, ECLAC had estimated annual average GDP growth of almost 5% for the region’s countries. This economic growth made it possible to predict a continuation of the favourable trend experienced by most of the region’s countries since the 1990s – and this was indeed the case (albeit with considerable variations) in almost all countries in the region. As a result, average per capita GDP in the 32 countries with information available rose from about US \$7,200 in 1990 to US \$8,400 in 2000, and then to US \$9,600 in 2010. Inequalities among the region’s countries definitely remain dramatic, and have tended to increase in recent decades: by 2010, five countries had per capita GDP of around US \$15,000; in seven countries the figure was less than US \$5,000.

It is well known that Latin America and the Caribbean is the world region with the most imbalanced income distribution. Although per capita GDP projects a good overall image of countries' economic situations, the considerable inequalities within Latin American countries force us to consider the way in which this growth is distributed among households. In this sense, progress has been very slow in the past decade, as the Gini coefficient (measuring income distribution) dipped from about 0.53 to 0.51 between 2000 and 2010, which means that levels remain comparatively extremely high. Developed countries tend to have Gini coefficients of between 0.25 and 0.35. In Latin America, even the most egalitarian countries (Argentina and Uruguay) have Gini coefficients of around 0.45.

**Graphic 2.2. Per capita GDP (PPP, constant US \$ 2005) (32 countries)**

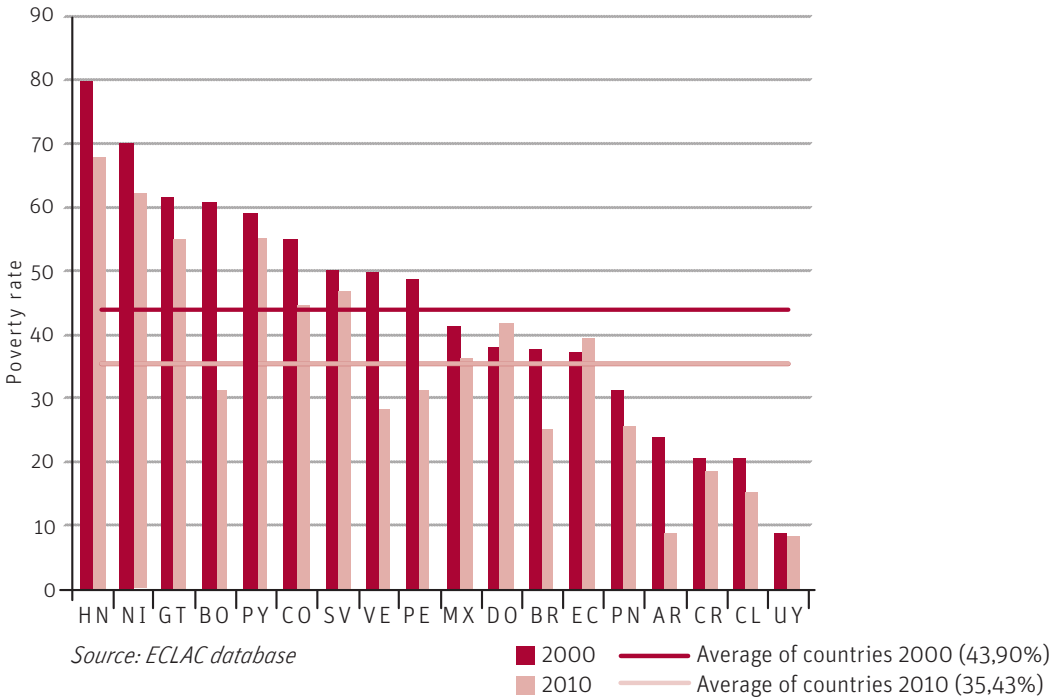


The most relevant context variable for tracking education in the region is probably the poverty status of families, as this affects participation in education, as well as the way in which pupils make use of educational opportunities. Between 2000 and 2010, the average number of people with income below the poverty line dropped from 43.9% to



35.4% in Latin American countries (or a reduction of around 20%). In just 2 of the 18 countries with comparable data, poverty rose slightly during the past decade. In contrast, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Argentina almost halved their poverty rates during the period. Despite such progress, it should not be forgotten that poverty rates in Latin America remain a huge obstacle to the expansion and improvement of education for children and young people (as poverty affects an average of one third of each country's population).

**Graphic 2.3. Population beneath the poverty line (according to national poverty line, %) (18 countries)**



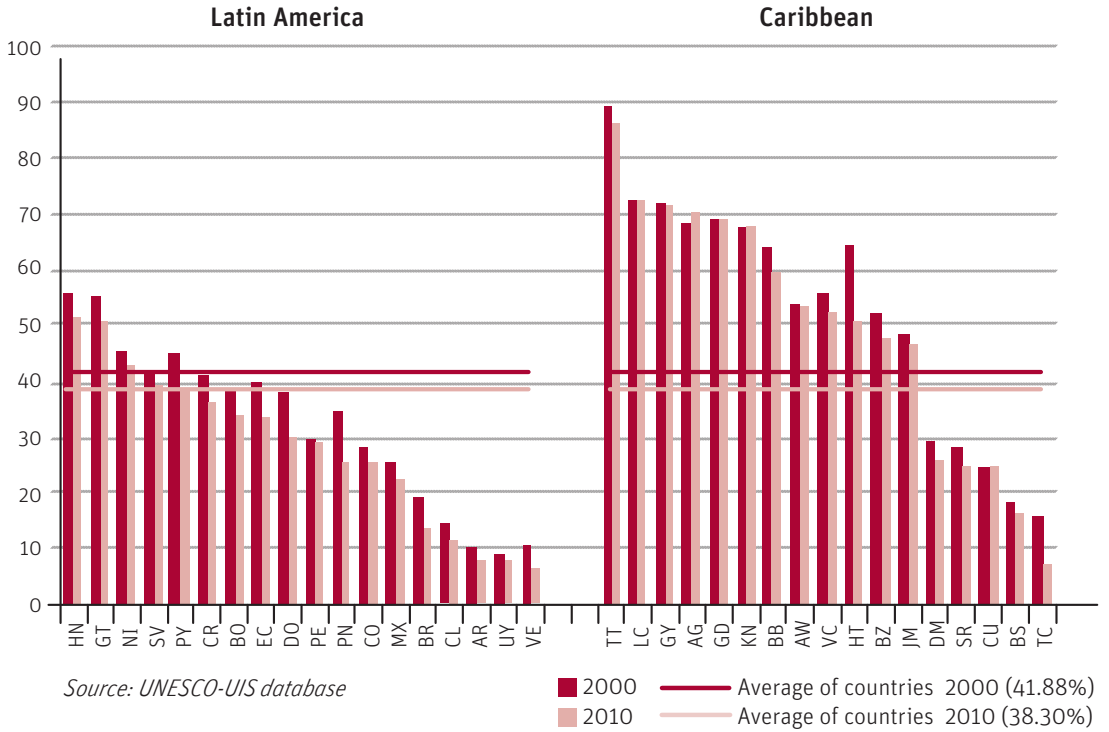
Closely linked to poverty and the presence of indigenous populations, the fact that a significant proportion of the population continue to live in rural areas has traditionally represented an additional barrier to expanding formal education in Latin America and the Caribbean. Indeed, an average of 4 in 10 people in the region's countries were living in rural areas in 2010, which is similar to the proportion observed in 2000.

What is more, in 2010 half or more of the population in 12 of the 35 countries with information available lived in rural areas, which is in contrast with countries such as Argentina, Uruguay or the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, where less than 10% of the population lived in rural areas.

Lastly, Latin America and the Caribbean has experienced significant demographic change in recent decades. Almost all countries have begun the demographic transition process (whereby population growth slows down and the population ages in relative terms), while several are in the advanced stages of this process. This implies that the proportion of children (and increasingly young people) of school age is declining in relation to the rest of the population. The effects of this reduced potential demand for education in Latin America are estimated to be significant, to the point where ECLAC expects many countries to benefit from a “demographic bonus” that provides a considerable opportunity for the expansion of education (particularly secondary education) (ECLAC, 2008).

In summary then, most Latin American and Caribbean countries experienced major progress during the decade from 2000 in terms of overall development, economic growth and – to a lesser extent – poverty reduction. This produced a context that was more conducive to educational progress. This combined with rapid demographic changes that in most countries are reducing the potential demand for education. However, persistently high levels of inequality and poverty, as well as the high proportion of the population living in rural areas, continue to represent additional obstacles to the expansion of quality education in the region.

**Graphic 2.4. Rural population (%) (35 countries)**



### 3. PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The possibilities of expanding and improving education services are crucially determined by the economic resources that countries decide to invest. There must be several other specifications to this idea to carry out a rigorous analysis of the financial priority that various States assign to education as part of their commitment to the education for all goals. First in this section, we consider the significance of fiscal spending within the national economy. We then observe the priority governments have given to the education sector within their budgets. Lastly, we describe the distribution of resources among the various levels of the school cycle. All of the above is applied to the years 2000 and 2010. Unfortunately, although there are more distinctions that can be made in terms of public spending on education, there are few countries with such information available.

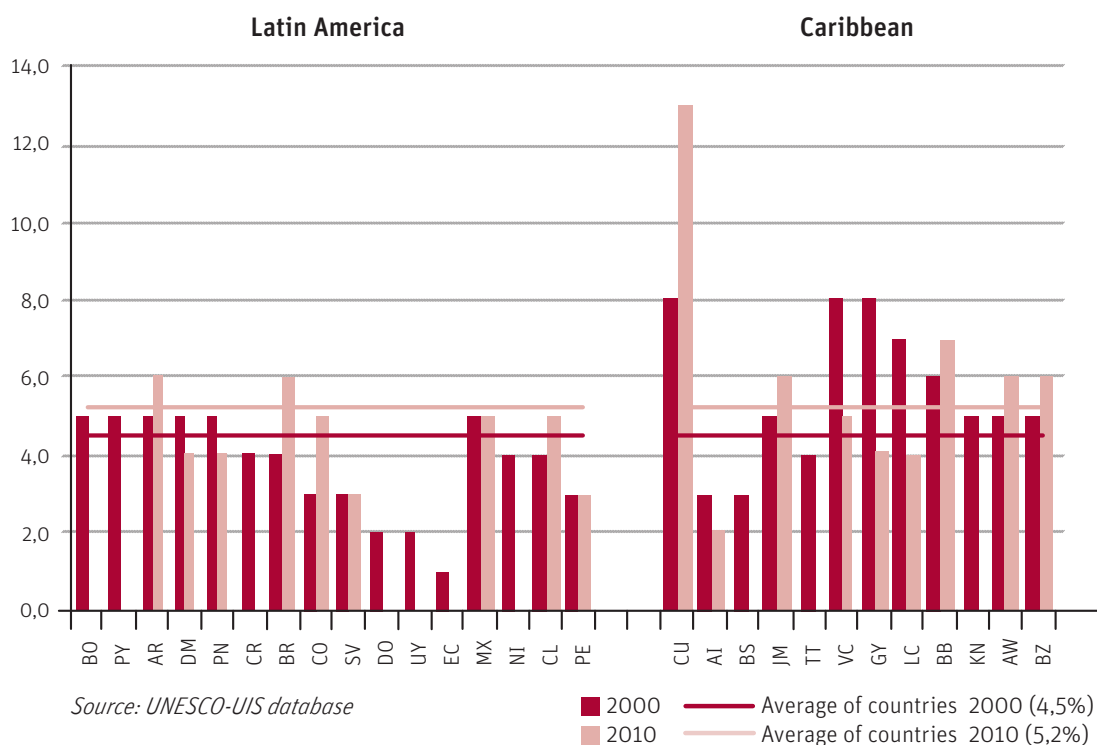
One basic measure of the priority a society attaches to education is to estimate the proportion of GDP invested in education. Indeed, the Dakar Framework for Action emphasized the need for governments to increase their financial commitment to education. On average, Latin American and Caribbean countries did increase public spending on education as a percentage of GDP (rising from 4.5% in 2000 to 5.2% in 2010 – a rise of seven percentage points – to bring the figure closer to the average education spending in European countries and the United States, which was 5.6% of GDP in 2010).

This average does, however, conceal major differences within the region, in terms of spending and the trend direction. In fact, seven of the 19 countries with comparable data did not post a positive trend for public spending as a proportion of GDP, but rather this dropped between 2000 and 2010. While in some countries (such as Argentina and Peru), public spending on education did not exceed 3% of GDP in 2010, another eight countries had rates of around 6% (and Cuba's figure was in excess of 12% of GDP). It should be borne in mind that this decrease does not necessarily imply lower public spending on education in absolute terms, but rather that such spending has not increased in direct proportion with GDP (as we know the latter expanded considerably in almost all of the region's countries).

Given that countries differ significantly in terms of the size of the State in relation to the national economy, a more suitable indicator to evaluate the financial priority that governments assign to education is

to compare education spending with total public spending. Generally speaking, the region's countries did not display a positive trend in the previous decade, as average public spending on education as a percentage of government spending dipped from 14.8% in 2000 to 14.1% in 2010. Intraregional disparities are also very striking in this case: in 2010, Costa Rica and Aruba had education budgets representing at least 20% of the government budget, while this figure was around 10% in several countries (and even lower in Dominica and Montserrat).

**Graphic 3.1. Total public spending on education as a percentage of GDP (31 countries)**



As stated previously, it is vital to consider investment differences among the various education cycles, as these reflect their differing costs, as well as the priority assigned to them by States. One indicator that makes such a comparison possible is to estimate public spending per pupil as a percentage of per capita GDP, which represents each State's financial effort on education in relation to the country's level of income. In the case of primary education (the only level singled out in the Dakar Framework for Action for States to commit to increasing investment), average public spending per pupil as a percentage of per capita GDP rose

slightly in the region during the previous decade (from 14.1% in 2000 to 16.1% in 2010). Cuba was a particularly striking case, as it practically doubled spending per primary pupil, with figures representing almost 50% of per capita GDP by 2010.

The region's slightly positive average trend in public spending on primary education was replicated for secondary schools in the past decade, as spending on the latter rose from 16.4% of per capita GDP to 19.6% between 2000 and 2010 (although at the end of the period there was greater spread among countries). Within secondary education, the country with the highest proportional increase in public spending was Brazil, which doubled such spending during the period to reach the regional average for public investment per pupil by the end of the previous decade. In absolute terms, Cuba shows the greatest financial commitment to education at secondary and primary levels, by allocating public resources the equivalent to half of per capita GDP (or double the average of other Latin American and Caribbean countries). At the other extreme, in 2010 the Dominican Republic had the lowest figures for public spending per pupil in primary and secondary education (less than 10% of per capita GDP in both cases).

Lastly, unlike what was observed for primary and secondary education, there was a negative trend in public spending per pupil in higher education over the past decade. Average public investment in higher education per pupil plummeted among the region's countries, from 43.5% of per capita GDP in 2000 to 29.7% in 2010. Despite this fall, average public spending on higher education per pupil in 2010 was double the equivalent for primary education (in 2000, the former was three times higher than the latter). Although there are few countries with comparable information for higher education, the countries that significantly reduced their spending during the period were generally the ones that had begun the decade with the highest levels of public spending on higher education per pupil (thereby bringing them in line with other countries in the region). This was the case for Cuba, for instance, where public spending on higher education per pupil went from 95% of per capita GDP in 2000 to 63% in 2010. Despite this trend towards convergence, higher education shows the greatest heterogeneity in terms of public investment per pupil by Latin American countries.

As for private spending on education, UNESCO estimates that it represented an average of 1.2% of GDP in the region's countries in 2010

(which is a third higher than average private spending of 0.9% of GDP in OECD countries). In countries such as Guatemala and the Dominican Republic, most spending was on private secondary education in 2010. According to OECD data, average private spending across all levels of education was 16% of the total in 2009, while Chile posted 41% (which was the highest of all member countries). It is well known that private spending tends to be unequally distributed.

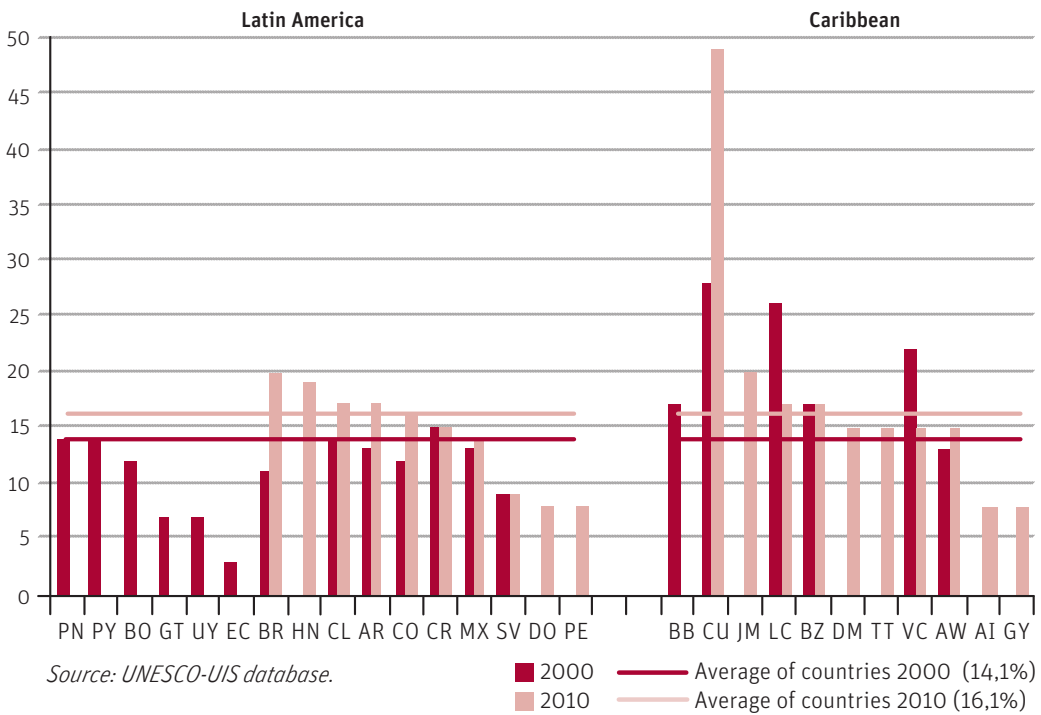
In summary then, the general trend for public spending on education in the past decade was slightly positive in Latin American and Caribbean countries, although this had more to do with expanded fiscal spending rather than greater priority being assigned to education within public spending. The increased spending has probably been mainly attributable to expanded education services, as the average proportion of public spending per pupil tended to remain the same or increase slightly in primary and secondary, while falling significantly in higher education. Later we will analyse the effect of these national differences in education investment (and other characteristics) on achieving some of the education for all goals. Despite data being scarce, private spending tends to be relatively high in the region's countries.

**Table 3.1. Private spending as a percentage of total education spending**

	Primary	Secondary
Dominican Republic	50,0	54,7
Guatemala	26,2	74,3
Peru	23,8	40,8
Chile	20,7	22,5
Colombia	18,1	21,4
Mexico	16,1	22,4
Paraguay	15,8	20,1
Argentina	6,5	8,6
Cuba	1,5	-
Barbados	-	2,7

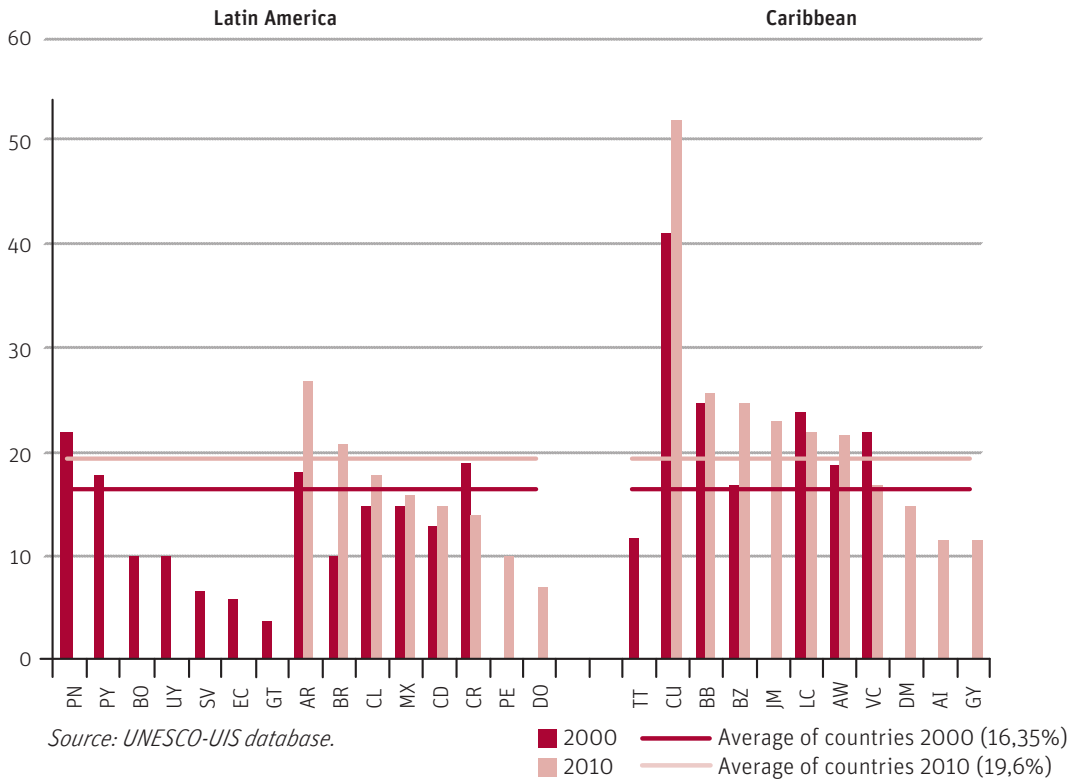
Source: UNESCO-UIS database

**Graphic 3.2. Public spending on primary education per pupil as a percentage of per capita GDP**

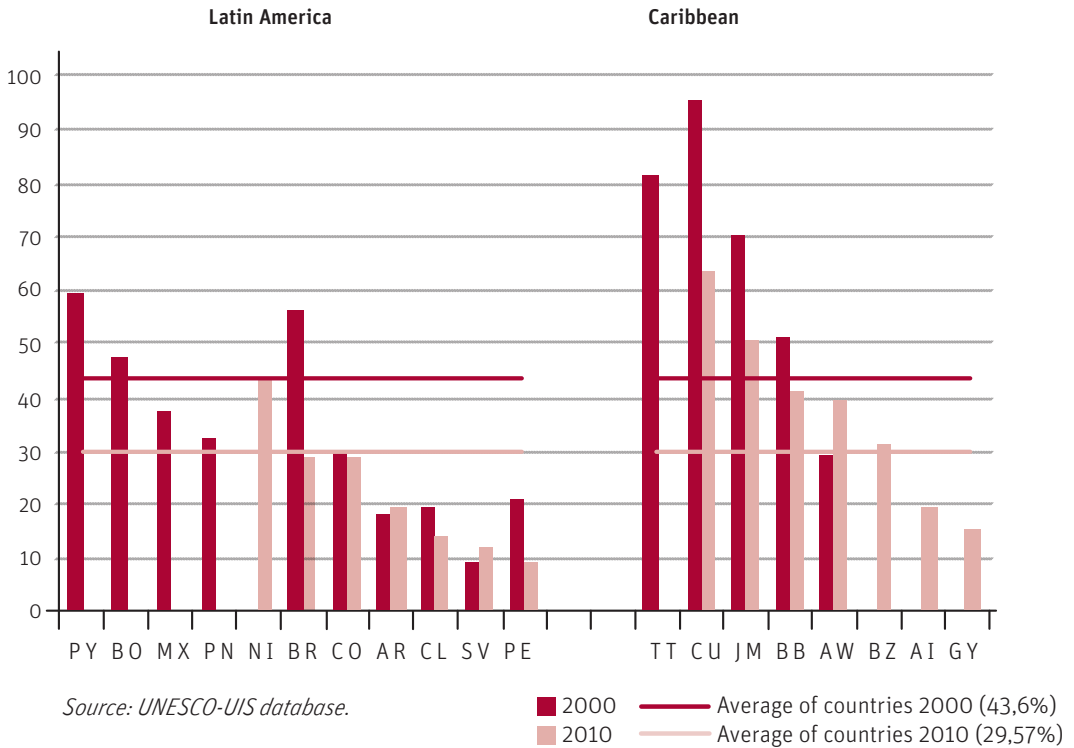




**Graphic 3.3. Public spending on secondary education per pupil as a percentage of per capita GDP.**



**Graphic 3.4. Public spending on higher education per pupil as a percentage of per capita GDP.**



#### 4. EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

*Goal 1: “Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children”.*

The inclusion of a goal relating to early childhood care and education in the education for all programme points to the importance of this life stage in human development, and this is also acknowledged in various international conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which safeguards “the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development” (Art. 27).

Considerable research (UNICEF, 2001; OECD, 2012; Lowe & Wolfe, 2000) shows that early childhood is an extremely sensitive time that lays the foundations for appropriate development and learning capaci-

ties throughout the lifetime. Neuroscience provides evidence on how the results of the child's interactions and experiences during the first three years will influence the development of the brain and consequently the physical, cognitive and socio-emotional dimensions throughout life (UNICEF, 2001). In this sense, just as a safe and warm environment that is responsive to the child's needs provides protection from the effects of stress later in life, so an adverse environment that is not attentive to the child's needs can have a negative impact on brain development (UNICEF, 2001; UNICEF, 2008).

Investing in extending and improving early childhood care and education thus enables us to reverse economic, social and gender inequalities within society to promote increased social mobility and inclusion of the marginalized (UNICEF, 2001). Investment in the early years has also been found to be strongly associated with better long-term academic performance, which would do away with the need for policies to remedy cognitive or development problems during middle childhood or adolescence. From an economic perspective, this "investment in human capital" would also increase productivity for society as a whole (OECD, 2012; Heckman, 2006; Hickman, 2006; Vegas and Santibáñez, 2010).

As a result, it is vital to focus efforts on children who are born and who grow up in vulnerable environments, as they are at great risk of extreme poverty, malnutrition, child labour and mistreatment, all of which are linked to exclusion from health services and reduced access to and use of schools (WHO, 2008).

### *Diagnostic: early childhood care and education in the EFA framework*

The first goal of the Dakar Framework for Action concentrates on early childhood care and education. While the distinction may be arbitrary to some extent, the concern for early childhood education tends to be focused on the 3 to 6 year age group, or immediately before entering primary education. In younger age groups (ages 0 to 3), the emphasis is on the most commonly used health and development indicators to monitor child well-being. Unfortunately, there is very little information on care programmes for children of this age who spend some of the day outside the home.

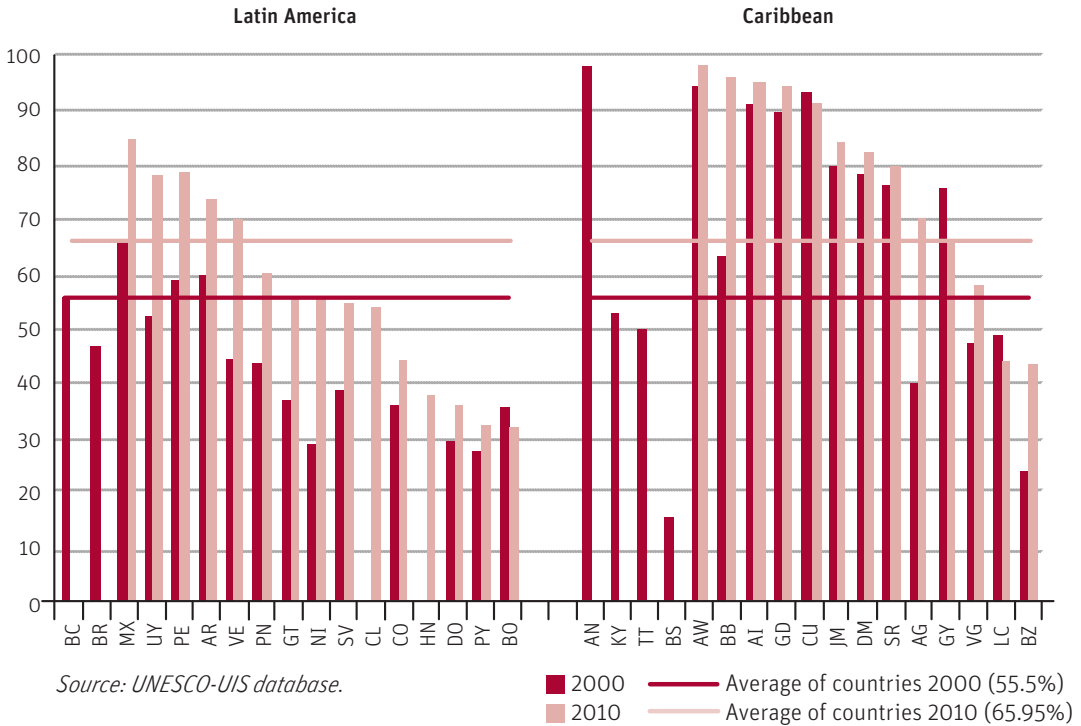
Living conditions and health in early childhood improved dramatically during the past decade in most Latin American and Caribbean countries. In addition to the above-mentioned fall in poverty, this was demonstra-

ted in the reduced child mortality rate among under fives, which went from an average 42 in every 1,000 to 28 in 1,000 by the end of the decade (which is a relatively positive change compared with other world regions). Above and beyond survival rates, the region still has a high proportion of children suffering from malnutrition and stunted growth: in 2010, an average of 16% of children under five had moderate to severe stunting (serious malnutrition affected 3% of the region's under-fives in 2010, compared with 4.8% in 2000). Although these indicators of quality of life in early childhood are generally associated with countries' levels of income, they are far from being the full story (especially in low- and medium-income countries). For instance, moderate or grave stunting rates are much higher in Peru than in Jamaica (despite the two countries having similar per capita incomes), while they are higher still compared with Nicaragua (where per capita income is much lower than in Peru).

In terms of the education opportunities of children aged 3 to 6, Latin American and Caribbean countries have tended to make slow progress in expanding young children's access to pre-primary education. The average regional net enrolment rates in pre-primary education rose from 55.5% in 1990 to 66% in 2010. Notwithstanding some major variations, this positive trend was observed in 22 of the 26 countries with comparable information available.

The region has a wide range of situations in this regard, ranging from countries with pre-primary coverage of around 90%, to others where coverage is about 40%. Given that this variability is not automatically linked with countries' level of resources, it probably reflects the differing priority that societies have assigned to an educational cycle that traditionally has not been considered part of compulsory education.

**Graphic 4.1. Net enrolment rates in pre-primary education (34 countries)**



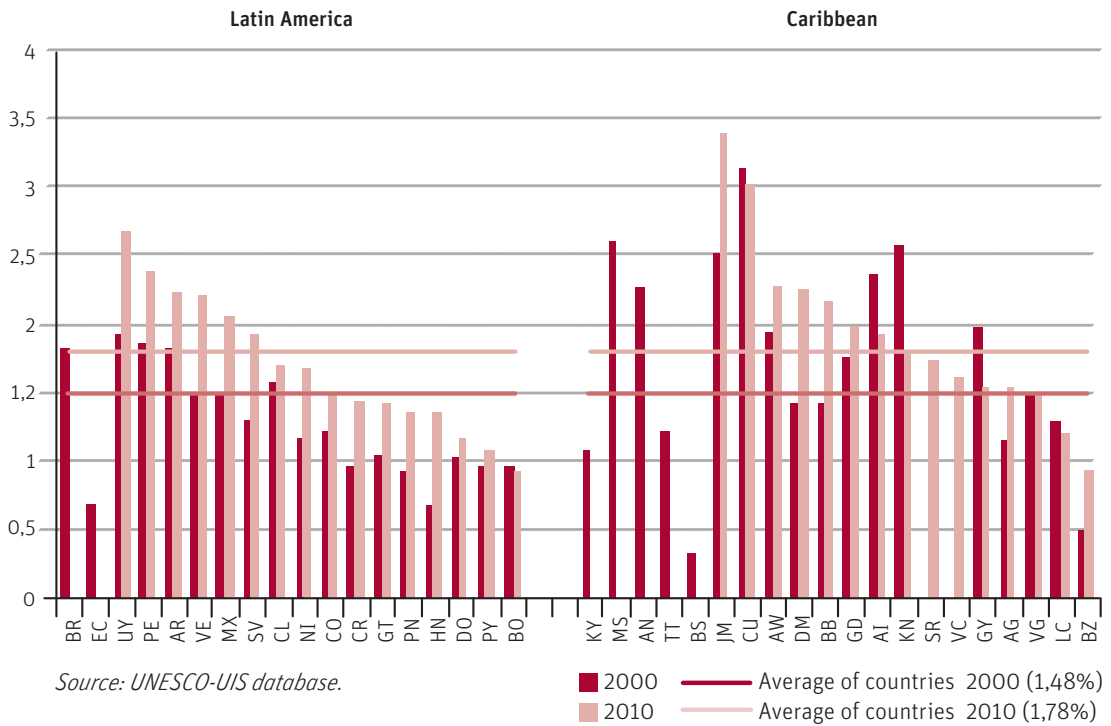
When we looked at this aspect in more detail (using a series of multiple regression analyses of all world countries with sufficient information – see Annex 1), our findings suggested that national differences in net enrolment rates in pre-primary education in 2010 are associated with economic, social and educational factors.

In particular, countries with greater economic resources (measured by per capita GDP) tend to have higher levels of pre-school education coverage. However, other social development indicators are also important, even when wealth differences are controlled for. For instance, countries with a higher rural population and higher child mortality had lower rates of pre-school education enrolment. Population composition in terms of age groups is also a relevant factor, as countries with a higher percentage of pre-school age population (i.e. those facing a larger task), tend to have lower net enrolment rates. One surprising finding was that, having controlled for all other factors, pre-school enrolment was not systematically related to female labour participation rates. The positive association between women in work and the availability of care/education places for children is probably more relevant at an earlier age (0-3 years).

National policies are also relevant factors in explaining differences in pre-school education coverage by 2010: on average, the more countries spend on education (measured as a percentage of GDP), the higher their net rates of pre-primary education enrolment. Having controlled for national differences in all above-mentioned factors, Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole had net pre-primary enrolment rates that were almost 11 percentage points higher than the average for countries in other world regions (although our estimates are not entirely conclusive in this regard, due to the small sample size). In other words, the region as a whole has above-average pre-school coverage, given its characteristics. However, national differences are very marked in this aspect, with many countries straying far from the international trend (in both positive and negative directions).

The considerable heterogeneity in terms of pre-primary education becomes even clearer when we observe differences in national capacities for guaranteeing minimum participation in pre-primary educational programmes. One estimate is provided by the expected number of years spent in pre-primary education (or pre-school “life expectancy”), which in Latin American and Caribbean countries was 1.8 years in 2010 (which was an average increase of just 0.3 years in the region over the past decade). Whereas Cuba or Jamaica provided children with an average of three years of pre-primary education in 2010, a third of countries with information available showed average pre-primary expectations of just about one year.

**Graphic 4.2. Expectations of number of years spent in pre-primary education (38 countries).**



In addition, despite the progress in coverage at the regional level, there is considerable inequality in terms of access to pre-school education. This harms the population that would probably have the most to gain from this level of education: children of lower income families, those in rural areas and indigenous people. For instance, in Suriname, which has a relatively high average coverage, fewer than 60% of children from the lowest income quintile attended a pre-school programme, while almost 90% of their counterparts in the richest quintile did attend such a programme. There are similar inequalities in Guyana (UNICEF, 2012). The same happens in countries with lower pre-school coverage (such as Paraguay, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua), where there are differences of up to 30 percentage points in access to educational services depending on the socioeconomic status of families (especially in programmes for under threes) (ECLAC, 2010).

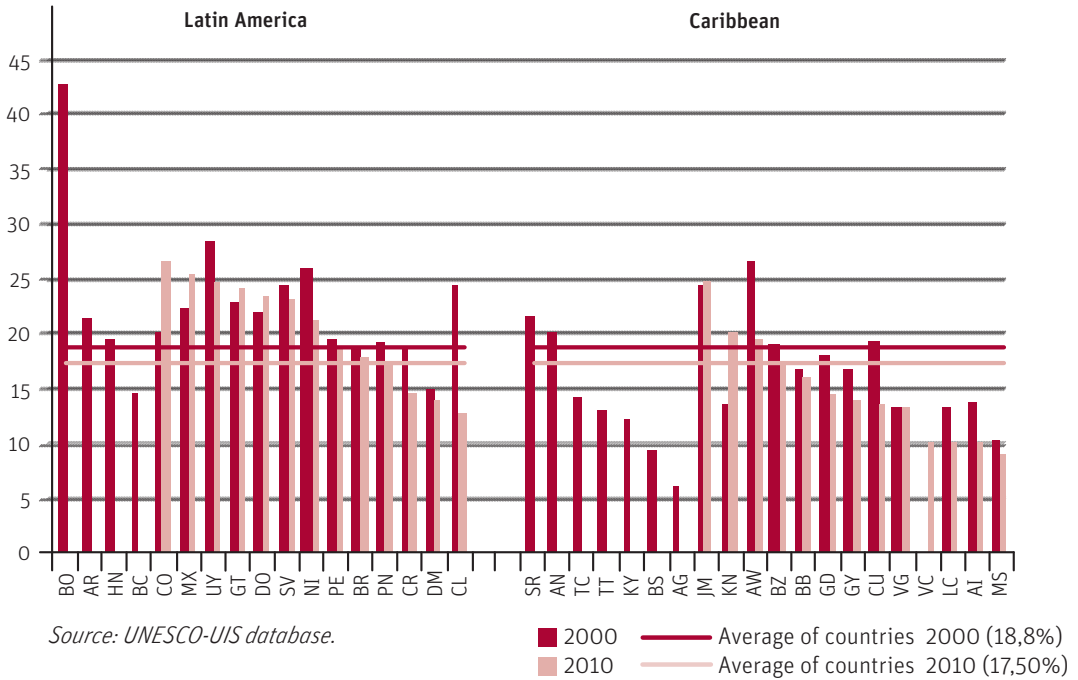
Throughout the region, access to early childhood care and education programmes remains limited for children living in rural areas (and by extension those from indigenous communities), who are half as likely to access an early care and education centre as children from urban areas (ECLAC, 2007).

Lastly, as previously mentioned, there are insufficient comparable data on the quality of pre-school programmes in the region. In this area, the most basic quality indicator is the availability of teachers per group of pupils, which for these age groups is not only important for the quality of stimulation and teaching provided, but also for the care and safety the teachers can provide to children. The average number of pupils per teacher in the region's pre-primary education in 2010 was 18 children, which is very close to the world average. The regional average of pupils per teacher has tended to drop slightly over the past decade. Lastly, there is also a considerable variety of situations in this regard: while some countries (especially Caribbean countries such as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Anguilla, Saint Lucia, and Montserrat) reported around 10 children per teacher in 2010), other countries (such as Colombia, Mexico, Uruguay and Jamaica) had almost 25 children per teacher.

In summary then, over the past decade Latin American and Caribbean countries have generally made considerable progress in improving conditions in early childhood, but there was limited progress in pre-school education (although advances were not more limited than in other comparable regions). One characteristic of the situation and development of pre-school education in the region is the heterogeneity, with differences that do not just correspond to income differences among countries. In addition, despite advances in regional pre-school education coverage, there is considerable inequality that is biased against the population that would benefit the most from such education (namely, children from the lowest income quintiles, those in rural areas and from indigenous communities). Lastly, there are insufficient data on the quality of pre-school programmes.



**Graphic 4.3. Ratio of pupils per teacher in pre-primary education**



### Progress towards universal pre-primary education

Strictly speaking, the Dakar Framework for Action does not propose the universalization of pre-school education. However, the idea that all children should have educational opportunities before primary school begins has been gaining ground in recent years. It is therefore possible to evaluate countries' progress in the previous decade in terms of their capacity to raise coverage of this level of education to 100%. The following figure provides estimates in this regard. The "gap" from 2000 between the net pre-primary education rate and universal coverage was calculated for each country, followed by a measurement of progress between 2000 and 2010, and any advance during that decade was then divided by the size of the original gap. In other words, this is an approximation of the proportion of how much of the task as it stood in 2000 was completed by 2010.

The region's countries had an extremely variable level of fulfilment of this education for all "goal" by 2010, with some countries' progress amounting to almost nothing (including reversals, like in Guyana),\* while others covered half of the original gap. The most striking case was Barbados, which in the last decade made progress of almost 90% towards universal pre-primary education.

## Advancement towards universalization of pre-primary education. Net pre-primary enrolment rate: proportion of the task as it stood in 2000 completed by 2010



Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of the UNESCO-UIS

Based on national patterns in recent years (1998-2010), we have made a projection of the probable situation in 2015 (see Annex 3 for details). Unfortunately, the time series for the region's net pre-primary enrolment rate are not available. However, the region's gross enrolment rates (which are available) are not very different from the net rates, and therefore we used them as a substitute. According to official data, between 1998 and 2010, the region progressed from 53% to 70%. According to our estimates, by 2015 the average regional gross enrolment rate in pre-primary education should be 77%.

To place the advances of Latin American countries in an international context, we carried out a series of multiple regression analyses to estimate whether the region as a whole advanced more or less quickly than other countries in the world between 2000 and 2010. We controlled for a series of variables in the characterization of countries, including per capita income, level of urbanization and demographic composition (details of the main results are in Annex 2). Our findings indicate that,

\*When countries reach nearly 100%, this indicator becomes extremely sensitive to small variations. This measurement should therefore always be interpreted in the light of the original rate presented. For greater clarity, countries with enrolment rates of above 90% in 2000 are highlighted in grey.

between 2000 and 2010, average net pre-primary enrolment rates in Latin American and Caribbean countries increased almost 18 percentage points more than other world countries (having controlled for relevant characteristics). Given that this “estimated advance” is higher than the one actually observed in the region, this suggests that Latin American countries have been making significantly more efforts than the rest of the world to expand this level of education.

## Policy discussion

There is consensus that providing quality care and attention in early childhood is a complex task, as ensuring children’s development, growth and learning involves attending to different aspects of their development (from birth to primary education) in formal and informal contexts (UNESCO, 2007a). As a result, early care and education require the coordination of various care providers: family, neighbours, public and private institutions, NGOs and communities themselves. Tackling this aim using public policies requires involving various sectors to promote the integral well-being of children, considering at least health, education and children’s development environment as priority areas for investment. An additional complexity is that such policies must combine direct children’s services with support programmes to improve the conditions and capacities of the various actors interacting with them on a daily basis (mainly mothers and other carers), to offset the disadvantages suffered by the most vulnerable and develop their capacity to adapt (UNICEF, 2008, UNESCO, 2007).

In addition, the region also has dramatic inequalities between and within countries (UNDP, 2010). Children who grow up in rural areas, belong to indigenous peoples or live in poorly educated or low-income families are the most vulnerable in terms of their development, while also being the most excluded from care services (UNDP, 2010; UNICEF, 2008). These conditions of vulnerability combine to make the situation even more delicate: there is twice as much poverty in Latin American rural areas as in its cities (ECLAC, 2012). It is vital to tackle these inequalities if we are to achieve the objective of providing good care and education in early childhood.

As part of the policy discussion, it is important to differentiate between the care objectives and approaches required in early childhood on the basis of children’s age. The first distinction to be made is between ages

0 to 3 (where the main concern is the child's welfare and integral development) and ages 3 to 6 (just before primary school when the previous focus is complemented by education efforts) (UNESCO, 2007a; ECLAC, 2011).

For children aged 0 to 3, the main concern is to protect the health and welfare of the infant and mother, with special emphasis on the most marginalized groups in society. Although, on average, regional problems of stunting – mainly due to malnutrition – have decreased, they remain relevant among the most vulnerable. The main causes relate to a lack of resources (although this is not a direct link), poor maternal nutrition and frequent illness during pregnancy. The consequences include an increased risk of contracting infectious diseases, as the lack of nutrients harms children's immunity. It also has a negative impact on academic skills at school, increasing the risk of late entry into school, grade repetition and dropping out early – which will all have a negative impact on the child's quality of life in the future (UNESCO, 2011; UNICEF, 2008; OAS, 2012).

Strategies for dealing with malnutrition and stunting should consist mainly in measures to increase breastfeeding rates and the use of food supplements. Another recommendation is to promote the education of mothers, as each additional year of education received is positively linked to their children's health, food quality and access to basic services (UNESCO, 2011).

One of the most widely recognized programmes in the region is “Educate Your Child” in Cuba. This programme is part of a community and intersectoral approach targeting families in rural areas with limited access to formal pre-school institutions. The programme aims to train the family (and mothers in particular) from pregnancy until the child reaches the age of 6, such that the home environment becomes the best place to maximize the integral development of children not attending pre-school institutions. There are also professionals or “monitors” who visit children aged under 2 at home to check on their development. Between the ages of 2 and 5/6, groups of children and their families visit a community premises once or twice a week to take part in activities led by a monitor – these incorporate childrearing guidelines and how to implement the activities at home (UNICEF, 2003).

Since 1999, the Community Homes programme in Colombia has offered a combined approach including health and nutrition care services, early learning, childcare facilities, community participation and parent

education, all targeting children from families living below the poverty line or in extreme poverty. Other programmes consider the child's environment, including conditional cash transfer programmes such as the Family Grant programme in Brazil, the Opportunities programme in Mexico or Families in Action in Colombia. Their aim is to provide resources to the poorest families so they can use them to improve their children's diet and education.

In terms of children aged 3 to 6, the focus is increasingly on providing them with quality pre-school education, particularly among the most vulnerable groups – in order to offset their environmental disadvantages by promoting integral development and increasing their readiness for making use of primary education. Among this age group, the region has made significant progress in considering early childhood as a key stage for strengthening children's educational and developmental opportunities. Several of the region's countries have lowered the age of compulsory schooling to include early or pre-primary education. Efforts have also been made to increase coverage and access to these levels for children in vulnerable situations (UNICEF; 2012, OAS, 2012).

The main concern about early childhood care and education in the region is the low quality of existing programmes and services, which is even more of a problem among the most disadvantaged (UNESCO, 2007; IDB, 2010; ECLAC, 2007). States have attempted to ensure the quality of programmes by using indicators relating to the inputs needed to provide good care and education, such as the pupils-to-teacher ratio, availability of teaching materials and staff training. Although these indicators are important, they are insufficient for determining the quality of processes and the results of early childhood care and education (Lowe and Wolfe, 2000). With this in mind, recommendations include the incorporation of indicators such as the quality of carer-child interactions, family participation, intercultural integration and integration of children's diverse needs (UNESCO, 2007a). These aspects are clearly more difficult to observe, officially report on and particularly influence through policy.

## Challenges

The growing evidence concerning the potential individual and social benefits of early childhood care has revealed the importance of ensuring access to such programmes, with a view to achieving equal opportunities and reducing the intergenerational consequences of poverty and inequality. Furthermore, the increase in women's participation in the

labour market and the rise in lone-parent families have made access and coverage of these services a priority issue in the region, thus guiding public policies (especially those aimed at the most vulnerable) (UNESCO, 2007b; UNESCO, 2007a; ECLAC, 2010). However, investment in early childhood is a major challenge, as its educational and developmental benefits are dependent on the quality of programmes (which is difficult to guarantee and monitor) (OAS, 2012).

As a result, the debate in developed countries in recent years has focused on the quality of early-years programmes, rather than their rapid expansion. In this respect, due consideration has been given to research suggesting that early childhood is the period when children are the most vulnerable to environmental stimulation, quality of care and relationships between them and their caregivers. Negligent care that does not appropriately respond to children's needs could therefore damage their long-term development and learning capabilities (UNICEF, 2008).

In Latin America and the Caribbean, we cannot consider the quality of such programmes to be guaranteed, as there are limited national policies that address children's needs (particularly the youngest) in a multidimensional way (UNESCO, 2007a). In the region, 80% of children attending an early education programme go to private and largely unregulated facilities, which makes it impossible to monitor the number and variety of programmes out there (or the educational processes and care they provide).

The concept of the quality of care and education at this level should include at least factors relating to health; food; and psychosocial, emotional and cognitive development. The emphasis of programmes for early childhood care and education programmes varies according to the two above-mentioned stages: from birth to 3 years, and from 3 to 6 years. The aims of early childhood programmes from birth to 3 years are to provide the mother and family with the conditions and capabilities needed to attend to health, nutrition and stimulation, in the interests of the child's integral development (in exceptional cases, programmes deal directly with children)<sup>8</sup>. From 3 years, programme objectives are expanded to include the promotion of proper development and acquisition of the necessary skills and knowledge for the best possible transition to primary education – thereby facilitating improved performance during school years (UNESCO, 2011).

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<sup>8</sup> The main justification for promoting institutionalized care for children of this age is the aim of increasing the number of women in the labour market. Although there is some debate on the matter, early child development experts tend to agree on the usefulness of improving family conditions and strengthening capacities for child care.

In operational terms, it has been very difficult to find consensual quality criteria for pre-school care and education programmes. Scientific evidence does, however, provide important guidelines in this regard. Good-quality early education programmes have a certain minimum duration (such as two or three hours over a couple of years), comply with high quality standards in terms of educational material and space, are delivered by highly qualified teachers and have a very low proportion of children per teacher (around 3 to 1 in the 0 to 2 year age group, and around 6 to 1 in the 3 to 5 year age group). In terms of the curriculum, good-quality programmes have pre-planned activities focused on cognitive development, with a strong emphasis on language (which is not to say that emotional and psychosocial aspects are not considered). Lastly, these programmes are not isolated in institutional terms, but rather integrate educational services with health and nutrition (and work with parents and carers as well as children) (Bowman, Donovan and Burns, 2000). These are certainly extremely high quality standards, given the prevailing situation in the region. OECD identifies five focuses that should be considered when formulating child education and care programmes: (a) explicitly establish quality objectives and generate regulations to align resources; (b) design a curriculum and implement learning and development standards to guide the process and make programmes comparable; (c) improve training for teachers and carers, as well as their working conditions; (d) actively involve families and communities; and (e) monitor, compile data and carry out research into ongoing improvements to the programmes (OECD, 2012).

Lastly, social inequality is a relevant feature in the region, and is the main challenge facing policies aimed at achieving the first goal of the Dakar Framework for Action. Children from the poorest and most marginalized groups continue to have fewer opportunities for pre-primary care and education, and what they do have tends to be lower quality. All of this may contribute to increased inequality among the next generation of Latin American society. In addition, although an education in the mother tongue is a fundamental factor in early education, most of the region's programmes are delivered in the country's official language (rather than the languages of indigenous peoples – which are one of the most marginalized groups in Latin American society). This compromises the positive effects of early education for these children.

## 5. PRIMARY EDUCATION: ACCESS AND COMPLETION

*Goal 2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.*

The right to primary education was the first to be established in international agreements, is part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and has since been included in all related international instruments. Previously, many States had already enacted laws on compulsory primary education, which was also made free of charge. Nowadays, there is practically unanimous consensus around universal and free primary education. As a result, primary education is considered a fundamental right in the Dakar Framework for Action, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Millennium Development Goals and other international agreements.

The right to education aims to develop the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that enable everyone to develop and live in a dignified way, take informed decisions to improve their own quality of life and that of society, and participate in collective decisions. At school, the ability to socialize with various people is established, identity formed and self-esteem built (UNESCO, 2012).

Worldwide progress towards universal primary education has been considerable since the beginning of the decade, as it now covers almost 90% of school-age children. However, in recent years the progress towards universalization has slowed somewhat, which may be due to difficulties in reaching the most marginalized groups in society (UNESCO, 2011). The second goal of the Dakar Framework for Action was to provide full access to primary education and reduce drop-out rates (especially among pupils in difficult circumstances), as well as improving the quality of this level of education. Given the far-reaching scope of this goal, in this section we have concentrated on the challenge of increasing primary schooling (with gender and indigenous analysis covered in specific sections, and educational quality tackled as part of the discussion on the sixth Dakar goal).



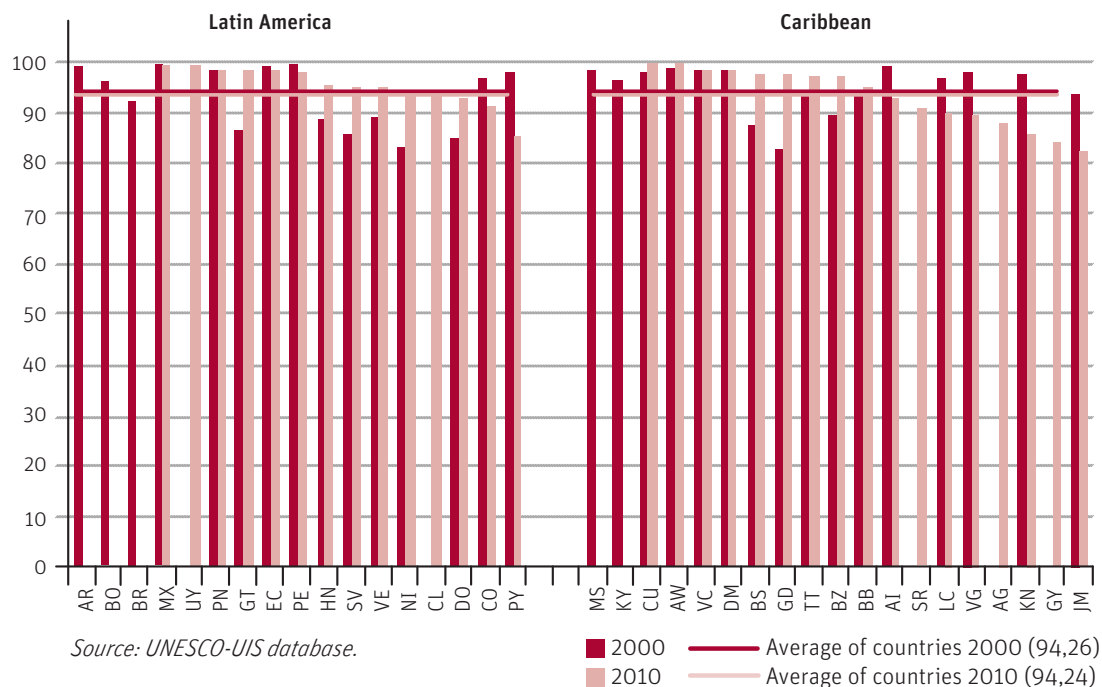
## Universalization of primary education in Latin America and the Caribbean

Universalizing primary education is undoubtedly the main key aim of the worldwide education for all movement. In this regard, Latin America and the Caribbean had reached an overall positive situation by 2000, with an adjusted net primary education enrolment rate of 94% (which is very close to the figure achieved by wealthier regions). However, the next 10 years was a story of uneven progress and strong contrasts between countries, which means that the goal of universal primary education cannot be taken for granted in the region.

First, the average adjusted net rate of enrolment in primary education stagnated at 94%, which means that the region's countries had made no additional progress in the 10 years to 2010. This lack of progress certainly hides highly contrasting national situations: while some countries increased primary schooling dramatically between 2000 and 2010 (particularly Grenada, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Bahamas - with advances of 10 or more percentage points), others experienced a significant decrease in the same period (including Paraguay, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Jamaica). A total of 7 out of 26 countries with comparable data saw a significant reduction in their adjusted net rate of primary enrolment over the past decade.

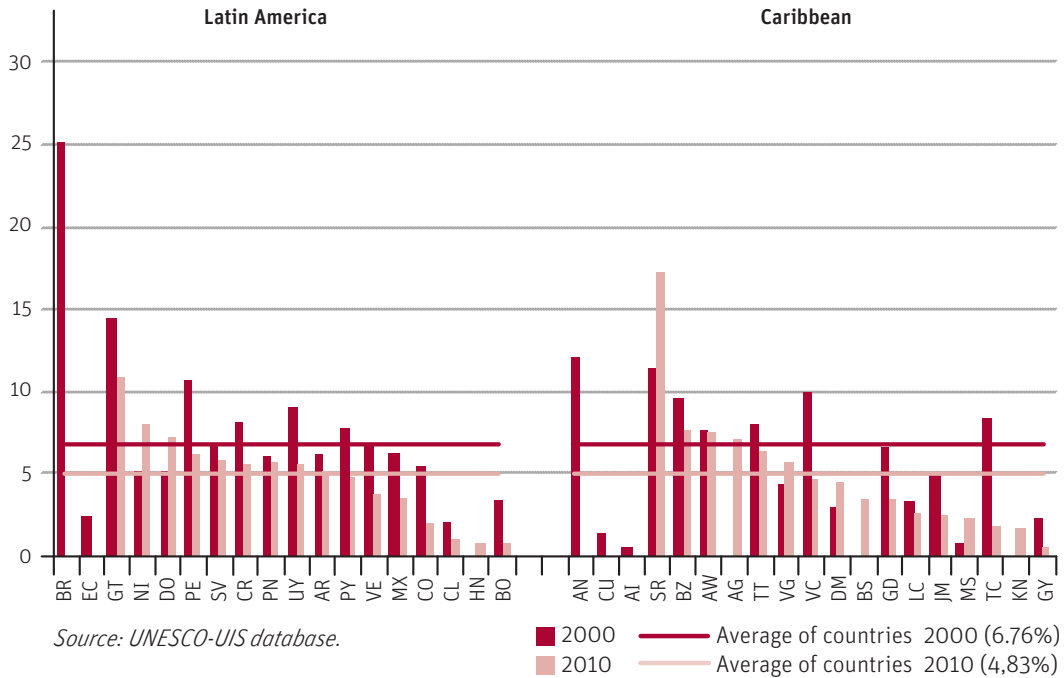
Information available (from household surveys), shows that, on average, there are no major differences in terms of children from different family income quintiles attending primary education. In 2010, the gap between children from the richest quintile and those from the poorest quintile was just 3 percentage points (which was an improvement on the gap of 7 percentage points observed in 2000). Particularly countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras made impressive progress in narrowing the gap by significantly increasing access to primary education for pupils from the poorest families.

**Graphic 5.1 Adjusted net enrolment rate in primary education**



Secondly, children should experience a smooth passage through primary education. However, a large proportion of pupils repeat a grade as they are not considered to have achieved the minimum performance standards for moving up. Although there are diverging opinions on whether it is appropriate to use grade repetition as an educational support or quality control mechanism, there is agreement that it would be desirable to keep repetition to a minimum. Across primary education as a whole, repetition rates in 2010 were an average of almost 5% in Latin American and Caribbean countries (compared to 6.8% in 2000). In other words, every year around 1 in 20 pupils stayed in the same grade. As a result of repetition and late entry into the school system, in 2010 the region's average proportion of over-age pupils in primary education was 9% (although the figure was 21% in Colombia, Brazil and Nicaragua).

**Graphic 5.2. Repetition rate in primary education (%).**



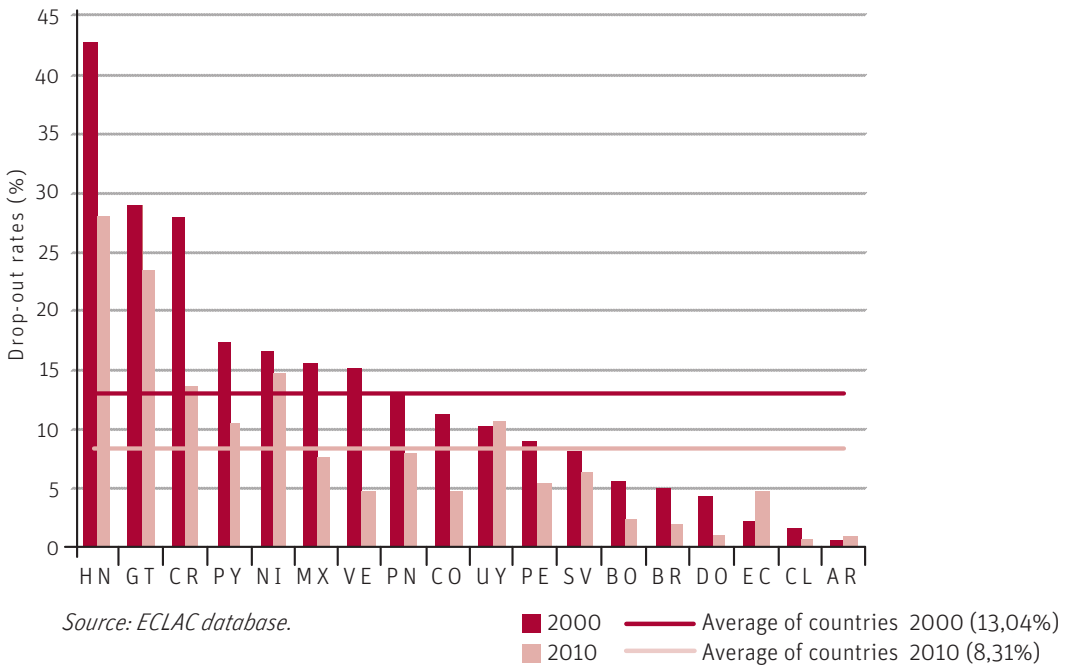
Thirdly, dropping out (which refers to one year, rather than leaving the school system permanently) severely compromises the ability to complete the primary education cycle. The region has made major progress in this regard, with average country drop-out rates falling from 13% to 8.3% between 2000 and 2010. Furthermore, this downward trend in drop-out rates was observed in 15 of the 18 countries with comparable data, including striking cases such as Costa Rica and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Having said that, inequalities in the region remain highly significant: while some countries such as Argentina, Chile and the Dominican Republic posted primary drop-out rates of 1% in 2010, other countries such as Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua reported drop-out rates of 15% or more among primary school pupils.

It is well documented that children who enter this level of education at a later age are less likely to complete primary education, or to continue with secondary education (OREALC/UNESCO, 2011). In the region – and particularly among low-income, rural or indigenous groups – this problem has major costs for education systems and for children (who have less potential for social mobility) (UNESCO, 2011). Factors explaining drop-out rates include variables relating to the student’s family context

and economic situation, as the opportunity cost for poor and marginalized children would be very high. Intra-school factors that may be encouraging dropping out have also been identified. These relate to levels of training and experience among teachers, their relationships with and expectations of students, and the time spent on teaching. These factors also include aspects of school organization, school calendar, curricular relevance and the types of student evaluation and promotion (ECLAC, 2010; PREAL, 2007).

Child labour is particularly significant in several countries, as it impacts on late entry and drop-out rates. Child labour can be a reason for early school-leaving among working children, as the opportunity cost of attending school is very high when they must help with household expenses. Child labour is also a result of early school-leaving. Although many children attempt to combine studying with work, this generally becomes impossible due to precarious job conditions and working hours that become longer as children get older. In addition, schools find it difficult to adapt their schedules to fit in with these children. This all results in children leaving education altogether or chronic underperformance that becomes more significant as they get older (UNESCO, 2009; PREAL, 2007).

**Graphic 5.3. Drop-out rates in primary education**



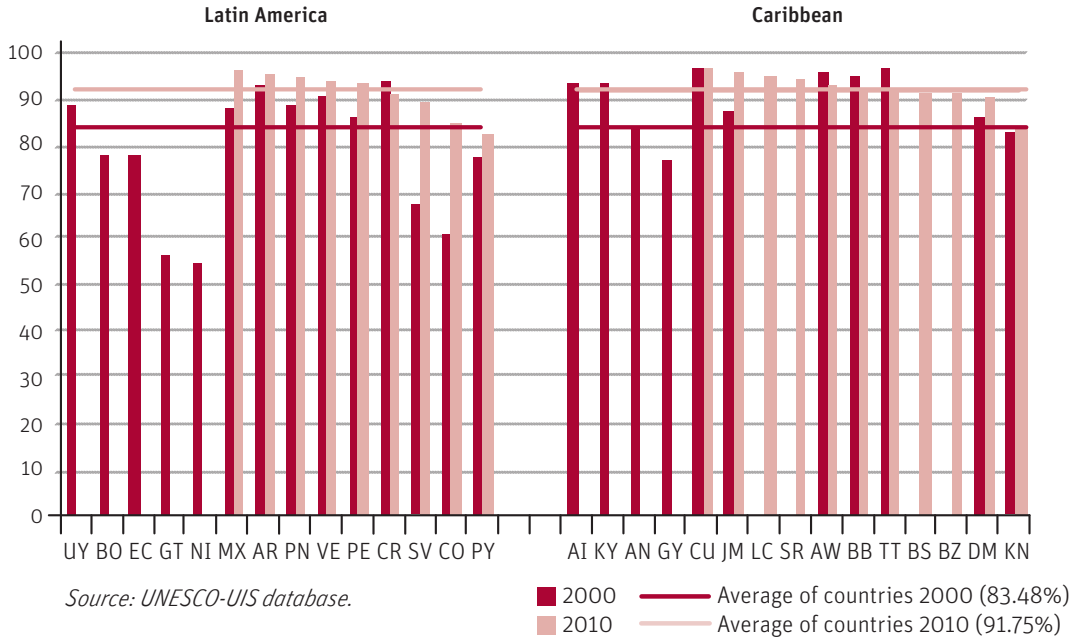
In the light of the considerably expanded access to primary education achieved by Latin American countries, identifying the main progress in primary schooling requires tracking more demanding indicators, such as retention at the end of the primary cycle. The general trend in the region is positive, with the average survival rate in the final year of primary education (fifth grade) rising from 83.5% to 91.8% between 2000 and 2010 – which points to a high retention capacity within the school system of Latin America and the Caribbean. It was probably the combined effect of falling repetition and drop-out rates that resulted in an increase in the proportion of pupils in a given cohort achieving long primary school trajectories (in the region’s countries with comparable data that had low rates in the early 2000s – such as Colombia and El Salvador).

Given the growing importance of raising retention rates at the end of primary school to achieve the Dakar goals, we carried out a series of analyses to identify factors determining national differences in this indicator at 2010 (multiple regressions for all world countries with relevant information available – see Annex 1). The first finding was that countries with more resources (measured by per capita GDP) had higher average retention rates at the fifth grade. However, results also suggest that national policies and internal school system processes are important factors that go beyond a country’s wealth. Countries that spend more on education (measured as a percentage of GDP) do tend to achieve higher fifth-grade survival rates. In addition, countries with a higher percentage of pupils repeating a grade in primary school tend to have lower fifth-grade survival rates – which is probably because pupils who repeat a grade are more likely to drop out.

In contrast, other potentially relevant factors (such as a country’s proportion of rural population, net rate of primary school entry and the percentage of population of primary-school age) did not show a systematic link with fifth-grade retention rates (once other national characteristics were taken into account). This is probably linked to the fact that countries have considered the expanded access to primary education as their main educational policy, which has enabled them to overcome barriers such as rural issues or the demographic weighting of this age group. It is increasingly factors relating to educational policy and school systems that tend to explain differences in educational achievement.

In this sense, the situation of the region's countries is comparatively favourable. Controlling for all the characteristics mentioned, Latin American and Caribbean countries as a whole have a higher fifth-grade survival rate (the net estimated difference is 7.6 percentage points higher than other countries). Indeed, most of the region's countries have higher-than-expected school survival rates given their characteristics (compared with other countries considered).

**Graphic 5.4. Fifth-grade survival rate (%).**



Lastly, given that the age range in which people can complete primary education varies, evaluating the goal of universalization must include observations of the proportion of an older age group to have completed this cycle of education. In this case, the progress of countries must be estimated by comparing that cohort with older ones. According to household surveys available (carried out in around 2010), the average completion rate for primary education in Latin America rose from 81.6% among people aged 30 to 34 years to 90.2% among those aged 15 to 19 (with the latter being born between about 1990 and 1995, and therefore mainly educated in the past decade). In other words, the proportion of people who did not complete primary education almost

halved in the two cohorts born 15 years apart<sup>9</sup>. As shown in the figure, such progress has been dramatic in some countries, such as the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Honduras.

Despite the progress made, it should be borne in mind that, even in the youngest generation, around one in 10 Latin American did not complete primary education (with the proportion reaching a third of the age group in countries such as Nicaragua and Guatemala). This situation was particularly acute in rural areas: an average of 16% of rural young people aged 15 to 19 did not complete primary education (with the proportion rising to 50% in Nicaragua and Guatemala). It is precisely in these areas where the largest advances have been made, as 30% of the generation who is 10 years older (25 to 29 years) did not complete primary education.

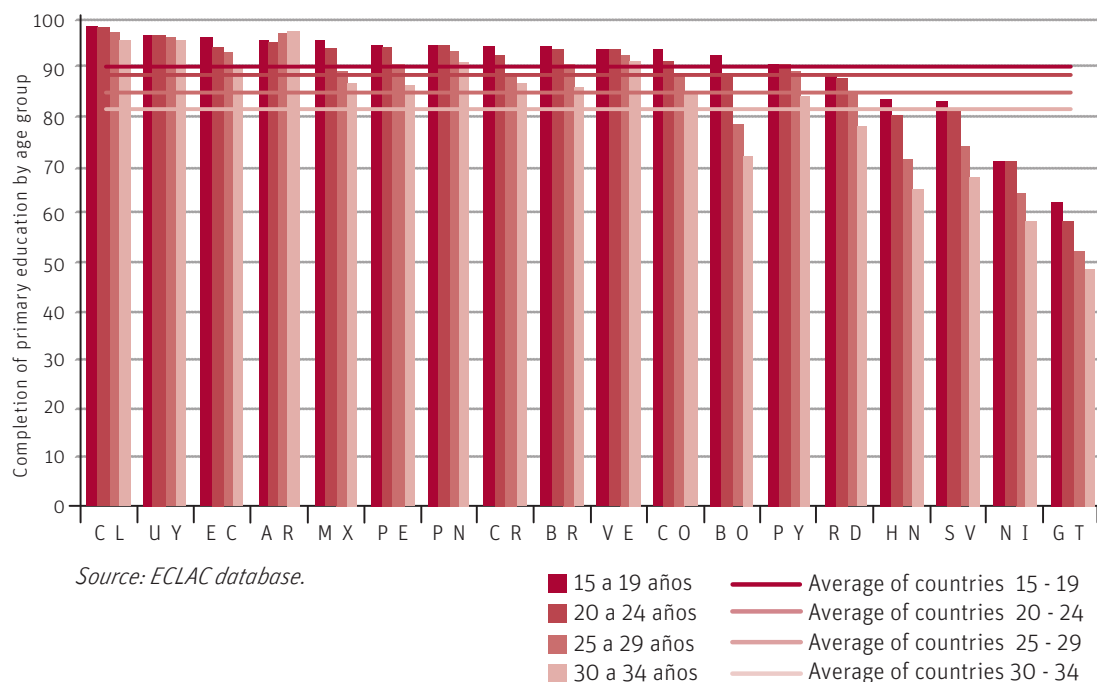
However, the greatest inequality in completing primary education remains associated with the socioeconomic status of pupils' families, with more limited progress in the past decade. In 2010, while an average 96% of young people aged 15 to 19 from the richest quintile had completed primary education, only 73% of the poorest quintile had achieved the same. In other words, pupils from the poorest quintile were almost seven times more likely not to complete primary education than those from the richest quintile. Although there are inequalities in all of the region's countries with information available, they are particularly acute in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, where the quintiles at either extreme are separated by about 40 percentage points or more.

In summary then, the region's countries made significant progress towards achieving the aim of universal primary education, particularly those nations that were lagging far behind at the beginning of the period. What is more, indicators of the system's internal efficiency and more generally the dynamics of various age groups show that the positive trend is a solid one and suggest that it will be maintained in the future.

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<sup>9</sup> By way of reference, household surveys carried out in about 2000 found that an average 82% of those aged 15 to 19 had completed primary education, which can basically be considered the baseline for this education goal for everyone in the region.

**Graphic 5.5. Completion of primary education according to age group (18 countries).**

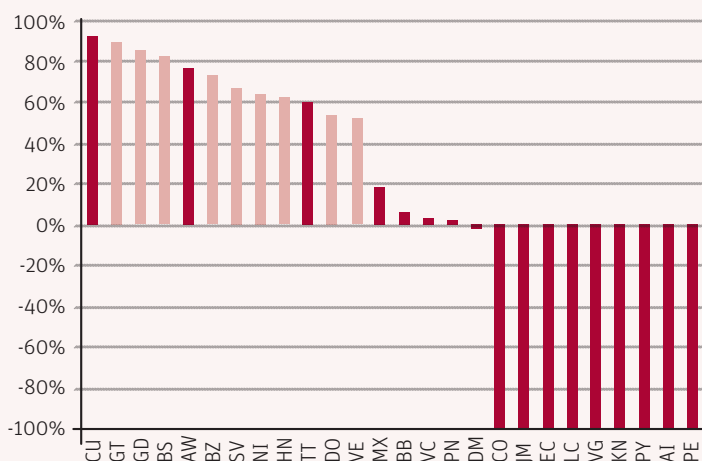


### Progress towards complete primary education for all

Achieving universal access to primary education is an unequivocal goal of the Dakar Framework for Action, and we have therefore estimated the level of fulfilment in 2010 of the “task” as it stood in 2000. The results are presented in the following figure. Given that several countries were already very close to full coverage in 2000, the indicator is very sensitive to certain setbacks observed during the period. It should be borne in mind that some countries had rates of almost 80% by 2010. As shown, countries that have made progress in the past decade have generally succeeded in covering between 50% and 80% of the original gap, with several countries approaching virtually universal primary education coverage.



**Progress towards universalization of primary education. Adjusted net rate of enrolment in primary education: proportion of the “task” as it stood in 2000 that had been achieved by 2010.**



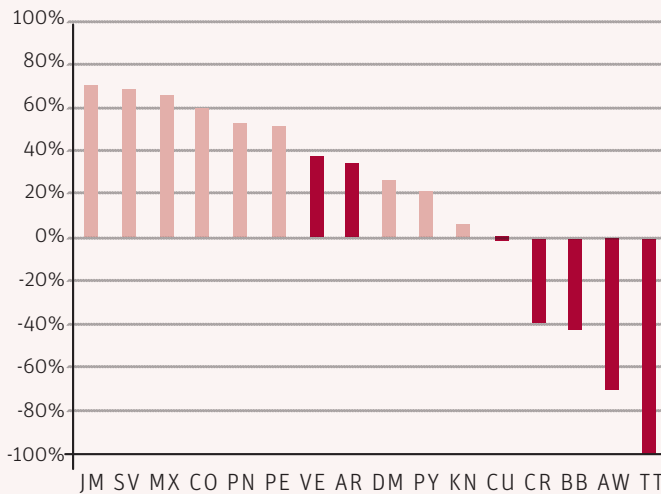
*Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of the UNESCO-UIS database*

Based on national patterns in recent years (1998-2010), we have carried out a projection of countries’ probable situations by 2015 (see Annex 3 for details). According to official data, between 1998 and 2010, the region progressed from 92% to 94%. According to our estimates, the gross average regional enrolment rate in primary education is expected to be 95%. There is clearly a slowdown in the region in this regard.

As we have seen, indicators such as cycle completion (including fifth-grade retention rates) are more telling for regions such as ours, and these show considerable progress in Latin America. In order to place the advances of Latin American countries in an international context, we carried out a series of multiple regression analyses to estimate whether the region as a whole advanced more or less quickly than the rest of the world between 2000 and 2010. We controlled for a series of characterization variables for countries, including per capita income, level of urbanization and demographic composition (details of the main results can be found in Annex 2). The findings indicate that, between 2000 and 2010, Latin American and Caribbean countries increased their average fifth-grade survival rate by around five percentage points more than other countries in the world – having controlled for relevant characteristics. This estimated progress is particularly valuable in this case because, in 2000, the region’s countries already had relatively high fifth-grade survival rates.

Given the high level of expansion of primary education in Latin American countries, indicators such as retention rates at the end of the primary cycle become more sensitive and more relevant for identifying the region's progress in this level of education. We have therefore replicated the "task fulfilment" indicator for the fifth-grade survival rate in primary school. Unfortunately, there are fewer countries with comparable information that can be used for this indicator. As we have shown, most countries made significant progress in school retention over the past decade, with fulfilment levels of around 40% or higher, including Jamaica, El Salvador, Colombia and Mexico, which covered about 60% of the original gap between 2000 and 2010. In this instance, setbacks were only experienced by countries that already had rates in excess of 90%, where negative variations were smaller in absolute terms.

**Progress towards universal completion of primary education. Fifth-grade survival rate: proportion of the "task" as it stood in 2000 completed by 2010.**



Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of the UNESCO-UIS database.

## Education policy guidelines

The region's main challenge in terms of primary education is to ensure that those living in rural areas, extreme poverty or indigenous communities (namely the most marginalized social groups) can access quality primary education and complete this cycle of schooling by acquiring the necessary skills for moving on to secondary education. Given that secondary education is now considered a minimum for individuals to participate actively in society, find a job and improve their future living conditions, it is even more crucial to complete primary school in a timely and satisfactory manner (ECLAC, 2010).

The main critical issues facing the universalization of primary education include guaranteeing effectively free education (including not only fees but also indirect costs), ensuring school entry at the right age, avoiding grade repetition and reducing drop-out rates so that pupils complete their primary education and facilitate their transition to secondary school. The characteristics of the students' home environment and the quality of education provision have a strong influence on the likelihood of repeating a grade or dropping out, while those living in rural areas or from an ethnic minority are more at risk of not completing primary education (PREAL, 2007).

In order to reach the most marginalized population groups, the region has implemented many policies that seek to reduce underlying elements of vulnerability, such as factors associated with poverty. As a result, several countries have new social protection policies such as conditional transfer programmes that consider the intergenerational transmission of poverty to be mainly caused by the lack of investment in human capital, and therefore provide incentives for such investment. Because the transfer is conditional, the opportunity cost of schooling is reduced (ECLAC, 2005). The world's most significant example of such programmes is Brazil's Family Grant programme, which has had a positive impact on education and poverty reduction (Rivera, Currais and Rungo, 2009). In the educational part of this programme, the transfer is conditional upon 85% attendance for children aged 6 to 15, and 75% attendance for young people aged 16 to 17, which reduces the risk of children spending time on paid or unpaid work. One aspect of traditional transfer programmes in education that could be improved is the educational dimension – in other words, by including features to promote school attendance and performance, so that it becomes more than

just a bureaucratic requirement to be monitored (Reimers, Da Silva and Treviño, 2006).

In addition, the quality of schools has become increasingly important, especially schools in rural areas or those serving the children of the most vulnerable groups. The quality of educational provision is a protective factor from grade repetition and drop-out rates, as it provides the capital of relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for proper development and integration into society (thereby increasing the chances of overcoming poverty). One factor that affects the quality of primary education – especially for lower income families – is the length of the school day. The regional average is four to five hours a day, although this is less than four hours in some countries.

The research shows a positive association between longer school days in primary school and teaching processes for various actors in the education system. In this sense, the 1990s saw some of the region's countries include a longer school day as the cornerstone of educational reform. This was the case in Chile, Colombia and Uruguay (OEI, 2012). Some studies have identified positive effects of a longer school day on the learning achievements of Chilean pupils (Bellei, 2009; Valenzuela, 2005). The region's countries now recognize the benefit of a long day in primary school, and have included it as a specific goal of the programme "2021 Educational Goals".

Policies aimed at lengthening the school day aim to make better use of the teaching-learning process at the various levels of education. For pupils, this means longer in school, with increased teaching time and less time spent on homework. This is particularly relevant for children from the most marginalized groups (Bellei, 2009), as a longer day can offset the lack of resources and educational stimulation in the family environment, while also reducing the likelihood of children spending several hours per day on the street and engaging in risky behaviours. Lengthening the school day is also thought to benefit women in the workplace, which represents a major source of income for families (Contreras, Sepúlveda and Cabrera, 2010). As far as teachers are concerned, this measure would improve job stability by eliminating the need to work across a number of schools. It would also help to simplify management and planning tasks for teachers and principals.

However, policies to lengthen the school day require considerable investment in the condition of schools, as they need the right infrastructure, sufficient educational inputs, improved recruitment terms of teachers and better quality schools. It is ultimately the quality of educational provision that has a positive or negative effect on students (ECLAC, 2010).

Tackling the problem of low achievement and drop-out rates in primary school requires policies that provide integral support to families, particularly for children with learning difficulties – so that they can deal with the problems that lead them to enter school late, become absent or repeat grades. The teaching profession also needs to be strengthened so that it can welcome students with special needs into regular classrooms.

Children who are behind in learning face their own problems, as well as discrimination from the education system, as there are few teachers trained to support the specific needs of these children to help them make the best of the teaching-learning process. Psychoeducational support for these students is vital if they are to integrate and make use of education. One example of policies aimed at supporting students with special needs is in Peru, which as part of the region's 2021 Educational Goals has developed the Inclusive Schools programme to train teachers, families and other education system actors to help provide these students with better opportunities to access, use and remain in education. Other actions in the region focus on curricular flexibility to integrate these students in the regular system. In El Salvador, the Everyone's Equal programme trains teachers and provides specialist educational material for schools serving children with visual or auditory problems, as well as supporting students directly through tutoring (OEI, 2012).

### **Some regional challenges in primary education**

Over the past decade, the region's net enrolment rates have stagnated at 94%, which suggests that the main challenge is to promote access to primary education among the most marginalized groups. It is thus crucial to reduce social inequality in order to improve the use made of the education system. In OECD countries, a wealthy student is five times more likely to attend a school with higher levels of well-being than a child with limited resources. This ratio is twice as high in Latin America, where a child from a high-income family is 10 times more likely to attend a school with higher levels of well-being than a poor

rer child (ECLAC, 2007). These findings have been confirmed by PISA-2009, which shows a high correlation between the school's educational resources and the students' social status in almost all of the region's countries (OECD, 2010, v.II)

Indeed, the region's social segregation based on income, geographical area or indigenous status is reproduced in schools. Considering that school environment is one of the variables that has the most impact on learning outcomes, it is vital for children from the poorest and most marginalized groups to have access to a good-quality educational environment. In Latin America and the Caribbean, there is a strict selection and self-selection process in the education system, where the children of higher-income families attend schools with more resources, while families from the poorest quintiles, rural areas and indigenous communities have very few educational options (and most of these are low quality). This exacerbates socioeconomic segregation in the education system, particularly at the extremes of the social scale (ECLAC, 2007).

The relatively large proportion of private schools in the region is also linked to the challenge of equality. In principle, defining primary education as a fundamental human right implies a universality whereby the State guarantees free and quality primary education provision. Throughout the world, this has mainly been implemented through public education (SITEAL, 2011). However, some authors and international agencies have begun to suggest that, for poor or developing countries, extending private education could be an option, and may even be better for achieving the education for all goals. They state that low-cost private provision has the potential to reach the most marginalized areas, and even that private schools are potentially more effective in terms of learning achievements (Tooley, 2001; Patrinos, Barrera-Orsorio and Guáqueta, 2009). Having said that, the available evidence does not prove that private schools are more effective than public ones. What the evidence does show is that private schools tend to be more selective than public ones, in socioeconomic but also values, religious and academic terms - thereby contributing to greater segmentation in the education system (Härma, 2010; Rose, 2007; Levin and Belfield, 2006; Witte, 2009).

In Latin America, private education represents almost 30% of primary enrolment, in contrast with more developed countries, where on average this does not exceed 10%. In Caribbean countries such as Belize,

Aruba, Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago, over 70% of enrolment in primary education is private. In Latin America, however, most primary pupils attend public schools (although Chile constitutes an exception as 58% of primary pupils there attend private school). Data indicate that there is segmented educational provision in the region as – on average – public schools have lower-quality educational inputs (laboratories, teaching materials, libraries and teacher quality) than private schools; this of course only adds to the above-mentioned social segregation in terms of enrolment (ECLAC, 2007; SITEAL, 2011). The evidence also clearly shows that, once socioeconomic differences of the students are controlled for, private schools in Latin America are on average no more effective than public schools in terms of academic achievement (Duarte, Bos, Moreno, 2010). The social and academic segregation of enrolment associated with school privatization, as well as the lack of positive impact of private schools compared to public ones, have both been widely documented in Chile – which is the region’s country that has experimented most extensively in market mechanisms for education provision (Hsieh and Urquiola, 2003; Bellei, 2009; and Valenzuela, Bellei and De los Ríos, 2010).

It is therefore vital for the region’s countries to guarantee access to quality primary education for everyone, using laws that establish this right from a human rights perspective, as well as public policies to enforce it. Providing free education is the most universally accepted mechanism for this purpose, in accordance with the provisions of international instruments on rights. Historically, this has been ensured by public education, although some private institutions (usually with State financial support) have also contributed to this. A comparison with OECD countries shows that average private spending on education is significantly higher in this region, which suggests a reduced State commitment to providing universally free education. For instance, while average private spending in OECD countries in 2009 was 8.8% of total school education expenditure (primary, secondary, post-secondary but not university), in Mexico the figure was 19% and in Chile 21.8%.

A recent UNESCO report comparing the legal educational framework for three Latin American countries and Finland stated that education should have the following interlinked characteristics: availability of teaching programmes and institutions with the necessary educational inputs, including sanitation facilities, teaching materials, trained teachers and libraries; accessibility of education without any discrimination so

that it can be used by everyone; acceptability, referring to the relevance and quality of teaching programmes: and adaptability of education to flexibly tackle the particular needs of society and pupils. In the region's three countries analysed in this study using the above criteria, serious limitations were observed – mainly in terms of budget allocation, poor quality of free education provision, high levels of discrimination and commercialization of education (UNESCO, 2012).

Along with poverty, one of the main causes of dropping out is child labour, which today affects a large number of children in the region (especially in rural areas and indigenous communities), thereby limiting their fundamental right to education. Child labour also affects the achievement of education for all goals, as it is associated with lower academic achievements among children, as well as complete exclusion from the school system. In addition, it endangers the health and quality of life of child workers, especially among those who begin work before the legal age, as they tend to carry out unsafe and badly paid or unpaid jobs (PREAL, 2007; UNESCO, 2010).

There is a considerable amount of child labour in the region, although this varies massively from country to country – from 5% in Chile and Panama to 25% in Guatemala (PREAL, 2007). The main reasons for entering work are economic, in order to help support the family. Children begin working very young, even before the age of 10. However, it is from the age of 15 that child labour becomes a greater concern: over 20% of children and young people have entered the workforce by then. Most of these children carry out unskilled work in situations that are dangerous for their physical, moral or social integrity due to exposure to risky environments, long work days or mistreatment/abuse on the part of adults. Child labour is one of the causes of early school-leaving, grade repetition and over-age students. Dedication to work seriously impacts on children's educational opportunities, and many do not successfully complete education cycles, thereby seriously jeopardizing their chances of overcoming poverty.

In the above-mentioned context, integral education provision plays a crucial role, provided that the infrastructure, safety and food are conducive to children attending and remaining in school. This must go hand in hand with institutional, teaching and curriculum changes to make school more suitable for children who work or are at risk of doing so. In this sense, it is vital to establish curricula that are relevant to the speci-



fic characteristics of working pupils, with teachers trained to work with and respond to the needs of these children, as well as implementing policies that take account of the particular characteristics of rural areas (such as arranging flexible timetables in production cycles) (UNESCO, 2011; PREAL, 2007). One example of this was the New School programme in Colombia, that in the 1980s became a national policy aimed at improving access by children from the most vulnerable environments by coordinating production and social needs with (mainly multi-grade) education, using a flexible curriculum and teaching strategies that fitted in with the requirements of rural communities (Kline, 2002).

## 6. SECONDARY EDUCATION

*Goal 3. “Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes”.*

### Transformation of secondary education

The education for all movement came about when secondary education was immersed in a process of profound changes, which have had a dramatic effect on its function, structure and student population.

In its broadest sense, the long history of secondary education shows that, as it expanded during the twentieth century, it was distancing itself from the strict role of preparation for higher studies (i.e. selector of elites and early dispatcher to the labour market), which had made it mainly academic and shaped the curriculum and culture. In contrast, secondary education was gradually taking on a more general formative function as a complement to primary education. This affected lower secondary education in particular, which was increasingly assimilated into basic education and generally defined as being part of compulsory education. Nowadays, secondary education tends to be more post-primary, rather than pre-university (Briseid and Caillods, 2004; Braslavsky, 2001).

This transformation has not, however, erased the original stamp of secondary education, which remained prevalent in upper secondary education, despite its massification. This is the dual nature of secondary education. On the one hand, it organizes and strengthens a curricular approach to the world of work, at the most extreme through an institutionalized trade apprenticeship (which can even take place within a company, as in the dual German model). This modality has allowed for an expansion into less privileged social sectors. On the other hand, there remains a scientific and humanistic secondary education aimed at university – although also more vaguely at the service industry. This branch has retained its bias towards the upper and middle classes.

These functional differences combine with variations in the length and structure of secondary education. Although the typical length of secondary education is six years, countries vary from four to eight years. In terms of structure, the most common model is a school system with three cycles, where the first two (primary and lower secondary) offer

general education and the third (upper secondary) offers differentiated education in specialized and separate institutions. Having said that, there are many exceptions to this pattern, which tend to follow either the German model of differentiated lower secondary education or the United States model of undifferentiated lower and upper secondary. In other words, secondary education institutions are on a continuum from general academic training to vocational/technical training, passing through a type of polyvalent or mixed education. Although there has been a long debate on the pros and cons of these options, researchers seem to agree that early and strong segmentation models (such as the German system) are more efficient in distributing graduates, while less segmented models that delay specialization (such as in the United States) are more equitable (Kerckhoff, 2000; Morimer and Krüger, 2000).

What is ultimately at stake in the historic evolution and major structural and institutional diversity in secondary education is the idea that this level of education plays a pivotal role between school socialization functions (for everyone) and academic selection (which is inevitably diversified and hierarchical). However, the filtering function of secondary education cannot easily be reconciled with the more modern idea of it being a universal right of adolescents and young people themselves. More than any other level of education, secondary education is torn by trying to combine opposing principles: attempting to be meritocratic and compensatory, and both preparatory and an end in itself.

The intergenerational communication involved in education has become increasingly difficult for teachers to achieve at the secondary level. Young people and adolescents have a distinct “youth culture” that is often opposed to that of the adult world, and particularly to school culture. The young people begin to develop different interests, motivations and callings, as well as cultivating their own practices and language. All of this has placed great pressure on schools and has represented a considerable teaching challenge for staff, particularly in terms of using more diverse teaching methods to motivate and engage students who are not always predisposed to participate (Levinson, 2012; Tenti, 2012).

This contemporary phenomenon is combined with a structural fact: the student population has genuine alternatives to formal education – starting work, founding a family, sharing with a peer group and so on. All of the above are attractive options that take up time and compete with education (especially for young people who are less committed to

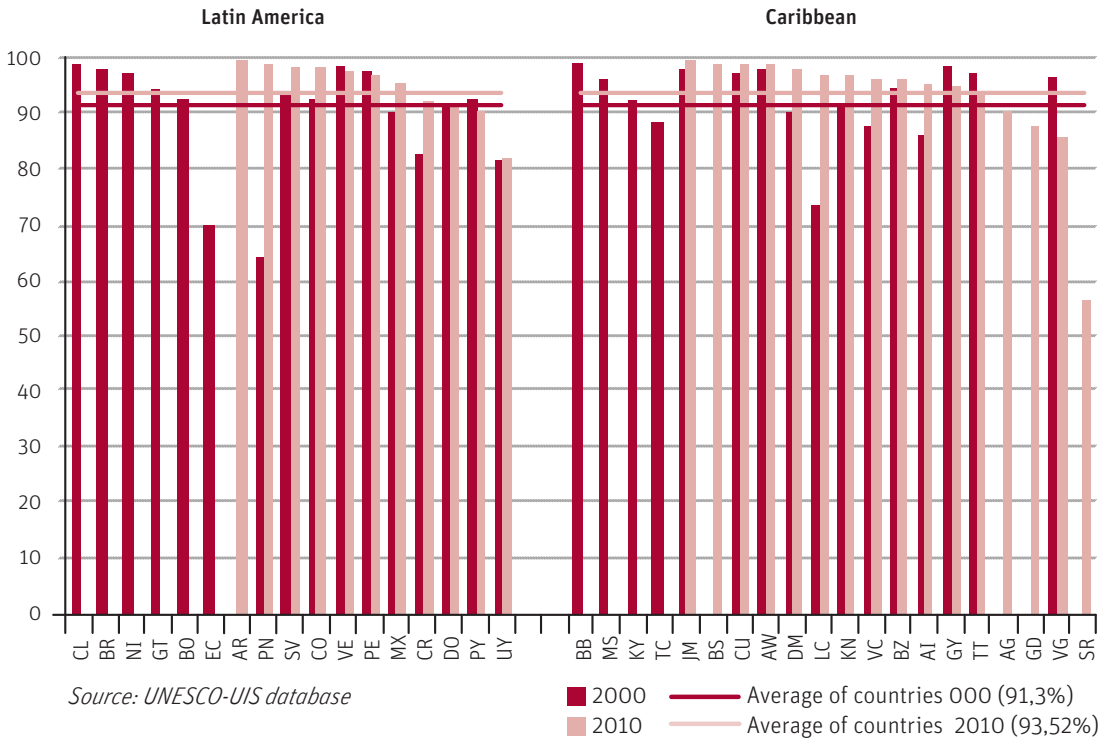
school culture or have more challenging educational trajectories). This represents an additional difficulty – and increasingly the main one – for policies aimed at increasing secondary school coverage and retention rates (SITEAL, 2008).

### **Expansion of secondary education in Latin America within the EFA framework**

Although the third education for all goal does make a general reference to young people, it is more vague about the operational dimension. It has therefore been unclear what the best monitoring indicators would be. The advance in secondary schooling has tended to be considered as an appropriate “translation” of this aim in terms of formal education. However, given that the goal makes a general reference to young people and adults, a more comprehensive vision should see this goal as including access to higher education, work-training programmes and work skills certification. These topics will be tackled in separate sections below.

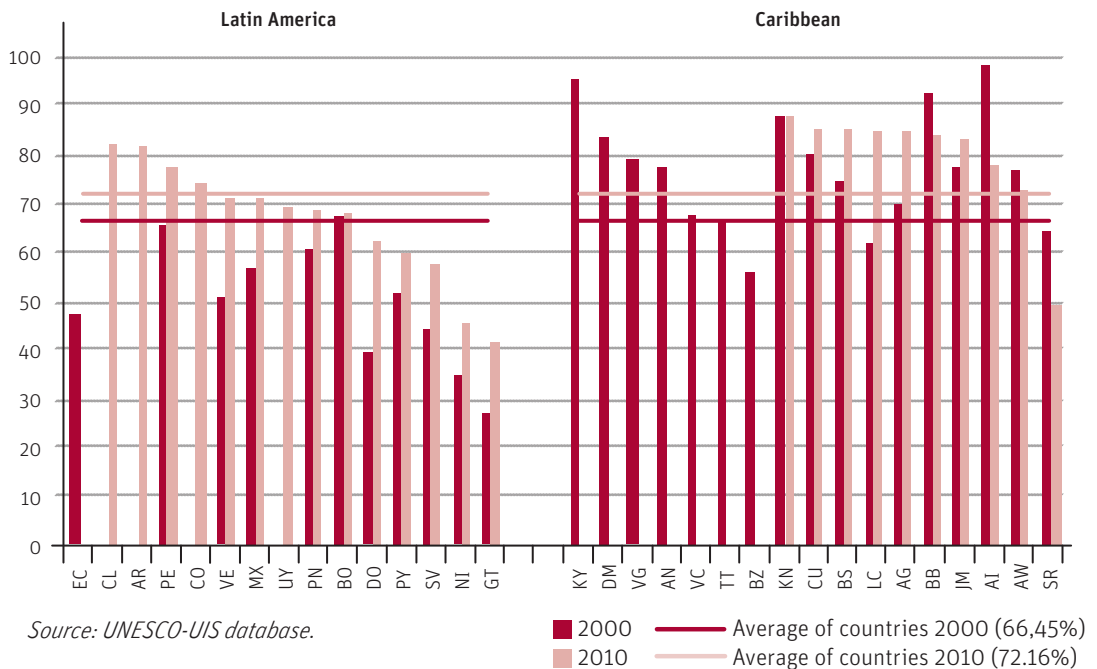
Generally speaking, the region’s countries’ primary education coverage is no longer a limitation on expanding secondary education, and there is a smooth transition from one cycle to the other. This is clearly important because secondary education expansion is limited by the primary-education completion rates and the availability of places for primary-school leavers. As we have seen, their numbers have increased in Latin America and the Caribbean, where they now represent on average just over 90% of that age group. In this sense, the vast majority of the region’s countries have relatively high rates of pupil transition from primary to secondary education (in other words, pupils who were previously in the final year of primary and go on to become new secondary-school pupils): only four out of 27 countries with information available had rates below 90% in 2010 (with the regional average standing at 93.5%). Furthermore, many countries (especially those that started off with lower rates) posted significant progress in this regard over the past 10 years, including the striking case of Panama, which increased its primary to secondary transition rate from 64.5% to 98.8% between 2000 and 2010.

**Graphic 6.1. Transition from primary to secondary education, % (37 countries)**



However, the region's level of secondary education coverage remains intermediate and, notwithstanding the exceptions, did not progress significantly during the past decade. Indeed, an analysis of the net secondary education enrolment rate clearly shows that the challenge is even greater: in 2010 the average for the 24 countries with available data was 72.2% (which was slightly higher than the 66.5% average in 2000). Countries such as Anguilla, Barbados and Suriname even experienced major setbacks in secondary education coverage during the past decade. In contrast, the most rapid progress took place in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Dominican Republic and Saint Lucia, which accumulated increases of around 20 percentage points. Overall, in 2010 the region still had intensely variable situations in terms of secondary education, ranging from net rates of below 50% in some countries to rates higher than 80% in others.

**Graphic 6.2. Net enrolment rates in secondary education (all programmes) (32 countries, %)**



The factors behind this considerable variability in the net secondary enrolment rate are a combination of context conditions and internal features of the education system itself. According to our analyses, based on a series of multiple regressions considering all world countries with sufficient information (see Annex 1 for details), secondary education coverage is positively associated with higher national wealth. The net secondary enrolment rate increases in direct proportion to per capita GDP. However, economic differences are far from providing a full explanation. Countries with a higher proportion of secondary-age population tend to have lower net rates of secondary enrolment, because the challenge facing them is relatively larger. The dynamics of the primary education system is also a very relevant factor behind these differences, as countries with higher net primary enrolment rates and higher survival rates in the last grade of primary school, tend to have higher rates of secondary enrolment rates.

The major significance of such internal factors in the school system for expanding access to secondary education becomes even clearer when we consider that our analyses did not find an association between educational spending as a percentage of GDP (or education spending as a percentage of government expenditure) and differences in the net secondary enrolment rate (once population size of this age group and primary education coverage/completion were taken into account). The same can be said of the impact of rural issues, as the proportion of rural population was not systematically related to net secondary enrolment rates, probably because their potential effect is influenced by each country's level of primary education coverage.

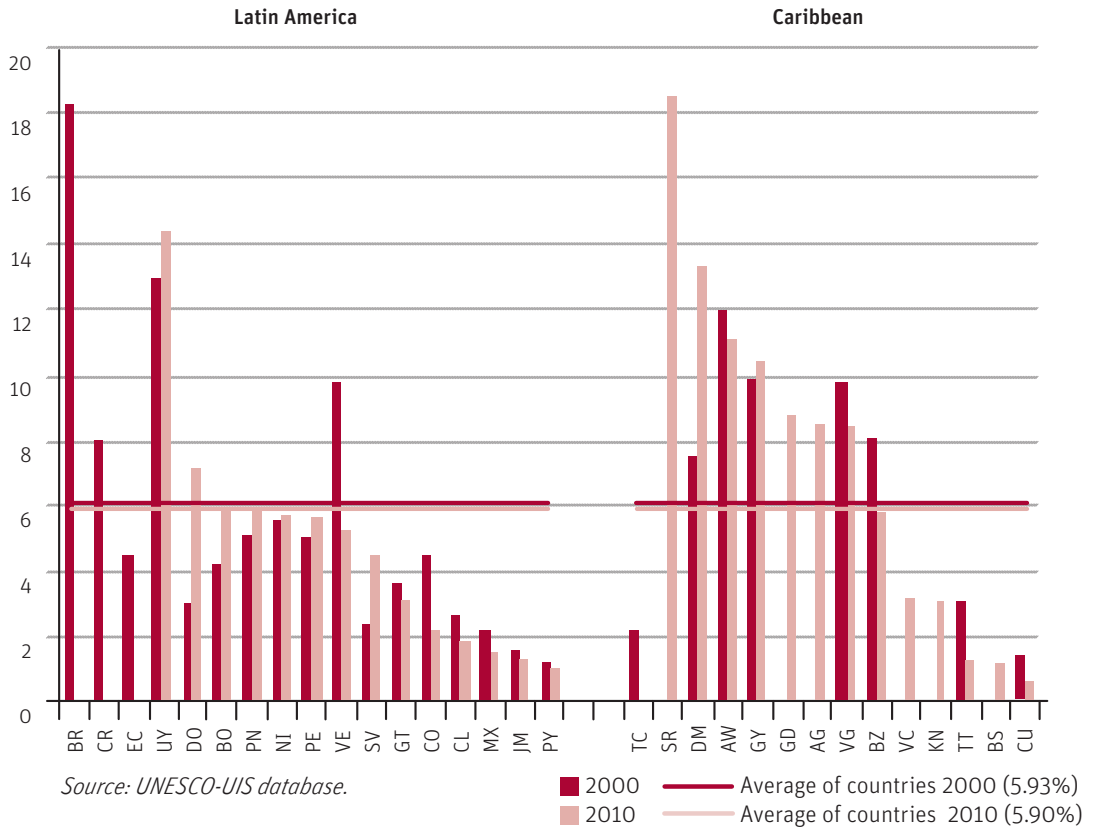
When all of these factors are taken into account, Latin American and Caribbean countries as a group do not stand out from other countries in terms of the net secondary education enrolment rate as of 2010. In other words, the region's countries had the expected level of secondary coverage according to their characteristics. However, the region has some countries above and some countries below the overall trend, and these heterogeneous situations reflect the two extremes of countries with much lower-than-expected secondary education coverage, and others with much higher-than-expected secondary coverage given their relative characteristics.

Inequalities between countries combine with inequalities within countries. In particular, the region's average secondary school attendance according to family income quintile ranges from 93.6% among the richest to 78.9% among the poorest. This gap also varies considerably among countries: in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Dominican Republic, Chile and Colombia, the difference between the highest and lowest income quintiles is around five percentage points, while in countries such as Guatemala and Honduras, the difference is over 30 percentage points.

In general terms, despite the region having relatively high and improving rates of primary completion and transition to secondary, this has not been reflected in a rapid and widespread expansion of secondary education. It is therefore vital to explore the secondary education process to understand this limitation. In this sense, grade failure is a major obstacle in the way of secondary education: over the past decade, on average the region's countries did not reduce the repetition rate in secondary education, as it remained at 5.9%. What is more, in some

countries the percentage of failing pupils rose significantly (as in Dominica and the Dominican Republic), and even in Uruguay the rate rose slightly from 12.9% to 14.3% during the period, despite repetition there already being more than double the regional average.

**Graphic 6.3. Repetition rate in secondary education (31 countries, %)**



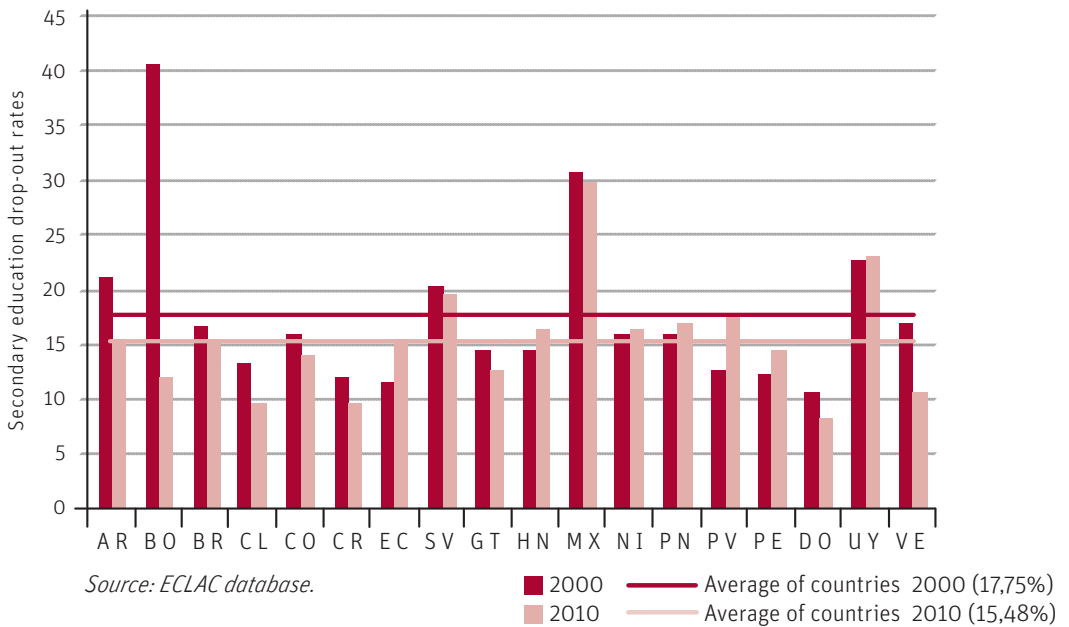
The persistently high failure rates combine with steadily high drop-out rates in secondary education. In the 18 countries with comparable data, average drop-out rates in secondary school only dropped from 17.8% in 2000 to 15.5% in 2010. In other words, every year around 1 in 6 pupils dropped out of secondary school in Latin America and the Caribbean. The cases of Mexico and Uruguay are particularly striking, as their indicators did not improve despite beginning the period with drop-out rates that were clearly higher than the regional average. This contrasted with the Plurinational State of Bolivia, where secondary drop-out rates plummeted from 41% to 12% over the past decade.



At the secondary level, the situation is much more uneven than for primary school, especially in rural and poor areas where child labour is one of the main causes of dropping out of secondary school (UNESCO, 2012). As a result, there are major differences in secondary-school completion, to the detriment of students from lower-income households, ethnic groups and rural areas – and this in turn increases inequality within countries (ECOSOC 2, 2011; ECLAC, 2010).

In this sense, the transition from the first to the second cycle of secondary education is one of the critical points for dropping out. The upper secondary subcycle that generally offers more specialized pre-university or vocational education is often not part of compulsory education (OECD, 2005, UNESCO, 2009; UNESCO, 2012). Unfortunately, there is very limited comparative and historical information to explore the differences between the two subcycles. However, available data show that, in 2010, the average gross enrolment rate in lower secondary in Latin American countries was 98%, but that this dropped to 75.2% in the case of upper secondary education.

**Graphic 6.4. Drop-out rates in secondary education (18 countries)**



Lastly, given that the evidence suggests that it is becoming increasingly vital to complete secondary education to avoid being marginalized from the labour market and society in the region, the new standard for assessing progress should be the proportion of younger generations to effectively complete this cycle of education. Information from household surveys enables us to carry out a detailed exploration of the level of education achieved by different population cohorts and therefore estimate the level of national progress in terms of secondary-education completion. In addition, it is possible to compare the trend for populations of differing economic status and areas of residence.

Taking the average for the region as a whole, around half of young people from the most recent generation have not completed secondary education. In the 18 countries with comparable information for around 2010, an average of about 53.5% of young people aged 20 to 24 (i.e. born around 1986 to 1990) had completed secondary education – which was slightly higher than the figure for those aged 25 to 29 (51.2%), and nine percentage points higher than those born 10 years earlier (44.8%)<sup>10</sup>. This positive trend applied to all the region's countries, except Argentina and Uruguay. However, in keeping with the aforementioned dramatic differences in coverage, the region has a wide variety of situations that are not directly linked to countries' level of resources. In 2010, for instance, 80% of Chilean young people aged 20 to 24 had completed secondary education, while just under 40% of their Uruguayan counterparts had achieved the same.

Comparing these three population cohorts clearly shows a slowdown in the region's advance towards the massification of secondary education, despite the fact that almost half of young people do not complete this stage of education. This relative slowdown is mainly due to stagnated secondary completion rates among young people in urban areas, as the 25 to 29 age group and the 20 to 24 age group only progressed by an average of one percentage point in the region in 2010. This was in contrast with the seven percentage point rise among their counterparts in rural areas. This has definitely gone some way to narrowing the massive gap between young people depending on their area of residence: in 2010, two in three urban young people aged 20 to 24 had completed secondary education, compared with just one in three in rural areas.

<sup>10</sup> By way of reference, household surveys carried out in around 2000 showed that an average of 42% of those aged 20 to 24 had completed secondary education.

The region also has extremely high and persistent inequality in terms of people's socioeconomic status. In 2010, an average of just 21.7% of young people aged 20 to 24 from the poorest quintile had completed secondary education. In contrast, 78.3% of those in the richest quintile had completed this level of education. The two groups were thus separated by a gap of 56.6 percentage points in 2010. This means that the region saw practically no progress in this aspect over the past decade, as in 2000 the gap was 57.3 percentage points. Such high levels of inequality are observed in all the region's countries, although they vary from around 25 percentage points in the Dominican Republic to 70 points in Uruguay.

In summary then, the region's countries are very uneven in terms of the level of schooling among adolescents and young people: whereas some countries have achieved significant levels of massification, in other countries schooling is limited for a minority of the population. Although secondary education did expand slightly in the region over the past decade, there are signs pointing to a slowdown in the increase in the young population completing this cycle. This appears to be mainly due to persistently high repetition and drop-out rates, rather than lack of access or provision. In all countries, this relative disadvantage has a disproportionate effect on the poorest young people and those living in rural areas, although in some countries it has been precisely these groups that have benefited the most from any progress made in the past 10 years.

**Graphic 6.5. Completion of secondary education by age group (rural population) (18 countries)**

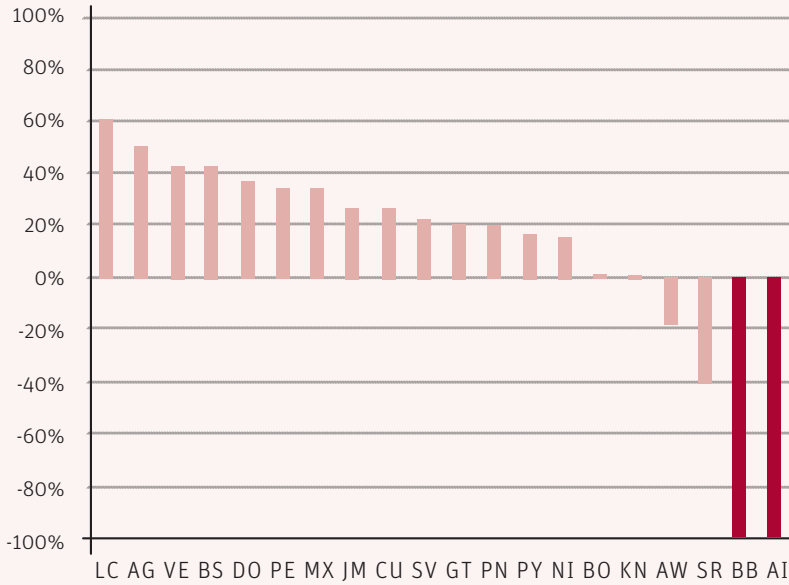


### Advances towards universal secondary education

As with pre-primary education, strictly speaking the Dakar Framework for Action does not refer to the universalization of secondary education as an aim. However, there is a wide consensus on the advisability of its expansion and massification (ECLAC, 2010; UNESCO 2012). As we have seen, this process is under way in 14 of the region’s 20 countries with comparable information. In fact, in order to universalize secondary education, the region’s countries have tended to increase the number of years of compulsory education to include at least the first cycle of secondary education. The following figure contrasts that progress with each country’s gap in 2000, using universal secondary education coverage as the target. As shown, countries that did make progress completed between 20% and 40% of the initial “task” between 2000 and 2010. Countries that made the most progress to expand secondary education in relative terms were Saint Lucia and Antigua and Barbuda, which covered 60% and 50% of the initial gap, respectively. In contrast, striking cases at the other extreme included Anguilla and Barbados, which be-

gan the decade with net secondary enrolment rates of more than 90% (virtually universal in relative terms), but ended the period with rates of around 80%.

**Level of progress towards the universalization of secondary education. Net secondary enrolment rate: proportion of the “task” as it stood in 2000 completed by 2010**



Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of the UNESCO-UIS database.

Based on the pattern followed by countries in recent years (1998-2010), we have carried out a projection of the likely net secondary enrolment rate in 2015 (see Annex 3 for details). According to official data, between 1998 and 2010 the region advanced from 63% to 74%. According to our estimates, by 2015 the average net secondary enrolment rate in the region will probably be 76.4%, which will still be far from the aim of universalizing secondary education.

To place the advances of Latin American countries in an international context, we carried out a series of multiple regression analyses to estimate whether the region as a whole advanced more or less quickly than other countries in the world between 2000 and 2010. We controlled for a series of variables in the characterization of countries, including per capita income, level of urbanization and demographic composition (details of the main results are in Annex 2). Our findings indicate that,

between 2000 and 2010, average net secondary enrolment rates in Latin American and Caribbean countries increased almost 12 percentage points more than other world countries (having controlled for relevant characteristics). Given that this “estimated advance” is higher than the one actually observed in the region, this suggests that Latin American countries have been making significantly more efforts than the rest of the world to expand this level of education.

## **Policy challenges: universalizing and transforming secondary education<sup>11</sup>**

Como se ha visto, la educación secundaria enfrenta en América Latina el desafío de consolidar su expansión, especialmente hacia la población más desaventajada, pero esta agenda “de crecimiento” está íntimamente ligada a otra “de transformación” de sus procesos internos y formas de organización, sin la cual los objetivos de aumento de la equidad y la calidad se verán seriamente comprometidos en la educación secundaria.

### **Definition and goals**

The main transformation in recent decades has been the new definition of secondary education: it is now seen as part of the basic education of every citizen, and no longer as exceptional or privileged. This redefinition has direct regulatory and political repercussions. In accordance with the international trend, Latin American countries have been extending compulsory education to include at least the lower secondary cycle. Secondary education is therefore considered to be the right of young people, and this perspective implies a commitment to universalizing access to secondary education. Expanding compulsory schooling certainly takes away pressure from the labour market, which has chronic problems in incorporating the youngest people.

The basic aims of secondary education are being amended as a result, with the emphasis being placed on the lifelong learning continuum. In

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<sup>11</sup> This section is based on C. Bellei (2012) “Políticas educativas para el nivel secundario: complejidades y convergencias”.

other words, the idea is to develop basic skills to a higher level to enable more independent ongoing learning; provide more space for students' individual interests, motivations and talents (as they form a much more diverse population than in the past); and strengthen socialization and cultural integration aspects that have re-emerged as crucial parts of our complex and multicultural modern societies. Subjects that were forgotten until recently, such as citizenship education, have begun to be included in curriculum reform in several countries.

## **Structure**

There is a clear trend towards reducing or delaying the streaming of students by ability or performance, in order to emphasize a “shared” curriculum. This trend is even seen among those in the area of technical/vocational training. This is the combination of historical attitudes from educational policy in favour of educational equity, and a re-reading of labour market demands and the overlap with general education in terms of the importance of communication, logical thinking and other “soft” social skills. This idea of a long, shared general training has been backed up by OECD analysis of the international PISA test, which points in the same direction: systems that delay pupil segmentation tend to be more effective in terms of academic achievement, as well as being more equitable.

## **Access, progress, retention and reintegration**

Defining secondary education as a universal right and part of basic education has strengthened the massification process. This implies having to tackle problems of access, progress and retention, which are the basics of the schooling process. In terms of access, the prevailing trend is to offer a universal, free and non-selective secondary education service with no entrance exams. One option implemented by some Latin American countries, particularly in rural areas (as in Mexico) or countries with fewer economic resources (such as Honduras), is to create informal education programmes or distance-learning secondary education programmes.

This general criterion is nuanced, especially in the upper secondary level, where there are many ways of streaming students towards the general or vocational routes (mainly on the basis of previous performance and careers counselling). Offering a greater number of options

in upper secondary, including vocational courses for the less academic pupils, appears key to increasing retention rates at this level of education. Another crucial aspect is to design organizations and curricula that make education and work compatible, which in some contexts is the most politically viable and potentially most effective option. One interesting experience in combating child labour from an educational perspective has been the First I Learn programme promoted by PREAL in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. This experience shows that, while it may be counterintuitive, exchanging work for school is much more than a monetary opportunity cost, because it also requires cultural, structural and teaching changes in the school system.

In the same sense, as part of the elimination of academic selection mechanisms, the use of grade repetition as a means of quality control or educational support should also be significantly reduced in the light of the wealth of evidence that it is educationally ineffective and is proven to increase the possibilities of early school-leaving.

Lastly, a growing policy priority is to tackle early school-leaving by less academic pupils who have found schooling more difficult or who have started work early due to economic problems (Acosta, 2011; Tenti, 2009). Drop-out rates have also been associated with behavioural and relational problems experienced by some young people. In some cases, these problems are associated with addictions and other psychosocial problems affecting some young people. The schooling of immigrant populations and ethnic minorities – who often face social and linguistic marginalization – has also increased the problem of drop-out rates. Programmes to tackle drop-out rates (which have been significant in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico), should combine the use of traditional tools (such as work-based training and grants) with others such as targeted educational support, psychological support and intersectoral social programmes.

## **Curriculum and evaluation**

Curriculum changes have once again become relevant. Although curriculum reform as an educational policy tool had become somewhat discredited, as it was largely ineffective and overly demanding on organizational and political resources, the new focus on knowledge in society, rapid technological change and rapid sociocultural transformation pro-



cesses have brought it back to the fore of policy priorities. One option has been to expand the secondary school curriculum to include new subjects such as the use of information and communication technologies, citizenship development, promotion of healthy living skills, sustainable development and the generation of entrepreneurial capacity, to name the most common. This trend also includes initiatives aimed at developing the cultural motivations and interests of young people in school through artistic and cultural workshops.

Another educational policy option relating to the curriculum has been heading in the opposite direction: back to basics. Based on the opinion that education is no longer academically demanding, it proposes implementing accountability systems based on standardized tests and the application of consequences (penalties and/or incentives) for schools and teachers, based on pupil performance. Consequences for students are also suggested, such as making the secondary-school diploma conditional upon passing final exams. The use of standardized tests for quality control and the promotion of education reform has been boosted by the growing relevance of international comparison tests (especially TIMSS and PISA) in the field of educational policies worldwide.

Although, in theory, both policy approaches could complement each other, in reality there is a tension between them because they are competing for time and teaching priorities in the classroom. Intensive use of standardized tests could lead to a narrowing of the curriculum that not only excludes new subjects intended to enrich pupils' learning experience, but could also produce a biased reduction in the curriculum for the subjects evaluated. On the other hand, the haphazard incorporation of additional aims and subjects into the secondary curriculum could exacerbate the overburdening and fragmentation that have historically characterized this level of education.

### **Quality improvement**

There is widespread and longstanding dissatisfaction with the quality of secondary education. There are many proposals and experiments aimed at changing secondary education from within. Despite the strong criticism, no model has emerged to replace the status quo, and change is limited to adjustments to traditional practices and institutions.

The promotion of educational change proposes the incorporation not only of new teaching methods but also new learning resources and new scenarios for teaching and learning. The aim is to replace the traditional “chalk and board” class with more dynamic methodologies from the pupils’ perspective. These would include teaching through projects developed by students, group work, pupil-led preparation of presentations and development of experiments, use of audiovisual media and the introduction of various information and communication technologies such as computers, personal mobile devices and the Internet. Introducing changes in teaching methods, which are at the heart of any quality improvement, will involve addressing initial and ongoing teacher training (which is discussed in another section of this report).

Certain basic characteristics of secondary schools and the highly structured school life of pupils and teachers have also begun to be questioned and changed in some cases. For instance, extending the school day or the school calendar; making a more subtle distinction between school subjects to promote more global learning experiences; reducing the size of schools (a critical issue for some establishments); or seeking ways of internally organizing schools that are conducive to a more community-based school experienced, more personalized treatment of pupils and closer monitoring of their progress and problems.

Quality improvement policies have also tried more institutional ways of tackling educational change. For instance, mainly due to low quality public education, the creation of specialized secondary establishments has been promoted with their own identity in terms of an educational project, as a response to the demand for greater diversity and innovation in the public system. Examples of this trend include the magnet schools in the United States, arts schools, technology education colleges, bilingual schools and centres of excellence for the most academic pupils.

Lastly, inspired by the concern for socio-educational equity, various types of compensatory programmes have been implemented to support schools serving the most vulnerable (the Opportunities programme in Mexico, PACE in Argentina and Schools for All in Chile are examples of such policies in the region). There are usually based on formulas of targeted additional financing, and have given rise to various education improvement programmes that aim to provide specialized responses to the challenges in these sectors by offering learning resources, as well as teaching and social support.

## Education for work

Lastly, the massification of secondary education placed work training at the heart of the agenda, with pupils streamed into vocational and technical training. Educational policies aimed at strengthening vocational education must first raise their status and improve social perceptions about such training (Jacinto, 2010). One key to this has been delaying such training until upper secondary, as well as efforts to better integrate it with its natural post-secondary education counterparts, so that it is no longer seen as an ending, but rather as a part of lifelong learning (which is discussed in a separate section).

Curricular change has sought to diversify this type of training by orienting it towards broader groups of occupations rather than one type of job, with the emphasis on skills that improve the general employability of graduates, rather than training in skills limited to one profession. For instance, the aim is to provide training in cross-cutting skills and competencies, such as communication skills and teamwork, by organizing teaching in a modular way that allows for training trajectories that even go beyond the secondary level. Interestingly, some of these trends have been introduced in general secondary education and many point to a curricular convergence of these two forms of education (UNESCO, 2005). Indeed, given that a significant proportion (generally the majority) of general secondary graduates will directly enter the workplace, the aim is to increase their employability by emphasizing soft skills, the use of new technologies and practical enterprise experience.

Alongside this, it has become relevant to achieve a smoother education-to-work transition for young people, as this change is often characterized by chronic problems in finding a job that lead to long periods of youth unemployment on a large scale. Some initiatives to tackle this include the increased formalization of the relationship between secondary education and the labour market, for instance by awarding skills certificates recognized by employers; introducing work experience and entrepreneurship in secondary education; and emphasizing careers advice to help pupils get their first job by advising them on job-hunting and interview strategies.

## 7. THE CHALLENGE OF EDUCATION QUALITY

*Goal 6. "Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills."*

The perspective of the right to education evolved from an almost exclusive focus on schooling to a concern for the learning actually acquired by children and young people. This has placed education quality at the heart of the agenda. Over the past 20 years, the debate on quality has moved from a focus on the necessary inputs for education provision (infrastructure, materials, and length of schooling) towards how to make use of school and the academic results of students.

The focus on learning is essential, as it highlights the effective development of students' potential, so that they can exercise their rights, participate in society and have a dignified life experience (Alexander, 2008). Furthermore, in addition to evidence on increased schooling among the population, improving education quality has been found to be a possible catalyst for social change aimed at overcoming poverty, improving unequal income distribution and increasing productivity and social development (Hanushek and Woessmann, 2009). As a result, contemporary visions on the right to a quality education tend to emphasize its multidimensional nature (UNICEF and UNESCO, 2008; OREALC UNESCO, 2008), with aims such as cognitive, creative and psychological development; and purposes such as peace, citizenship and security that can promote equality and transmit local and worldwide values (UNICEF and UNESCO, 2008, p.32).

One of the great contributions to the education for all movement has been precisely the concern for education quality, expressed as a combination of conditions for teaching and learning, and the academic achievements of pupils. The definition of the sixth goal of the Dakar Framework for Action combines a generic reference to the qualitative aspects of education with a specific reference to measurable outcomes in certain parts of the curriculum. In practice, however, there has been very uneven progress in generating information to monitor this goal in all its complexity. This has resulted in only partial monitoring of this aspect of education for all.

In terms of conditions for learning, the focus has been placed on teachers, which is consistent with the fact that strengthening the teaching profession was one of the 12 strategies explicitly mentioned in the Dakar Framework for Action. In terms of learning achievements, there has been considerable emphasis on standardized tests (worldwide and in the region in particular), mainly in literacy and mathematics. It should be stated that what connects education inputs with outcomes are teaching-learning processes – in other words, the quality of learning opportunities to which pupils have had access. Unfortunately, these parts of the education process are difficult to observe and measure, which means they constitute a blind spot in the monitoring of education quality.

The concern for education quality is completely relevant in Latin American and the Caribbean, and should not be seen as a secondary goal in relation to increased coverage. What is more, the two dimensions are closely linked. Expanding pre-school, primary and secondary education has brought in pupils from groups with lower economic, social and cultural resources, and for them it is vital to improve educational quality to include equal learning as an essential way of offsetting the impact of their disadvantaged backgrounds (UNESCO, 2011). A low-quality education is comparatively more harmful to those with limited family resources, which makes it a main factor in education inequality.

Regionally speaking, within countries there are challenges of schooling and minimum conditions for proper learning that remain pending from the twentieth century, as well as twenty-first century challenges such as narrowing the digital divide and developing skills for independent learning and problem solving that are vital for participating in the knowledge society and exercising citizenship in increasingly pluralistic and globalized environments. For this section, we have selected the following five relevant aspects for moving towards a broad definition of education quality in the framework of education for all: academic learning achievements, school environment, citizenship education, and information and communication technologies. However, the list is by no means exhaustive.

In particular, it is important to highlight two dimensions that have not been discussed in depth (one traditionally tackled by policies and the other considered an emerging issue, respectively): basic inputs and school segregation.

The growing emphasis on education results has led some analysts and decision-makers to undervalue (or completely ignore) the concern for inputs (class size, textbooks, teacher salaries, teacher training, school infrastructure), by misinterpreting scientific evidence that suggests that inputs “do not matter” for education quality. However, the cumulative evidence in developing countries concludes that, at least in these contexts, basic educational resources are a significant factor in education quality (Glewwe, Hanushek, Humpage, and Ravina, 2011; Hanushek, 2006; Scheerens, 2000). We should not lose sight of this aspect in a region where there is a low availability of school materials for large swaths of the population – and this has recently been associated with lower levels of school achievement (Murillo and Román, 2011).

In addition, the fact that Latin American and Caribbean countries are characterized by deep economic and social inequalities tends to have a significant impact on education institutions. In this context, social segregation of schools reinforces this pattern, as it tends to exclude the most disadvantaged groups from the conditions that promote improved educational quality (such as better qualified teachers, favourable school environment and access to challenging educational materials). Furthermore, segregation of schools reinforces inequality, as the evidence shows that classmates are also an important factor in education quality. This is because the social, economic and cultural capital of families available in school is proportionally higher among the most privileged than it is lower among the rest (OREALC/UNESCO, 2010; ECLAC 2007; Valenzuela, Bellei, De Los Ríos, 2010).

## **7.1. LEARNING ACHIEVEMENTS AND QUALITY ASSURANCE**

The most widely used information for analysing pupils’ learning achievements is based on the use of standardized tests, which have become more widely and intensively used in recent years. It is, however, vital to be aware of their limitations as indicators of education quality.

The ultimate purpose of the concern for education quality is to increase the number and quality of learning opportunities that education systems offer to students. However, the relationship between these opportunities and pupils’ ultimate academic achievements is known to be highly complex, as well as being influenced by many “extra-scholastic” factors. This is one of the many reasons why standardized academic achievement tests for pupils are not strictly an indicator of each country’s edu-

cational quality, just as at the local level they are not a valid measure of a school's effectiveness (Koretz, 2008).

Standardized attainment tests have another significant limitation as quality indicators: they do not measure relevant aspects that pupils are expected to learn in school. First, this is because such tests do not measure practical skills and abilities, or attitudes or learning in various areas that pupils are encouraged to acquire in education. Second, this is because the tests are generally concentrated on a couple of subjects (literacy and mathematics, and occasionally natural sciences), which while definitely being important, are only a fraction of the school curriculum. Lastly, this is because even within subject evaluation, important skills (such as written and oral communication) are excluded (Koretz, 2008; Ferrer, 2006; Ravela et al., 2008).

Bearing in mind these limitations, such measurements still provide essential information for diagnosing and monitoring the learning achievements of children and young people, at least in the areas of knowledge identified as crucial (and specified in the Dakar Framework for Action itself). Analysis of education quality has thus mainly focused on students' academic outcomes (or learning achievement), especially in language, mathematics and science, using national and international standardized tests for increased comparability and monitoring. In other words, although the current debate on education quality cannot be reduced to the results of these tests, they cannot be ignored either.

### **Learning achievements in Latin America and the Caribbean**

The SERCE-2006 test of the UNESCO Latin American Laboratory for the Assessment of Quality in Education provides the best comparative regional information on the academic performance of primary-school pupils. This involved 16 countries, and third and sixth grade pupils evaluated in literacy and mathematics, and sixth grade pupils in sciences. Although this type of evaluation measures a wide range of skills and knowledge, a basic equity criterion suggests a focus on pupils who do not reach the minimum achievement for their age and grade, and who are therefore at high risk of lagging chronically behind in their education.

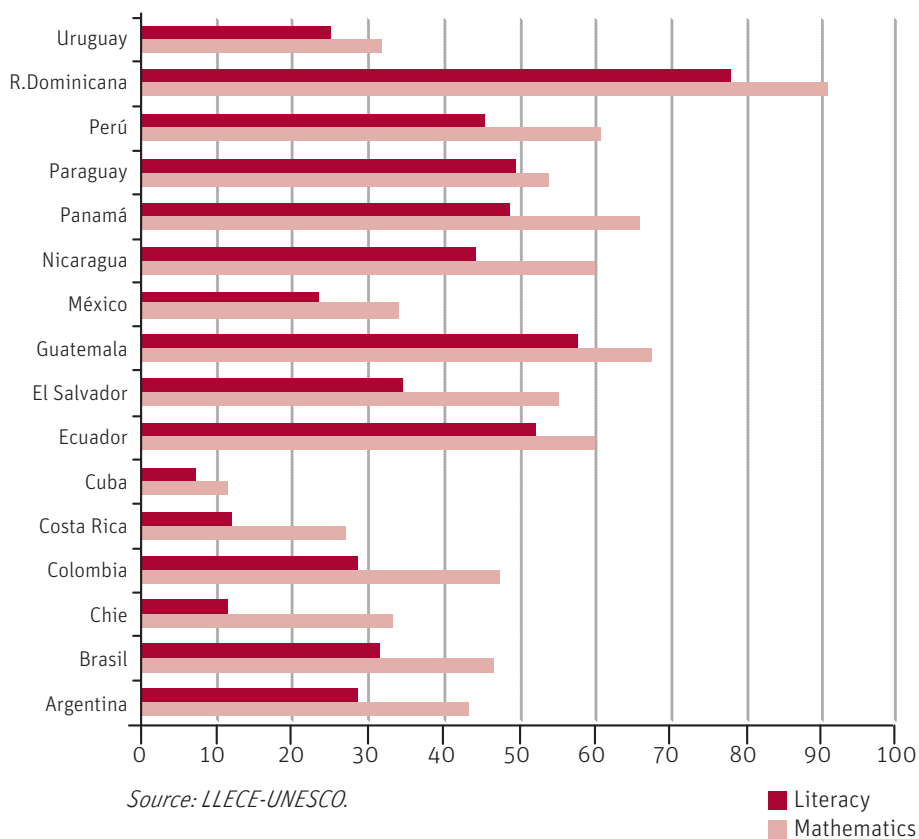
The SERCE-2006 results (OREALC UNESCO, 2008) suggested that, in participating countries, an average of one in two third-grade pupils had

not achieved level II performance (considered a basic level of achievement) in mathematics, while one in three had not achieved this level in literacy. Furthermore, there were marked differences among countries. For instance, whereas 7% of third-grade pupils in Cuba did not achieve performance level II, the figure reached 49% in Panama and 78% in the Dominican Republic. National differences in mathematics were even more striking.

According to a UNESCO study into SERCE data (Treviño et al., 2010), the factors behind the difference in student performance include socioeconomic and cultural conditions of the pupil and on average for the school; school climate and pupil perception thereof, management of teaching; years of teaching experience; and years in pre-primary education. Negative influences on children's academic achievement include belonging to indigenous groups, child labour and grade repetition. The SERCE-2006 results also show that Latin American countries vary greatly in terms of the extent to which their school systems reduce or increase academic achievement inequality among pupils with a different gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity or area of residence. This suggests that the quality of educational conditions and processes can make an enormous difference in reducing inequality. A particularly striking case identified by SERCE is Cuba, which has successfully reduced achievement inequalities relating to socioeconomic status more than any other country in the region. Similarly, the differences in available resources in Cuba's schools were not a relevant factor in unequal achievement among pupils in any subject or grade evaluated by SERCE (Treviño et al., 2010).



**Graphic 7.1.1. Third-grade pupils not achieving level II performance in literacy and mathematics in the SERCE-2006 test, % (16 countries)**

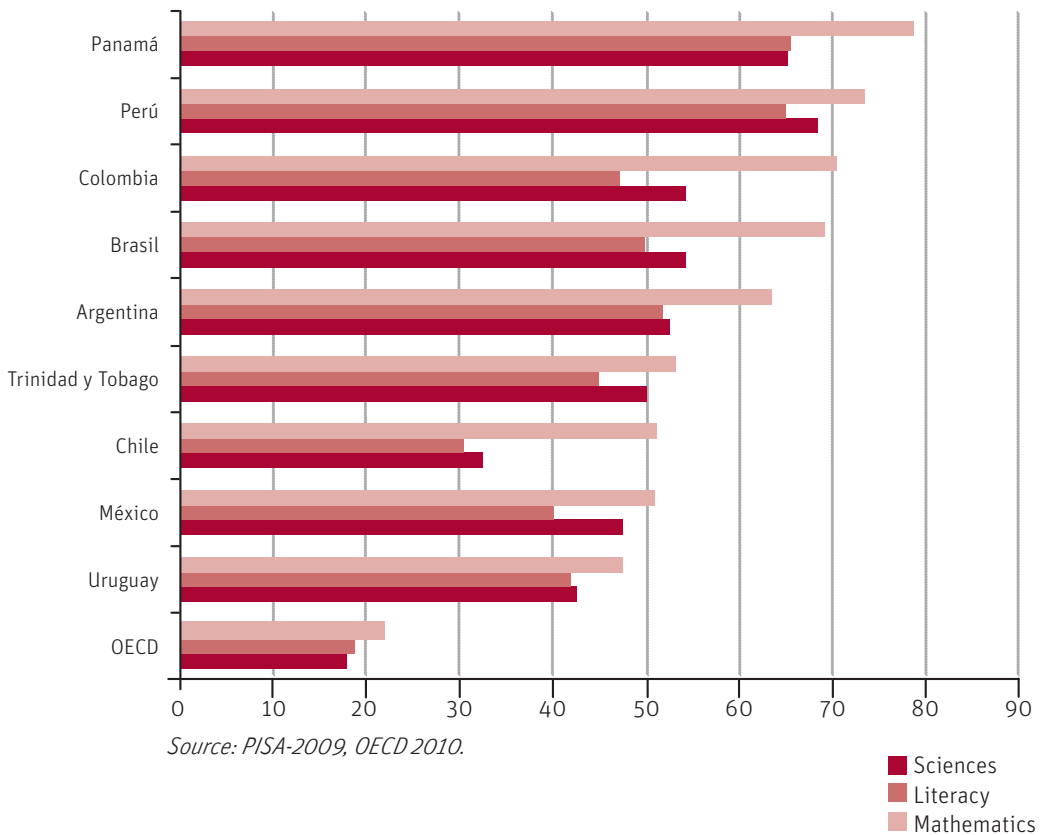


The academic performance of secondary-school pupils has been measured by the international PISA test – an OECD study that evaluates 15-year-old pupils. One additional advantage of PISA is therefore that it provides an external comparison standard for Latin America and the Caribbean. The disadvantage is that only a small group of the region’s countries have taken part.

According to the PISA-2009 results (which are the most recent available), in the nine participating Latin American countries, an average of 58% of pupils for mathematics, 45% for literacy and 48% for sciences did not achieve performance level II (considered the minimum level of achievement in each subject evaluated). By way of comparison, the OECD average of pupils not achieving this standard of achievement was 22% for mathematics, 19% in literacy and 18% in science (OECD, 2010, v.I). Generally speaking, the Latin American proportion of underperforming pupils in various disciplines was two to three times higher than in OECD countries.

Analysis of PISA-2009 has confirmed the importance of family socioeconomic status in school achievement. However, the bearing that this social inequality has on student performance varies wildly from country to country: in Peru, Uruguay, Chile and Argentina, this inequality is higher than the average for OECD countries; in Panama, Colombia, Mexico and Brazil, levels are similar to OECD figures. Out of the region's countries that participated in PISA-2009, only Trinidad and Tobago had a weaker association between pupils' socioeconomic background and literacy achievements than the average for OECD countries (OECD, 2010, vII). Interestingly, Trinidad and Tobago has the region's weakest ratio between the quality of schools' educational resources and the socioeconomic status of pupils (as it is the only country with the same average as OECD countries in this regard).

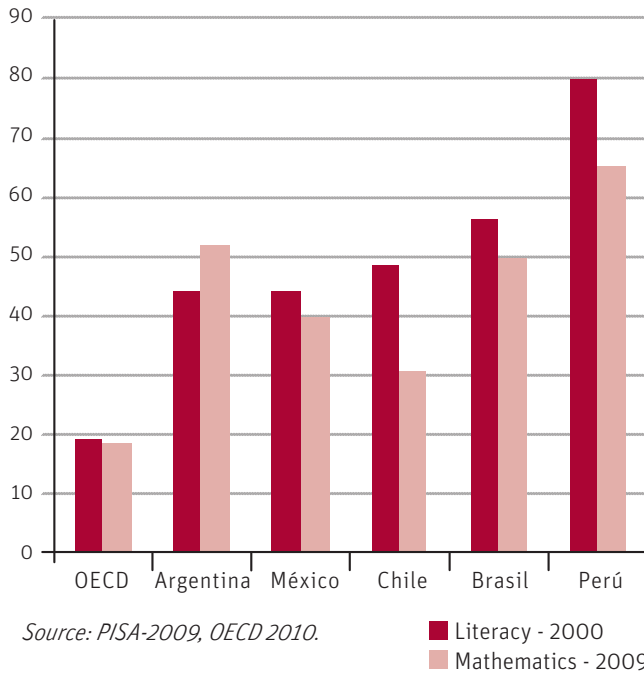
**Graphic 7.1.2. Pupils aged 15 who did not achieve performance level II in literacy, mathematics or science in the PISA-2009 test, % (9 Latin American countries, plus the OECD average).**



There are no widespread comparable data for monitoring the progress of Latin American and Caribbean pupils in terms of academic achievement. The best information available (albeit for just five of the region's countries) is literacy performance of pupils evaluated in the above-mentioned PISA test, which was carried out three times during the past decade. The trend observed is a generally positive one: in almost all participating Latin American countries (except Argentina), the proportion of pupils with a very low level of performance dropped between 2000 and 2009. In contrast, during the same period, OECD countries did not show average improvements in the literacy achievements of the lowest performing pupils. What is more, out of all the countries that took part in the PISA test, Peru and Chile were in the top three countries for increases in the national average literacy performance in absolute terms.

On the whole, academic achievement indicators for the region's pupils are a concern in most countries with information available. On average, about one third of primary pupils and almost half of secondary pupils do not appear to have acquired basic learning in literacy. Mathematics results were even more unsatisfactory. Furthermore, the most disadvantaged pupils face considerable inequity in terms of academic achievement. The good news is that, over the past decade, some of the region's countries made significant progress in terms of literacy ability among secondary-school pupils.

**Graphic 7.1.3. Pupils aged 15 who did not achieve performance level II in literacy in the PISA-2000 and PISA-2009 test, % (5 Latin American countries, plus the OECD average).**



### **Educational quality “assurance”**

The most advanced policy proposal to tackle the issue of overall school quality is the design of “quality assurance” systems for education (“standard-based reforms” and the movement for greater accountability in education can also be considered part of this approach). Although strictly speaking this concerns renewing components that have traditionally existed in many education systems (such as inspection, external evaluation and school supervision), they are now being organized according to a different rationale. The debate and initiatives concerning “quality assurance” have progressed considerably in some of the region’s countries, including Colombia and Chile (see Espínola and Claro, 2010; and Casassus, 2010, on the latter).

Essentially, the proposal is to implement systematic external arrangements for educational supervision and evaluation that combine the use of on-site inspections and tests, with a view to monitoring education quality (inputs, processes and outcomes) and producing guidelines for

school improvements (usually in the form of evaluation reports). These reports must be reflected in educational improvement plans, with set time-frames and targets, which are used by local and national governments to distribute resources for their implementation. Lastly, these improvement plans can become virtual “performance contracts” between the local and national authority, or between the authorities and the managers/teachers of the school. Achieving the targets will thus have additional benefits, while non-fulfilment of the goals will result in special support programmes, remedial measures and eventually penalties (Barber, 2004; Hamilton, Stecher and Yuan; 2008; McMeekin, 2006).

Although available evidence on the effectiveness of these proposals remains too limited (in time and coverage) to assess, three main issues have been identified. First, the problem of available capacities and resources at the school level so that actors (teachers, managers and local education authorities) can productively respond to new pressures to improve. All the evidence suggests that these conditions need to already be in place if systems are to work as expected.

Secondly, there is a wide definition of educational “quality” being pursued in schools: a very narrow definition based mainly or exclusively on standardized test results has the aforementioned serious problems (with well-documented undesirable effects). However, the lack of indicators or valid information on other school achievements, as well as the lack of agreement on what quality processes are, make it difficult to incorporate such aspects into the system.

Lastly, these systems have consequences. At the heart of this proposal is the idea that education professionals take more responsibility for the quality of their work, which usually involves “reward or punishment” based on each person’s performance. The problem is that, given the considerable differences in resources and pupil population among schools, as well as the complex nature of education, it is very difficult to validly determine the “net effectiveness” of each school or teacher. This means that the “rewards and punishment” are often unfairly allocated, affecting not only equity but also the very productivity of the arrangement. Nor is it clear what the most appropriate remedial measures are for poor performance: while some propose school closures or helping pupils transfer to private schools, others suggest introducing compensatory programmes to improve or restructure schools. In both cases, we have seen the problem change from quality “assurance” to the more

traditional challenge of school “improvement”, and that is the crux of the matter.

In summary then, the current trend is to see these “quality assurance” mechanisms as part of broader initiatives of systemic education reform, where building teachers’ professionalism is acknowledged as being at the heart of the issue (Hopkins, 2008; Mourshed, Chijioke and Barber, 2012).

## **7.2. TEACHERS AND EDUCATION QUALITY**

Studies on pupils’ academic achievement and those on improving education systems consistently agree that the quality of teachers is the key factor in educational quality. Considering the characteristics of schools, teachers have been identified as the basic element for promoting student learning, and one that can even offset the effects of negative environmental conditions experienced by the poorest children or those with learning difficulties (Barber and Mourshed, 2007; Rockoff, 2004). As a result, educational policy has begun to place teachers at its heart once more, leaving behind intentions to devise “teacher-proof” educational reform.

When teacher policies concern themselves with quality, and not just system expansion, the scale of the task is much greater. At the international level, the main policy challenges regarding teachers have been identified as attracting and retaining quality teachers in the school system, as well as providing them with opportunities for initial training, development and refresher training to ensure they have the skills required to teach in a rapidly changing society (OECD, 2009). Responding to this agenda requires a systemic approach that combines robust training processes, good teaching conditions in school and a high professional status for teachers.

The most pressing difficulty standing in the way of such progress is the contrast in most countries between the low status and pay of teachers, and the demands of their professional work. In addition, undesirable working conditions have a negative effect on having the best teachers working in the most disadvantaged areas (Little and Bartlett, 2010). However, the difficulties also run deeper. Teachers’ work is increasingly complex and challenging, as they must serve children from various social groups that may have significant differences in cultural capital.

Furthermore, skilled teachers must not only know their own subject but also have various teaching strategies to help children develop more complex skills, attitudes and motivations that will enable them to participate in society and become independent lifelong learners. All of the above has called into question traditional practices and institutions concerned with initial and ongoing teacher training (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Darling-Hammond, Ching and Johnson, 2009; OECD, 2009).

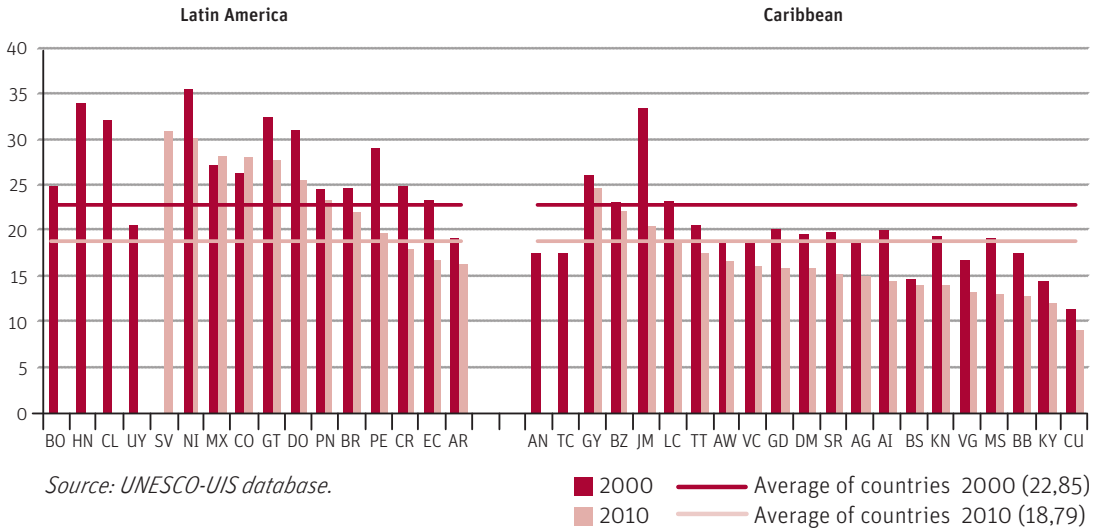
### **The situation of teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean**

In the framework of education for all, basic monitoring of the teacher situation has consisted in observing the availability of teachers and their specialized training. The most commonly used indicator of availability is the number of pupils per teacher in the school system, while one quality indicator is the proportion of teachers with specialized training (or certified teachers). Although there is no comparative regional information on other aspects such as the quality of teacher training or level of knowledge/skills, a recent UNESCO report provided some evidence in this regard (OREALC/UNESCO, 2012).

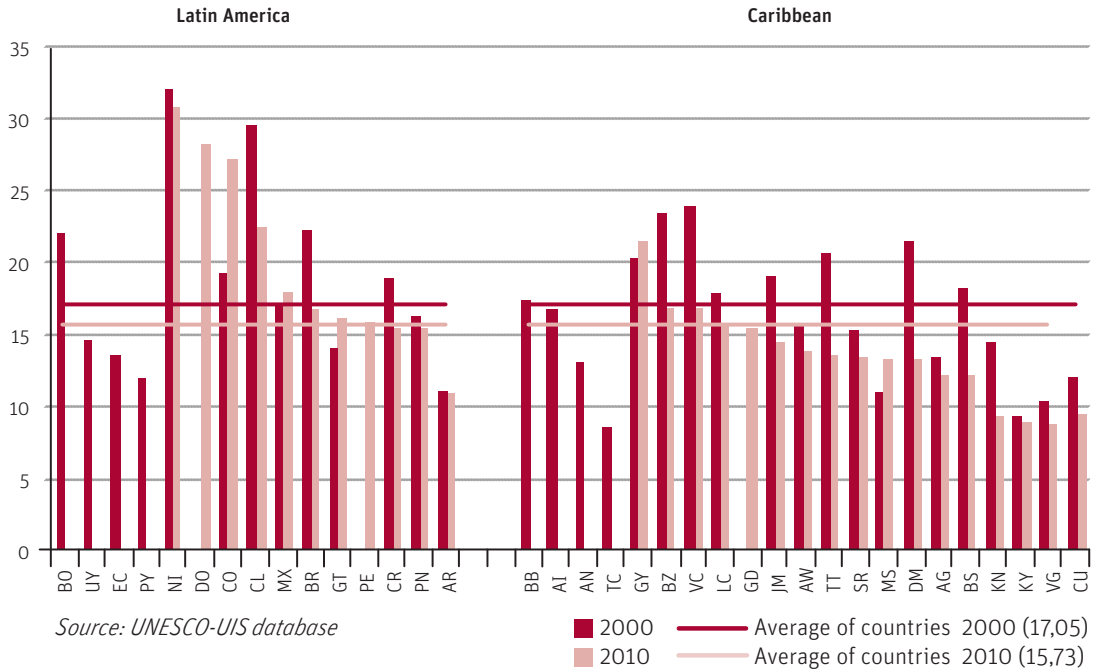
In terms of the number of pupils per teacher, in 2010 the overall situation in Latin America and the Caribbean was intermediate, in that it was very close to the average when compared with other world regions, in terms of both primary education (19 pupils per teacher) and secondary education (16 pupils per teacher). Besides, the past decade has seen this proportion fall in primary and secondary education, especially the former – where the average number of pupils per teacher fell by four pupils since 2000. This improving pattern applied to most countries with comparable information, except Colombia – where the pupil-to-teacher ratio increased in both school cycles (and secondary in particular). This regional average definitely conceals a wide range of situations, with some countries (such as Nicaragua) having around 30 pupils per teacher in primary and secondary education, while others (such as Cuba) have around 10 pupils per teacher in both levels.

Given the advance in education coverage in recent decades in the region's countries, the fact that average pupil-to-teacher ratios are not comparatively high (and even dropped during the previous decade) should not be underestimated, as it reflects considerable efforts to increase the number of teachers available at various levels of education.

**Graphic 7.2.1. Ratio of pupils per teacher in primary education (37 countries).**



**Graphic 7.2.2. Ratio of pupils per teacher in secondary education (36 countries).**

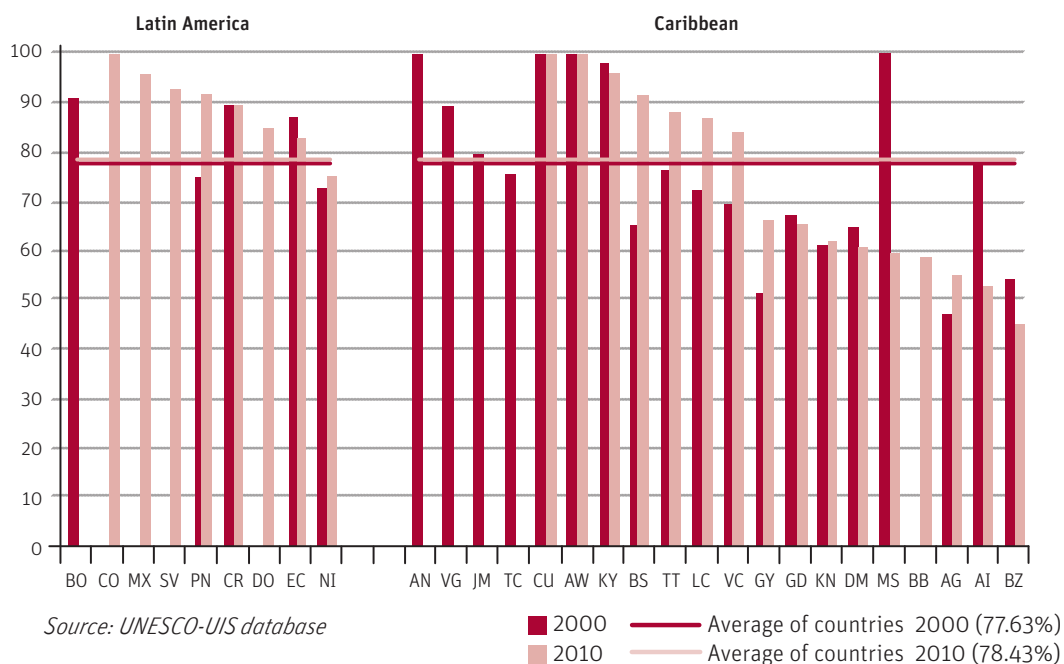




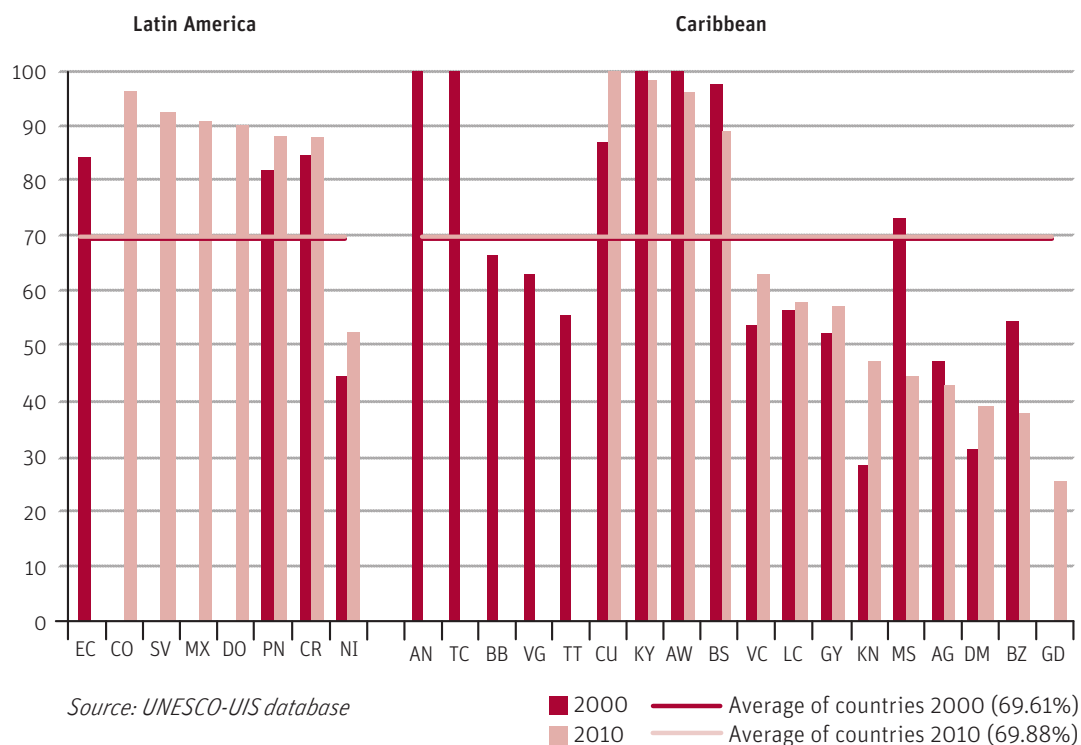
In terms of the quality of teacher training (measured by the percentage of teachers with certified training according to each country's requirements), comparable information indicates that, in 2010, 78% of primary teachers and 70% of secondary teachers had certified teaching training. However, there are dramatic regional differences in the level of teaching professionalization, as in some countries (particularly in the Caribbean) only half of primary and secondary teachers are certified, while in other countries the proportion is in excess of 90%. Cuba deserves a special mention in this regard, as 100% of primary and secondary teachers were certified in 2010.

Between 2000 and 2010, Latin American and Caribbean countries on average made no progress in this regard in primary or secondary education. This does not mean that the last decade saw no changes, but that these were contrasting: some countries significantly increased the number of certified teachers (as in Panama and Bahamas in primary education and Saint Kitts and Nevis in secondary), while the proportion fell considerably in others (such as Montserrat and Anguilla in primary education and Montserrat and Belize in secondary).

**Graphic 7.2.3. Certified teachers in primary education (%)**



**Graphic 7.2.4. Certified teachers in secondary education (%).**



Generally speaking, efforts appear to have been more focused on increasing the number of teachers available than on raising the standards of teacher training. The result is that several countries have between a fifth and half of teachers with no teaching certification. This is even more worrying if we consider that certification requirements for teacher training tend to be low in the region: training in some countries lasts for one or two years, while in others training takes place in secondary institutions, teacher-training colleges or higher education institutions with low standards. Training programmes are insufficiently regulated and tend to be low quality (OREALC/UNESCO, 2012).

In the region's countries, the importance of good teachers is widely recognized, and many public policies aim to improve the social status of teachers. This requires attracting and retaining good teaching professionals, providing quality initial and ongoing training and improving working conditions (Ávalos, 1996, Vaillant, 2009). One example of such policies is in Brazil, which in 1998 set up the Fund for Maintenance and Development of Fundamental Education and Valorization of the Teaching Profession-FUNDEF to improve wages and allocate funding to tea-

cher training. FUNDEF has had a very positive impact, by significantly improving wages, especially when they were very low, and reducing the number of unqualified teachers at the national level (Vaillant, 2009).

Unfortunately, there are also major contradictions in the implementation of teaching policies, even in countries with a high level of teacher professionalization. In Chile for instance, although several policies to improve labour conditions and initial and ongoing teacher training have been implemented since the 1990s (Núñez, 2003; Ávalos, 2002), teaching degrees have also experienced the largest increase in enrolment (but mainly for programmes with no quality certification, low or non-existent entry requirements and often based on alternative timetables, short courses or distance learning). All of the above compromises the quality of teacher training. Furthermore, a recently approved law removed the requirement of a professional qualification for teaching in secondary schools (Bellei and Valenzuela, 2010).

The limitations of initial training could be resolved using quality ongoing training systems. However, a recent report found that the regional situation does not bode well in this regard. According to the report's authors, ongoing training is fairly irrelevant and uncoordinated, does not take account of the variety of teachers' situations, the reality of schools or the practical challenges of teaching. All of this results in low-impact actions in areas relevant to the teaching profession (OREALC/UNESCO, 2012).

The situation described – albeit a non-exhaustive description as it does not include teachers' working conditions – shows that teaching policies linked to education quality face a highly challenging environment in most of the region's countries.

### **Guidelines for teaching policy in Latin America**

A recent regional report (OREALC/UNESCO, 2012), organized by UNESCO and based on wide expert consultations, literature reviews, data analysis and national case studies, identified an important series of teaching policy guidelines for Latin American and Caribbean countries. The report grouped the guidelines into four dimensions: initial training, ongoing training, professional career and policy institutions. The proposals are reproduced in this section.

In terms of initial training, the proposal is to promote the entry of better candidates; raise the level of entry requirements to study teaching; strengthen the quality of teacher-training programmes (particularly the curriculum), training strategies, learning evaluation and quality of instructors); offer training relevant to teaching disadvantaged social groups; and provide appropriate quality monitoring systems for training programmes and their graduates.

As far as professional development and ongoing training are concerned, the suggestion is to provide teachers with the right to suitable and relevant ongoing training based on integral training and learning of students; ensure that ongoing training impacts teaching practices and student learning; provide professional development pathways that reflect teachers' career stages; implement mechanisms to regulate the provision of ongoing training to ensure quality and relevance; promote collaborative learning at school; and regulate the suitability of postgraduate provision.

The report also proposes modernizing teaching careers in countries, in order to strengthen the profession and help to attract good candidates. The career must have distinctive development stages; careers should be structured around improving professional improvement; a clear and coordinated pay and incentives policy should be designed and implemented to stimulate teaching work; valid and consensual performance evaluation systems must be developed for teachers; and there should be transparent mechanisms for obtaining teaching positions and the allocation of duties. In addition, as part of such efforts, the best teachers should work in the most marginalized areas such as rural areas, indigenous communities and poor areas. This requires teachers having the necessary incentives and resources, as well as the autonomy to practice in the classroom while being constantly monitored (Vegas, 2009).

Lastly, the report states that the public institutions and processes related to teaching policies should be strengthened to prioritize teaching policy from a systemic point of view within educational policy; reconcile continuity and change criteria to increase the effectiveness of teaching policy; and promote the participation of stakeholders in generating policies to increase support, legitimacy and feasibility.

### **7.3. SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO EDUCATION QUALITY**

School environment is a school process factor that has a significant effect on learning. Education quality requires an inclusive and democratic environment, where children can maximize their potential (UNESCO, 2005). This is in keeping with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), in which the right to education is part of the general principles of non-discrimination, best interests of the child; right to life, survival and development; and respect and consideration for the vision of children (Articles 2, 6 and 12, respectively). Indeed, in a comprehensive framework for the right to education, the right to respect in the learning environment is now considered one of the three main pillars, as it includes the respect for the child's identity, promotion of children's increasing participation in their subjects of interest, and respect for their physical and psychological integrity (UNICEF and UNESCO, 2008).

Research into school effectiveness has backed up this vision of the importance of a safe and positive school environment. Aspects of a good school environment conducive to learning include the direction of managers' and teachers' work to help children learn, teachers' job satisfaction and their strong capacity to prevent and resolve problems of school relations and discipline (Martinic and Pardo, 2003; Bellei et al., 2004; Murillo et al. 2007; Cornejo and Redondo, 2007). In addition, there is evidence that school violence negatively affects academic performance: schools with more frequent violence have reduced social capital and fewer skills for resolving conflicts peacefully (Treviño et al., 2012; Cook et al., 2010).

#### **School environment and learning in Latin America and the Caribbean**

There is considerable empirical evidence on the relevance of school environment to pupil achievement in Latin American and Caribbean countries. In the above-mentioned SERCE-2006 study, school environment was one of the most consistently significant variables behind primary pupils' academic performance in the region's countries. Factors associated with the school environment include teachers' management of classroom behaviour and good use of instruction time, which was the most influential aspect on learning (Treviño et al., 2012). These findings were in accordance with the aforementioned literature on effective schools.

To analyse the SERCE-2006 results, school environment was defined as the extent to which students feel welcomed and respected in school, which included aspects such as relations among pupils, with teachers, classroom environment and violent situations in school. For the region overall, the school environment indicator measured at school level and pupil perception of the school environment were positively and significantly associated with third and sixth grade pupil performance in the three subjects evaluated (literacy, mathematics and natural sciences) (Treviño et al., 2010).

Disaggregated country-level analysis showed that the positive association between school environment and pupil achievement was replicated in most cases, in an intense and systematic way that was only exceeded by the association with pupils' socioeconomic status (Nicaragua is the only country where school environment did not appear related to learning in any of the measurements). In addition, the effect of school environment on learning seemed to be slightly stronger for third-grade than for sixth-grade pupils, and stronger in mathematics than in literacy (Treviño et al., 2010). What is clear that there were no grades or subjects in Latin American countries where a good school environment was found to be associated with lower academic achievement among pupils.

Lastly, the PISA-2009 study also explored the links between the school environment and pupils' literacy achievements. In this case, however, school environment was more broadly defined as "learning environment", which also included quality of relations in school, discipline, leadership of the head teacher, motivation of pupils by teachers and academic pressure on the school from families. As well as confirming the relevance of this dimension for pupil achievement, the PISA study also found that the quality of the learning environment was strongly linked to the school's socioeconomic conditions, such that the two factors influenced each other: students attending schools with a better socioeconomic status tend to enjoy better learning environments, while both factors combine to contribute to improved literacy performance. Furthermore, the study found that the combined effect was particularly strong in countries such as Chile, Trinidad and Tobago, Argentina and Uruguay (OECD 2010, v.IV). The final finding of this study was that in most participating Latin American countries (Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Panama, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago and Peru), the specific dimension of the school's disciplinary environment had a significant and positive effect on pupils' literacy achievements.

## Some challenges in terms of school environment

The increasing importance of the school environment has led to the development of public policies in the region that include this dimension as a key way of improving learning (especially among disadvantaged groups).

One trend since the early 2000s has been to encourage the participation of various stakeholders: head teachers, teachers, families and pupils themselves. One study carried out in Latin America highlighted the growing role of school councils on the back of education reform in countries such as the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and Nicaragua (López, 2005). Another example is the EDUCO programme in El Salvador that advocates highly autonomous schools run by the community, which has reduced drop-out rates and absenteeism (UNESCO, 2005).

Overall, the notion of school climate or relations is fairly challenging for education policies, as it refers to processes and interpersonal relations among different layers that are difficult to change through policies or regulate using traditional rules of co-existence.

Even in terms of participation, which seems more traditionally accessible, the involvement of various actors in school councils has often been found to be linked to administrative management or the improvement of school infrastructure, while there is less involvement on issues such as school relations. What is more, this involvement tends to be geared towards the establishment of regulations that, rather than promoting a good atmosphere or a shared identity within the school, focus on penalizing those who break the rules (Neubauer and Trigo de Silveira, 2009). The same has happened with more recent policies aimed at improving the school environment: they tend to focus on reducing violence or bullying using approaches based on punishment and control, without any positive proposals for promoting healthy co-existence.

## 7.4.CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND EDUCATION QUALITY

Since modern education systems were established, their promoters have defended the idea that mass education contributes to the dissemination and consolidation of democratic society by educating sovereign citizens. The purposes of forming a national identity and laying the foundations for democratic co-existence were as fundamental as

literacy and learning basic mathematics. Given the importance of these aims, citizenship education should be seen as key to what is currently termed “education quality”.

The aim of citizenship education was made explicit in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and was strengthened in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and in other international agreements. The right to education involves training in the respect for human rights, knowledge and respect for one’s own cultural identity and other cultures. Furthermore, children should be prepared to be responsible citizens who contribute to a context of peace, tolerance and inclusion (Articles 28 and 29, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989).

Citizenship education is now recognized, along with academic learning achievements, as one of the aims of the education system, which includes the knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable students to engage in civically minded behaviour, exercise their rights and participate in society (Cox, Jaramillo and Reimers, 2005; ECLAC, 2010; UNESCO, 2011). In addition, the transformation of twenty-first century society (mainly globalization and advances in information and communication technologies) has resulted in growing social diversity. This requires a rethink of the meaning of citizenship and the role of citizens. As a result of the above, citizenship education has taken on a new relevance (Schulz, 2010). These changes also highlight the need to educate people able to understand this new society, adapt to the rapid changes and become active and productive members of society (ECLAC, 2010; Schulz, 2010).

Citizenship education covers the development of various skills and attitudes. Schulz et al. (2010) point out that citizenship education implies knowledge as well as real opportunities to participate and get involved in civic and civil society. The focus is on the various ways people interact and define their communities and societies. This concerns formal political participation (the civic dimension), as well as involvement and participation in local community activities (the civil dimension).

Citizenship education is also linked to social inequality. One of the most important factors affecting the outcome of citizenship education is the socioeconomic background of students. Research shows that, out of the variables that impact on citizenship education, social inequality is an important context factor (especially in terms of political participation) (Solt, 2008). In this sense, there is an association between higher socioeconomic status and level of education, and higher political participation. This favours the representation of the needs and interests of the



highest income groups (Solt, 2010, Lijphart, 1997; Marien, Hooghe and Quintelier, 2010).

### **Regional situation in terms of citizenship education**

The region has a paradoxical situation in terms of citizenship education and the genuine exercise of civic rights, with a sharp contrast between political progress and persistently dramatic social inequality. Over the past 20 years, most Latin American and Caribbean countries have recovered and maintained democratic governments whereby leaders are elected by peaceful and regular elections (which is a key aspect of citizenship). In contrast, the region has significant inequality in terms of access to social justice, as well as high levels of poverty, strong economic growth with major differences in income distribution, and dissatisfaction with the current state of democracy (UNDP, 2004). The region's characteristic social inequality has a negative impact on citizens' confidence in the political class and the ability of public institutions to respond to social demands. Latin American young people in particular are thought to be somewhat apathetic and uncommitted to democratic processes (Cox et al. 2005), with 55% arguing that an authoritarian regime would be acceptable if it were capable of resolving society's economic problems (UNDP, 2004).

The International Civics and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS-2009) (Schulz, 2009), conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), was an in-depth exploration of how young people from various countries were being prepared to take on their role as citizens. The study explored the civic knowledge acquired by pupils, their perceptions of public institutions, forms of government, respect for the rule of law and their attitude towards forms of peaceful co-existence. In Latin America, only Mexico, Guatemala, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Paraguay and Chile took part in ICCS-2009.

One of the study's main conclusions was the contrast between the set curriculum and the actual learning of pupils. For instance, although the curricula in all six of the region's participating countries feature a concern to build and strengthen more democratic, inclusive and peaceful societies (issues related to citizenship education), the civic knowledge of Latin American students was relatively limited. According to ICCS-2009, the regional average was half a standard deviation below the average for all participating countries (Schulz, 2009). In particular,

in five of the six participating Latin American countries, half of young people had the lowest level of civil knowledge, which implies they are not familiar with the concepts of participatory democracy as a political system and do not have knowledge of civil concepts, systems or institutions (Schulz, 2009).

Socio-economic status is positively associated with civic knowledge, and is a relevant factor in explaining differences in civic knowledge among students and countries. The ICCS-2009 study found a correlation between family and school background and the civic knowledge of pupils, as well as between level of economic development and level of civic knowledge of countries (Schulz, 2009). However, factors internal to school systems could also explain such differences. In Latin America, low levels of civic knowledge could also be attributable to the low priority given to these topics in school and to problems relating to the teaching of citizenship education (Cox et al. 2005).

Another relevant finding is that, while there is a rejection of authoritarian governments, over half of Latin American young people justify dictatorships under certain circumstances, with men being more inclined towards authoritarian governments than women. The same applies to willingness to use corrupt practices and disobey the law in certain circumstances. In this context, it is vital to point out that students with greater civic knowledge tend to reject dictatorships or justifications to disobey laws (Schulz, 2009).

In terms of perceptions, Latin American young people tend to mistrust political parties, courts and the police, although there are more marked differences among countries.

Lastly, in stark contrast with previous findings, the ICCS-2009 study found that Latin American young people have positive attitudes towards their country and a strong sense of regional identity. They have empathy with people in difficulty or those from minority groups, and are concerned by the need to build fairer, more inclusive and democratic societies (Schulz, 2009). These leanings of young people contain the potential for a positive civic attitude based on the common good and social justice. This could be better harnessed by the region's schools. Recent student movements in several of the region's countries certainly show the willingness of young people to take part civically and promote changes to improve their conditions and those of the education system in general.

## Main regional challenges in citizenship education

Latin America has experienced significant development in the past 20 years, with steady economic growth and the most educated younger generation in the history of the region. However, social inequality remains a major obstacle for Latin American society. This social inequality stands in the way of citizenship education. The social discontent associated with this inequality, combined with the predisposition of Latin American youth to social issues, could be the opportunity to boost a change towards participation and political involvement among young people. This would highlight the needs of the most marginalized groups and contribute to the common good. As shown by the ICCS-2009 study, improving students' civic knowledge is an important step in strengthening democracy and civil society in Latin America.

For this to happen, greater importance must be attached to citizenship education, which tends to slip down the list of priorities of education policies with a reductionist approach to learning. Furthermore, a more comprehensive approach should change the paradigm from civic education based mainly on acquiring knowledge on government and institutional functioning, towards citizenship education that involves developing skills and attitudes for citizen and political participation. This should complement and give meaning to academic learning, so that students not only learn content but also how to improve their social relations and their involvement in their own societies (Cox et al., 2005).

There are several options when it comes to the curricular approach to citizenship education. A recent study analysing the curriculum content of citizenship education in the six participating countries of the ICCS-2009 (Bascopé, 2012) showed some variability in curricula that emphasized the civil dimension. In Colombia, for instance, the curriculum emphasized content relating to peaceful co-existence, civic values and social inclusion. In countries such as Mexico, Paraguay and Chile, the focus was on the civic dimension (such as forms of representation, democratic participation, voting and accountability).

The curricular approaches must then be translated into programmes that are effective at school level. Some of the region's countries have placed special emphasis on civic and citizenship education, by focusing mainly on skills such as tolerance for diversity, respect for life and human rights, and responsibility for one's own actions and the community (Cox et al., 2005). One example is the national Citizen Skills programme

in Colombia, which aims to tackle the country's violence problem. This programme reflects a new vision of civic education that requires new skills, as a way of educating on being, and educating for know-how.

Citizenship education also needs to broaden its focus in terms of contents, which are traditionally limited to political institutions, to include social issues such as equality, the environment and human rights. It is also recommendable to incorporate this content throughout all levels of education, in the curriculum for various subjects (Cox et al., 2005). Furthermore, the incorporation of approaches such as education for sustainable development (which is at an early stage in the region) has the potential to expand this concept towards one of global citizenship – with the emphasis on the sense of global and intergenerational responsibility and solidarity (Salgado and Tréllez, 2009).

Lastly, organization and the school and teaching environments must also be addressed, to ensure consistency between what is taught and practised/experienced there. When such consistency does exist and pupil-teacher relations are acceptable, there is a more direct understanding of democracy. This links the challenges of citizenship education with the aforementioned ones relating to school environment. However, Cox et al. (2005) use surveys carried out in several countries to show that the region's teachers display high levels of rejection of diversity – which would make it difficult to teach citizenship and democracy.

Promoting civic education in this arena should also include greater dissemination and consolidation of forms of student organization and participation, especially in secondary schools. In several of the region's countries, student organizations have historically played an important role in promoting education and social change. Furthermore, recent student movements in several countries show the enormous civic potential of such processes. The school system should be capable of not only "processing the demands" of students as a pressure group, but also of making use of the opportunity to strengthen citizenship education in its broadest sense.

## **7.5. EDUCATION AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES**

One of the challenges and trends particular to the twenty-first century is the inclusion of new information and communication technologies

(ICTs). Digital skills training in the education sphere is necessary for inclusion in the knowledge society. The potential of ICTs lies not only in digital literacy but also their use in promoting modern skills and improving students' educational performance more generally (ECLAC, 2010). In fact, Latin America has a wide digital divide in terms of access and type of use of ICTs by students.

Changes arising from the information society include the recent link between education and information and communication technologies. This link opens up a whole range of opportunities. However, the expansion of social networking has shown that ICTs are known to be becoming generic social tools, as was the case with the spoken word, books and telephones. The inclusion or exclusion of a new digital culture could thus have various effects, as it would be tantamount to including or excluding the newest forms of social, political, cultural and economic life.

The educational literature acknowledges that the positive link between education and ICTs (Sunkel et al, 2011) has: economic effects, such as the need to adapt teaching to changes at work where communication and cognitive skills are more important; social effects, such as participation in the social community of shared values and spaces (hence the notion of digital divide); and educational effects, including the capacity of new technologies and practices that can improve learning processes. Although academic literature and public policy tend to prioritize the latter aspect, it cannot be separated from the two previous ones: ICTs are not only a powerful learning resource, they are increasingly important life tools.

There are various ways of introducing ICTs into the education process. This can be done generally, using tools whose value transcends education (Internet, text processors, spreadsheets and so on), or more specifically, using tools designed for educational use (specialized software and specific teaching practices for their use). The latter refers to technologies for education. The trend is for both kinds of technology to be increasingly part of the education process.

From this perspective, the international evidence is positive but limited. In other words, it suggests a relationship between ICTs and improved learning, but the data are partial and cannot be extrapolated (even when research uses sophisticated methodological design) (Cox and Marshall, 2007). The main difficulty facing such research is isolating the effect of ICTs from the context in which they operate. This makes

the results obtained very context-sensitive. Even so, the link between ICTs and learning can be said to be positive (and above all it has great potential).

## **ICTs and education in Latin America and the Caribbean: overview and challenges**

As has tended to happen with modernization processes in Latin America and the Caribbean, the incorporation of ICTs into education has been uneven, with the region lagging behind in general. Having said that, in the past decade the region's countries have made considerable efforts with the support of international cooperation. Incorporating ICTs into education – as part of their application to other areas as an instrument of development – is vital for the Millennium Development Goals. The World Summit on the Information Society has set out 10 objectives for countries to meet by 2015, and two of them refer to education and technologies from the information society. Lastly, although ICTs were not explicitly mentioned in the Dakar agenda, they can also help to achieve the education for all goals (UNESCO – UIS, 2012).

An overview of the incorporation of ICTs in education throughout the region must include access, use and results associated with such technologies. In terms of access to ICTs, the general overview is negative. In 2000, only 15% of households had computers with educational software and the Internet, climbing to 19.1% in 2006 (Sunkel et al, 2011). The total absence of ICTs in the household dropped from 66% to 52.5% in the same period (although a complete lack is still the most common situation). In any event, this exclusion is very uneven. While a series of countries (particularly Southern Cone countries such as Chile and Uruguay) have indicators very close to the OECD average, others lag way behind the Latin American average. Furthermore, there is considerable heterogeneity within countries: household access to technology is largely determined by socioeconomic status. A more dynamic incorporation into the information society is therefore unavailable for some social groups in certain countries.

Public education policies related to ICTs have gone some way towards attenuating such inequalities. In 2009, the region's 15-year olds had similar computer access to the OECD average (Espejo, Trucco et al, 2011). Yet again, the overview is varied: while over 90% of schools in Cuba and Chile have information and communication technologies for 15-year olds, Peru only has ICTs in 19% of schools (Espejo, Trucco, et

al, 2011). In the educational sphere, socioeconomic gaps are related to school ownership: private secondary schools (attracting higher-income groups) have higher indicators of ICT access than their public counterparts.

In order for such limited access to become an effective instrument for educational improvement, the ICTs that are available must be used appropriately. First, teacher collaboration is vital in this regard. Unfortunately, the region lags behind in this area. According to the SERCE-2006 study, only teachers in Cuba, Chile and Uruguay habitually use ICTs in their daily lives and are therefore in the best position to use them intensively in the classroom.

As well as access, the use of ICTs should also be approached as a specific problem. The main use of ICTs by the region's pupils is recreational: games, music and electronic communication (and especially the latter) are the main ICT uses by the region's students (Sunkel et al, 2011). Having said that, the last few years have seen increasing use of ICTs for schoolwork, which is linked to their increased availability in schools (Espejo et al, 2011). As suggested by the general literature on information and communication technologies, they tend to become part of users' social lives: rather than being simply recreational, ICTs are the medium for people's everyday communication.

Prioritizing recreational/social use over the educational potential of ICTs can also be a factor of social inequality. While educational and social use can be easily linked among middle and upper classes in countries with high levels of access (and in the minorities surrounding the elite in countries with more limited access), other social groups do not experience an automatic educational improvement from the introduction of technology, as pupils use ICTs in their social lives without altering (except to reduce) their grades. Of course, this is not the only evaluation criterion: a study in Romania shows that, although grades did not increase, low-income young people accessing a public policy programme providing a computer at home with an Internet connection did improve their cognitive skills and self-confidence in the use of ICTs (Malamud, O., Pop-Eleches, C., 2010).

More generally, the introduction of a technical tool does not necessarily modernize social relations in precarious or poor settings. The huge challenge to education policies is that the aim is not only to ensure access, but also to change practices. It is therefore insufficient to observe the

incorporation of ICTs into education based on access alone (such as number of computers per pupil), but rather to map out their uses and related practices.

Lastly, as mentioned previously, there are insufficient measurements of the outcome of ICT application in education. Cox and Marshall (2007) indicate that, while the link is positive, the research finds it difficult to isolate the effect of ICTs in the analyses based on standardized test results, and to extrapolate the results from small studies with control groups. The evidence is also limited in the region, although there are signs that ICTs have a greater impact on science teaching than on other subjects (Claro, 2010).

The region definitely still faces the challenge of usefully incorporating ICTs into education. This implies not only raising access indicators, but also improving teaching training and devising curricula that intensively use new technologies. The difficulty in isolating the effects of ICTs on learning achievements speaks to a more general feature that ICT introduction in schools shares with the school improvement policies that preceded them: namely that existing school conditions and the willingness and capacities of actors are what crucially determines the impact of new resources. This lesson is critical and must be taken seriously by those who have hopes of the “automatic effects” of introducing ICTs into education. In other words, the aims of learning support and expanded citizenship associated with ICTs in education will not be automatically achieved through access to computers, the Internet or specialist software.



## 8. HIGHER EDUCATION<sup>12</sup>

*Goal 3. “Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.”*

### Worldwide changes in higher education

Current modernization processes are largely determined by the emergence of the knowledge society (also known as the information society or post-industrial society). Rather than a complete social transformation, this is more of a trend. For developing countries, it is something to aspire to (Castells, 2000). One fundamental aspect of this transformation is the importance of knowledge in all social relationships. The employment structure requires an increasing number of qualifications, while new information and communication technologies redefine our lives (and even our most personal relationships) by demanding an ever greater use of applied knowledge, complex communication skills, basic mathematical capabilities, and expert and systemic thinking (Levy and Murnane, 2004).

Faced with such changes, modern society has had to redefine its institutions for the output and dissemination of more sophisticated knowledge: universities. Traditionally, universities dominated the role of training qualified human resources, producing advanced knowledge, science, humanities, arts and the social reproduction of the elite and of professionals (associated with the middle classes). The new conditions changed these traditional functions. Society demanded that universities become more socially open in response to the growing demand for social mobility through education. Universities also no longer had exclusivity when it came to scientific output, with the appearance of other social actors (mainly large enterprises and independent centres). Lastly, there is an ever-increasing number of connections between institutions in systems that are shared, valued and run according to highly

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<sup>12</sup> This section mainly analyses university education (ISCED 5A), although technical higher education is also included (ISCED 5B). The latter is described in more detail in the section on lifelong learning. This section therefore refers to formal education leading to vocational and/or technical diplomas lasting at least two years. This does not include work-oriented non-formal education (work training), which will be analysed in another part of the report.

rational and standardized quality indicators (Bell, 2001; Clark, 1991). The change processes have resulted in a dramatic rise in enrolment in post-secondary education, along with a relative increase in technical and vocational education places (ISCED 5B). Programme provision has also become more diversified, with the increasing presence of evening classes and distance-learning. There are also more places for postgraduate studies, such as masters and doctorates. This educational expansion has not been all good news in terms of equity: although it has opened up the professions to young people from middle and lower class families, it has also reinforced a pattern of inequality as it is those from the richest groups who have benefited the most from such growth (Shavit, Arum and Gamoran, 2007).

New demands also brought about profound changes within universities. Their old medieval codes were replaced by standardized bureaucratic procedures; and their subject divisions seemed increasingly obsolete in the face of new interdisciplinary means of producing knowledge (often linked to production and technological innovation processes). Funding also became more diversified, and was based on productivity and quality criteria, thereby reducing the contribution that States and other entities gave to universities to use as they saw fit. This has forced many universities to generate new revenues by charging students, forming partnerships with business or selling services.

Current higher education systems provide (horizontally and vertically) differentiated and varied training of professionals. Where new institutions (that are often lucrative) appear, they and universities, along with the private sector and other actors, contribute to scientific output and high culture, are funded from different sources, and are organized on the basis of standardized quality indicators that tend to objectively measure the once ambiguous reputational value of institutions.

### **Higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean in the framework of education for all**

The third goal of the Dakar Framework for Action makes a generic reference to meeting the learning needs of adults and young people. Although the main focus of education for all monitoring in this sense has been to expand secondary education, we believe that a strict in-

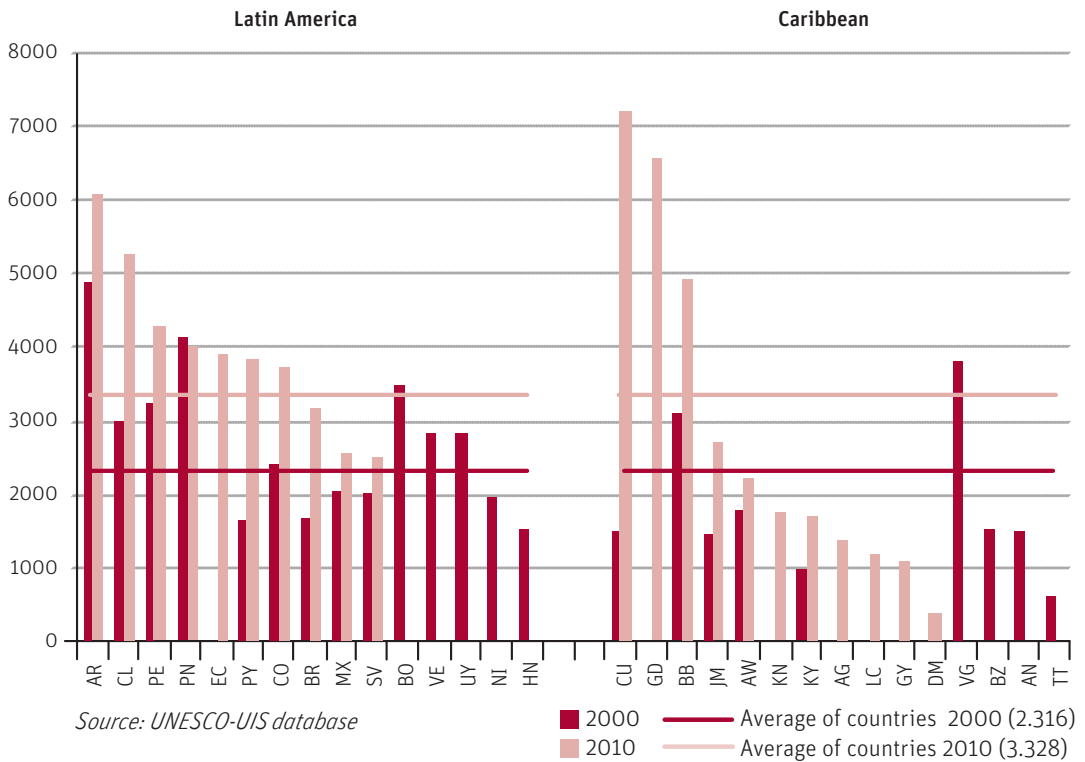
terpretation of this goal requires the inclusion of expanding access to higher education<sup>13</sup>.

There has been rapid growth in higher education enrolment in the region, particularly in the past decade (2000-2010). It is not easy to estimate the coverage of this level of education, as the “eligible age group” is not formally defined, and people enter and leave higher education throughout their lifetime (particularly during youth and early adulthood). One measurement used is the number of higher education students in relation to the total population. Using the number of higher education students for every 100,000 population, figures for the 30 Latin American and Caribbean countries with information available rose from 2,316 in 2000 to 3,328 in 2010, which represents an increase of just over 40% in 10 years. It should be pointed out that this positive trend was observed in all countries with comparable data, although in some countries the rise was more rapid. This was the case in Cuba, where the proportion of pupils in higher education increased five-fold during the decade.

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<sup>13</sup> We only consider post-secondary study programmes lasting at least two years, usually leading to the award of higher vocational or technical diplomas. This analysis does not suggest that these levels should be universalized, but that they should be significantly expanded and lose their traditionally elitist character.

**Graphic 8.1. Number of students in higher education (ISCED 5A and 5B) for every 100,000 inhabitants (30 countries)**



Despite this progress, the development of higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean still lags chronically behind. According to ECLAC estimates based on household surveys, higher education enrolment in 2010 was around one third of the 18-24 year old cohort (and the figure is twice as high in developed countries). In any event, there is no reason to see a direct link between a country's level of development and the expansion of higher education. Even within Latin America, the general situation of backwardness is extremely uneven. Although there is a relationship between wealth and the scale of higher education systems, this link is neither linear nor automatic.

Furthermore, according to our analysis (based on multiple regressions including all world countries with information available – see Annex 1 for details), once other context and educational indicators are controlled for, the number of students in higher education for every 100,000 inhabitants is not associated with countries' per capita GDP. The per-

centage of the population of eligible age for higher education does not appear relevant either, probably because the age range in which people attend higher education is much broader (although countries with a higher proportion of rural population tend to have less coverage in higher education – which is due to the mainly urban nature of higher education services). In contrast, education policy indicators did turn out to be determining factors in higher education coverage. For instance, countries with greater education spending as a percentage of GDP and greater education spending as a percentage of government expenditure tend to have more students in higher education for every 100,000 population. In addition, countries with a higher net enrolment rate in secondary education have on average greater higher education coverage – which is in keeping with the above-mentioned systemic vision of education trajectories.

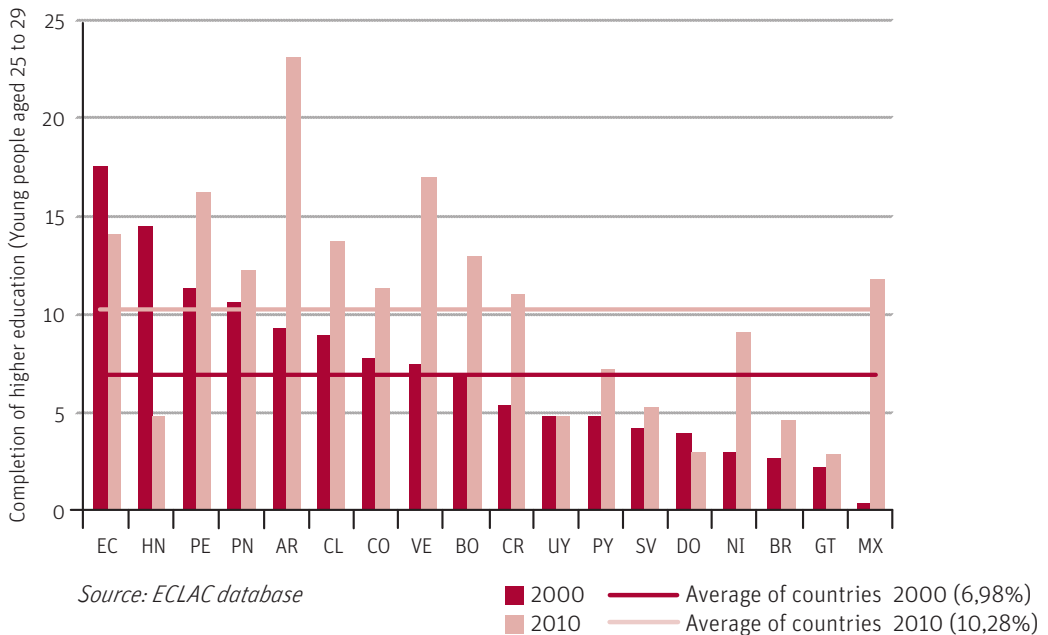
It should be mentioned that, once all such factors have been taken into account, the level of higher education expansion in Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole is no different from other world countries. However, the aforementioned inequalities among countries are extremely striking, as countries with similar conditions have very different levels of higher education coverage – which points to countries assigning a different priority to this level of education.

We also carried out complementary analyses to compare Latin American and Caribbean progress between 2000 and 2010 with that of the rest of the world, in terms of expansion of higher education (see Annex 2 for further details). Our findings consistently indicate that, on average, between 2000 and 2010 there are no differences between Latin American and Caribbean countries and the rest of the world in terms of increased number of higher education students per 100,000 population (once relevant national characteristics have been controlled for).

In addition, based on the pattern followed by countries in recent years, (1998-2010), we carried out a projection to predict their probable situation by 2015 (see Annex 3 for details). Unfortunately, the time series for the number of students per 100,000 population at the regional level are not available. However, the gross enrolment rates are available, and provide an overview of the trend (and were therefore used instead). According to official data, between 1998 and 2010, the region progressed from 20% to 41%. According to our estimates, by 2015 the region's average gross higher education enrolment rate is likely to be 51%.

Given that there are high drop-out rates in higher education, it is vital to also observe the completion of vocational studies among the population (which is a more stringent indicator). Figures show that Latin America still has much to do in this regard, as only one in 10 young people aged 25 to 29 had completed five years of higher education in 2010 (which was slightly higher than the 7% observed in 2000). For this stage of education, yet again there are dramatic differences among the region's countries in terms of present levels (ranging from Argentina's 23% of young people completing higher education to the Dominican Republic's 3%), as well as over the past decade (with Mexico having tens of times more young people completing higher education, and Honduras where it decreased to a third during the period 2000-2010).

**Graphic 8.2. Completion of higher education (population aged 25-29) (18 countries)**



Although the region's countries certainly present an extremely heterogeneous situation that is some way off that of developed countries, access to higher education over the past decade grew relatively quickly, as it is beginning to lose its traditionally socially restrictive nature in several countries. Having said that, this considerable expansion of higher education has been unequally distributed throughout the population:

while 0.7% of 25-29 year olds in Latin America's lowest income quintile completed higher education, the figure was 18.3% among those from the richest quintile. The fastest absolute growth over the past decade was experienced by the highest quintiles (although the lowest quintiles have grown more quickly in relative terms). The expansion has therefore not resolved the enormous social inequality when it comes to higher education access. Although the region now has a significant number of students who are the first generation of their families to enter higher education, there are still fewer young people from lower income families who reach this level (ECLAC, 2010).

The expansion dynamic of higher education involves extremely deep forces: the promise of social mobility, transformation of the production structure to include a larger services sector, and institutions' need for self-financing all demand a greater openness than in the past from higher education institutions. One contributing factor is that the expansion is linked to the appearance of private actors as providers (with a different focus) (CINDA, 2007). This diversifies the higher education landscape horizontally and vertically, as most new institutions limit themselves to teaching, and concentrate on technical/vocational training (maximum 4 years not leading to a degree, ISCED 5B), thereby targeting lower income groups.

This implies vast changes in the historical model followed by the region's countries. For most of the twentieth century, higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean was developed by the State. During the same century, Latin American public universities became macro-universities: large national institutions organized under the Humboldtian ideal that were responsible for professional teaching and scientific research, but also for expanding education, as part of their obligation to give back to society in general (as society – through the State – was solely responsible for their funding). Most enrolments were concentrated in these institutions, as well as in Catholic universities and a few private philanthropic or business initiatives (especially in the arena of vocational training). They were a factor of selective social mobility, especially for the middle classes. However, they were largely exclusive to the elites (apart from exceptions in Argentina and Mexico). The crisis in the Latin American development model and the emergence of a worldwide neoliberal agenda have cast doubt over this model of public service based on State contributions.

Despite these transformations, public macro-universities still dominate the system (Mexico's UNAM, Argentina's UBA, Brazil's USP and the University of Chile, to name but a few). As well as increasing their enrolment (thereby maintaining a considerable proportion of total students), they remain the best quality institutions with the most scientific research and a dominance of postgraduate education. They can be said to be the clearest institutional expression of the Latin American capacity for intellectual reflection, scientific output and development of culture. Owing to this important ongoing role, and the reduced fiscal commitment to their funding (which varies according to the country), some experts talk of the public university crisis as a fundamental feature of the age (in the 1990s and 2000s).

In the sphere of higher education policies, there have been attempts (with varying degrees of success) to build accreditation and quality assurance systems to facilitate coordinated management of an increasingly diverse and differentiated set of institutions. The normative and supervisory functions of the systems have been separated from national universities, which has led to the creation of new institutions responsible for evaluating providers, ensuring quality and promoting within them a culture of information, compliance, transparency and responsibility. These processes have yielded uneven results, insofar as systemic reforms have not yet been accompanied by institutional reform (Mollis, 2011). As a result, there are various mechanisms for funding and ownership, as well as a huge range of sizes and purposes. Although the public-private partnership is important, it is not the only axis and does not represent an "either or" situation: there is a public-private continuum with various levels of social control and commercialization (Brunner, 2008). It is therefore difficult to define current higher education systems.

Lastly, the region still has a very limited capacity for adapting to the new requirements of globalization and the information society in terms of training advanced human capital and scientific output. The private sector and the creation of institutions other than universities has not resulted in dynamic scientific output that provides an alternative to public macro-universities. New higher education providers tend to concentrate on teaching, and have not been substantially drawn to basic research or postgraduate programmes. Public universities have therefore had to tackle these challenges, even with their aforementioned weaknesses (Mollis, 2010).



## Challenges and opportunities for higher education in Latin America

The development of the knowledge society has not been equal in all countries. The transition tends to generate new gaps and risks of exclusion, just as new opportunities for collective and individual well-being are also appearing. The region's challenge is to take advantage of such opportunities, as this is largely determined by the equality and quality of its education systems, and the capacity of its economies to create value and innovate through an appropriately trained workforce. Latin America's higher education systems have a vital contribution to make in terms of accessing the information society. To advance towards the knowledge society, Latin American and Caribbean countries must further massify higher education systems, strengthen their own scientific and technological capacities and make better connections with society.

The first challenge facing the region's higher education systems is to ensure equitable expansion by becoming drivers of social mobility and outreach. This implies introducing reform to institutions' admission processes. This generates an old dilemma: should higher education be a right, as is the case for primary and secondary education? To date, international legal instruments have only stated the need to guarantee access to post-secondary education based on merit, which is also a notion that has been questioned and needs updating<sup>14</sup>. Along these lines, countries should introduce equitable access criteria to at least contextualize merit and take account of the social background of young people.

The second challenge is responding to the new demands that globalization and the information society place on developing countries: to generate their own capacity for scientific and technological output. This involves improving basic scientific output, promoting applied research

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<sup>14</sup> Various aspects of merit are under debate. The affirmative action movement is very strong in the region, with its suggestion to basically approach merit on the basis of measuring academic results relative to the social context of students. Thus merit would not have to do with "talent" (which often reflects inherited school capital), but rather the students' own capacity to improving their learning and stand out in their environment. For more details and experiences in this arena, see Berdahl (2011), lecture by the former Chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley. For the policy debate on merit and equal opportunities in education, see Dubet (2011) *Repensar la justicia social*.

and increasing the registration of patents. None of this can be achieved without improving and expanding basic science education, promoting the robust development of research institutions and having a critical mass of scientists and doctorate-level young people in programmes of international standing. The scale of the challenge is such that it cannot be tackled in isolation, hence the need to intensify international cooperation in the field of higher education. It is vital to be clear about how challenging this is for institutions. The region's countries will have to strengthen and coordinate their public research universities, which have traditionally been and will remain their main sources of knowledge output for some time to come. Private research universities committed to the generation of public goods should also be supported, and higher education institutions should also be linked with various production sectors.

The final challenge facing higher education systems is to connect better with and be more open to their societies. The traditional commitment to outreach must be renewed. For example, there should be a close relationship between public universities and the school system: the former can do much for the latter, as universities can be obliged to improve teacher training, collaborate in curricular design, support schools in difficult teaching areas and produce relevant research for tackling the problems of the school system. In addition, higher education systems need to establish greater internal coordination and links with other social spheres by being more streamlined and using better accountability mechanisms for society. This does not imply removing their autonomy, but rather creating public policy instruments that enable society's institutions to monitor and guide them towards public aims. The accreditation and evaluation systems that have been designed in recent decades can make a significant contribution in this regard. Another recommendation is the vertical integration of public institutions, as well as increasing their level of specialization and linking them more with the needs and opportunities of their communities.

All of this involves an increased public funding effort, which should certainly go hand in hand with a stricter control of the use of resources. In terms of student financing, some countries in recent decades have been implementing policies of charging families directly, student loans and State support such as grants or demand subsidies as alternatives to the traditional direct funding of institutions. In any event, commitment to

equity and the balanced development of the university system requires strong State support. In terms of science and technology development, there is agreement that the public investment effort in this field must be much higher than it has been to date.

## 9. GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

*Goal 5. “Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.”*

Gender parity aims to provide boys, girls, men and women with equal access to quality education through pedagogical opportunities to enhance their strengths. It has also been argued that, from an intergenerational perspective, increased levels of education among parents – and particularly mothers – has a positive effect on their children’s health, nutrition and education continuity and success rates. From an economic point of view, attaining such an objective is more challenging as gender equality in education is linked to significant government investment and family expenditure and is therefore hampered by poverty levels, health problems and insecurity in schools, as well as by cultural and pedagogical factors.

In the broader political context, non-discrimination on grounds of gender is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Consequently, international organizations have focused their attention on this theme and its implications in order to define guidelines and strategic goals to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, concerning legal, employment, economic or educational issues (United Nations Development Fund for Women, international women’s conferences since 1975, women’s rights convention, etc.). The United Nations Population Fund also refers to gender equality, as a human right and as one of the eight Millennium Development Goals. Furthermore, the United Nations Economic and Social Council suggests that gender-related considerations should be implemented in all policies and programmes, including political, economic and social settings, to benefit women and men in an equitable manner (ECOSOC 2012).

On the basis of the social and cultural construction of the feminine and the masculine, the notion of gender refers to a set of attributes that defines individuals in different roles and identities and constitutes a social organizer of status production (De Barbieri, 1996). Therefore, applying the notion of equal opportunities to this issue implies equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities regardless of gender. This is why education is not only seen as one of the dimensions in which gender equality must be achieved but also as one of the tools to attain equal opportunities in all areas.

A criterion for evaluation is to consider not only the normative aspects previously referred to but also the substantive aspects in terms of impact on the equal living conditions and opportunities of men and women. In this sense, Fraser (1996) suggests an integrated perspective of gender justice by considering two programmatic dimensions. On one hand, she considers redistribution policies, which, in the educational context refer to the access and attendance of girls, boys, women and men to and in education and which are included in nearly all public policies; and on the other hand, she considers the dimension of gender socialization, or recognition policies, which comes in the context of cultural justice or symbolic justice and identifies the role of academic education and its practices in building this justice.

### **Regional diagnosis from the perspective of education for all**

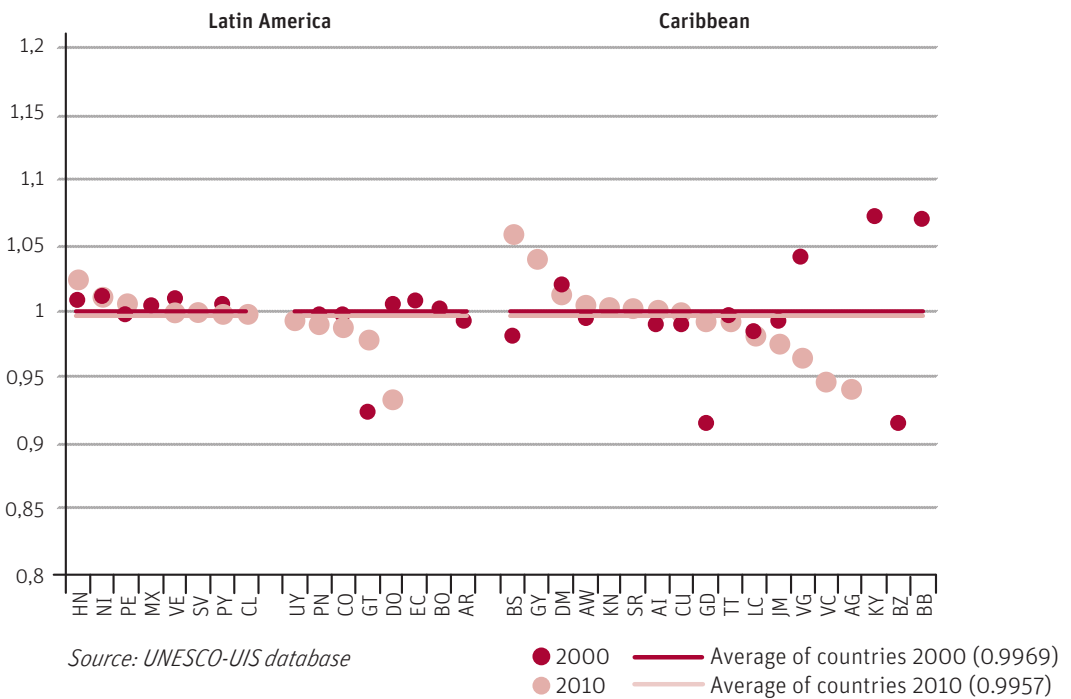
Special attention was given to the issue of gender equality in the Dakar Framework for Action. This decision stemmed from the historical and general disadvantages of women with respect to men in education. Thus, in addition to the special mention in the fourth goal in favour of women concerning illiteracy (analysed in another section of this study), the fifth goal of the Framework for Action focused on gender equality in terms of overcoming the social exclusion of women.

In this sense, the commitment established in 2000 to achieve gender parity in access to education was based on the following: girls represented 57% of the 104 million out-of-school children and of the 860 million illiterate adults, two thirds were women. For 2005, inequalities in terms of access should have been rectified worldwide but of the 181 countries with available data, only 59 were able to achieve this aim in due time in primary and secondary education (UNESCO 2008).

As stated in the original version of this goal, gender inequalities in academic success can be seen (and should therefore be evaluated) both in the inequalities related to schooling and to the performance and the exploitation of educational opportunities. Regarding this last aspect, there are unfortunately no good historical indications of gender inequality in the region that would enable a longitudinal study of the gender gap. Nevertheless, the information available gives a relatively clear idea of the current situation on the issue, and sheds a light on recent developments.

In terms of equal access to primary education, it is true that since the beginning of the past decade the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean showed, on average, a situation of virtual equality between men and women. In fact, the gender parity index, which expresses the women's situation in comparison to men's, in this case in terms of the net rate of enrolment in primary education, reached rates close to one, that is, perfect equality, in both 2000 and 2010<sup>15</sup>. Before 2010, there were still significant gender disparities in primary education in four countries (of the 27 with available data): against women in the Dominican Republic, Antigua and Barbuda, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and against men in the Bahamas.

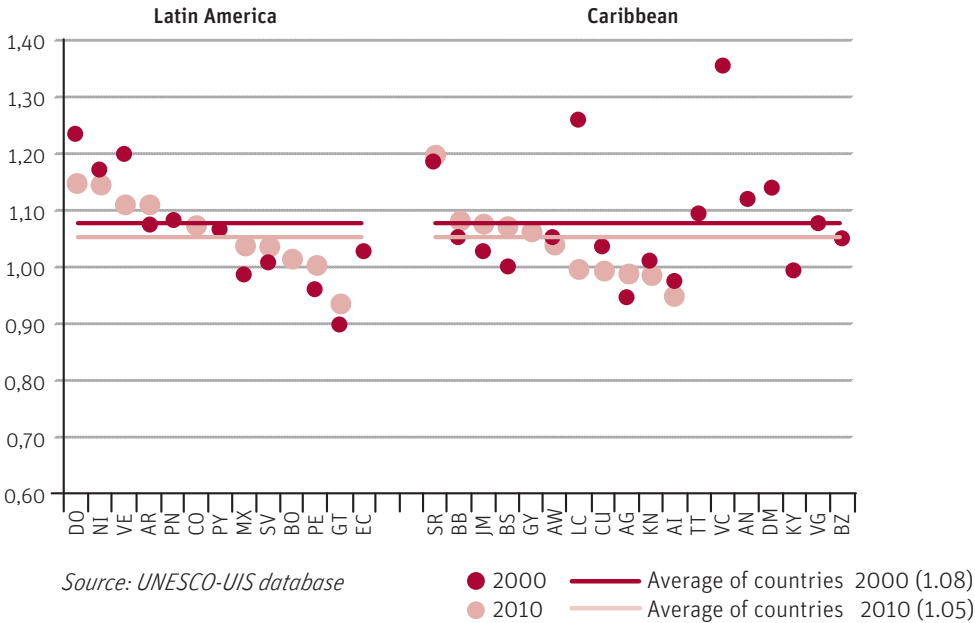
**Graphic 9.1. Gender parity index in the net rate of enrolment in primary education (34 countries included)**



<sup>15</sup> This index is below one when disadvantages towards women exist and above one when the disadvantages affect the men. There is no standard to establish gender parity in practical terms but UNESCO usually considers that gender parity is reached when the index values range between 0.97 and 1.03.

However, the predominant situation in Latin America and the Caribbean with regard to equal access of both genders to secondary education is unequal, but to the disadvantage of adolescent men. Indeed, the average gender parity index in the net rate of enrolment in secondary education of the countries in the region was 1.05 in 2010 (i.e. 5% in favour of women), which actually indicated progress from the 1.08 recorded in 2000. While two of the 23 countries in the region with available information registered disparity against women in 2010, disparity against men was observed in 13 of the 23 countries (several of which reached values greater than 1.1 on the gender parity index for secondary education). It is important to note that this situation of gender disparity in the access to secondary education is typical of Latin America and is not found, on average, in the other regions of the world (with the exception of Eastern Asia, although with less intensity). This can largely be explained by the fact that men abandon formal education at the secondary level in order to enter the labour market early (PREAL, 2007; IDB, 2012; ILO, 2012).

**Graphic 9.2. Gender parity index in the net rate of enrolment in secondary education (31 countries)**



The comparatively advantageous situation of women in Latin America in terms of their level of schooling does not imply that there are no specific challenges that have yet to be addressed. In this respect, the high rates of teenage pregnancy disproportionately affect those who are in a clear situation of disadvantage and belong to the poorest segments of society or live in rural areas. Furthermore, it has been claimed that given the little hope that education can provide opportunities for social mobility, maternity may appear as an “escape route from their situation” (UNDP, 2010; IDB, 2012). In the case of Chile, the National Women’s Service highlighted the social reality that clearly demonstrates that teenage pregnancy and maternity is the first cause of education dropout among students between the ages of 15 and 19 years old and the highest rates were found among women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

With regard to higher education, although it is true that women’s access has increased significantly, the gender pattern in terms of professional careers remains unchanged with women generally pursuing careers that offer lower wages (in a labour market in which men usually make more money than similarly qualified women).

From the point of view of gender socialization, Sikora (2011) suggests that this choice reflects the common roles that exist in a household in a way that “normalizes” the perceptions associated to certain careers. The shortage of women in the fields of mathematics and engineering can be explained by the fact that there are few mothers in those professions and work environments; therefore there is not enough information for the daughters to explore those areas. On the other hand, boys have better opportunities to see the men of the family in those fields and it is more probable that they choose those career paths. The study indicates that there is high gender identification between boys and fathers, and girls and mothers, and their respective jobs.

From a culturalization perspective, it has been suggested that girls most probably choose careers that offer intrinsic rewards, little competition and greater social cooperation and care. The image of certain careers influences the choices as girls see mathematics and sciences as being less feminine, attractive, popular and social. This attitude is linked to the fact that, unlike men who develop self-confidence at an early stage, girls become self-confident later and feel less confident and able to be successful in these types of careers. In addition to this,



poor teaching practices that are not conducive to integrating the varied potential of both sexes in the school setting are also a reason for such career choices.

The SERCE study carried out by the UNESCO Latin American Laboratory for the Assessment of Quality in Education in 2007 noted gender gaps in the academic performance of students in various countries of the region. According to a pattern identified in other international studies, women showed on average better performances in reading in both third and sixth grade while men achieved on average better results in mathematics (in both grades) and in science (only students in sixth grade were assessed)<sup>16</sup>. It is also true that the estimated gap in favour of men in mathematics was wider and more systematic than the gap in favour of women in reading. However, while these trends were observed in the majority of the 16 participating countries, it is important to note that the link between gender and academic performance is in no way uniform throughout the region: for example in Chile, Costa Rica and Ecuador there were no gender-related differences in reading and in Ecuador and Panama there were no gender-related differences in mathematics. Based on the results of the same SERCE study undertaken in 2012, it is clear that girls in the region (with the exception of Cuba and the Dominican Republic) consistently achieve on average lower results in scientific subjects than the male students.

Important gender differences were also detected by the 2009 PISA study: while women usually performed better than men in reading, and men usually performed better than women in mathematics, the science test showed that, on average, there were no differences between genders. With the notable exception of Trinidad and Tobago, where women achieved better results than men in all three skills assessed, the Latin America countries participating in the study showed the same pattern of gender inequality (OECD, 2010).

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<sup>16</sup> This gender inequality pattern in favour of women in reading and in favour of men in mathematics was also observed on average in the first study undertaken by the UNESCO Laboratory in 1997 in which 13 countries of the region participated and which assessed third and fourth grade pupils. Regrettably the results of both tests are not comparable and it is therefore not possible to say whether any progress has been made in this area.

Different interpretations can explain the aforementioned gender-related differences in learning. One hypothesis states that social and cultural patterns associate the feminine with language and the masculine with the exactitude of sciences. This social certainty perpetuates itself and is then reapplied in schools, through teachers and an emphasis on this social representation in textbooks and classroom materials in which the iconography tends to portray men in the scientific fields and mathematics, and women in the humanities. In addition, more learning activities and greater involvement is offered to men than to women in the scientific fields and mathematics within educational establishments. It has also been suggested that the cognitive aspects of learning development differ between girls and boys, which would require different pedagogical strategies in order to influence these gender inequalities in the students' learning outcomes (Sikora and Pokropek, 2011).

Additionally, in various fields of education, it has been observed that the highest positions in tertiary education are typically held by men in the countries of the region. For example, out of a total of 200 Latin American and Caribbean universities, there are 168 male rectors and 32 female ones. In countries such as Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Puerto Rico, El Salvador and Guatemala, among others, there are no universities with female rectors (Gentili, 2012).

Finally, the relation between traditional types of social and economic organization among indigenous communities, especially in rural areas, shows that women are still educationally disadvantaged in these areas. On the other hand, since role models and speakers within these indigenous communities, as well as representatives and authorities of the national society are always men, indigenous women believe it is more prestigious to have a boy. This imbalance and the confusion of roles and tasks of both sexes create tensions and conflicts within the family which eventually have an impact on the education. Furthermore, some experts suggest that the recent transformations experienced by these communities do not necessarily contribute to the improvement of the situation but rather that they could mean an added difficulty in certain contexts of social disruption (Oyarce, 2010; Kretschmer, 2010).

## Challenges surrounding gender parity in educational settings

The agenda of gender inequality in education includes very different kinds of challenges which make it highly complex to implement measures aimed at reaching gender parity. Not only is the agenda influenced by political and established regulatory resources, but it is also part of a greater movement aimed at changing the political order, forms of social interaction and cultural elements.

There is no doubt that this movement has already started in the region. Since public policies were implemented, countries like Argentina, Costa Rica, Chile, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Paraguay, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Mexico, among others, have put in place measures of gender parity that determine programmatic agendas in general, and particularly in education. In Costa Rica for example, the Law on the Promotion of the Social Equality of Women exists since 1990, making educational institutions responsible for guaranteeing equal opportunities for men and women and complementing the existing laws with various support strategies (related to wages, education, positive discrimination, etc.). Sector-wide education policies in Chile have helped to establish tendering regulations with gender criteria for educational materials and textbooks that not only remove negative bias but also promote a vision of gender equity (Duarte et al., 2011). These measures are complemented by the need to eliminate sexist content from the curricula, to train actors in education to avoid these types of bias in their teaching and to develop specific programmes to assist and protect girl and boy victims of sexual abuse and sexual violence (National Women's Service 2007).

In addition to its decision to plan actions to guarantee that gender equity reaches all educational levels and literacy processes, the Presidential Secretariat for Women's Affairs in Guatemala decided to train technical and administrative staff of the Ministry of Education on gender issues; moreover, observations and recommendations were made regarding the sexist and stereotyped perspective of the textbooks used by students in the country.

Future educational challenges exist in various dimensions of schooling and of the way in which schools are organized. In terms of access to and attendance in education, some countries in the region are still faced with the task of ensuring that women receive an academic education,

particularly in rural areas and among the indigenous population which is linked to particular socio-economic and cultural contexts. Another challenge (UNESCO, 2004) concerns the need to promote safe school environments in areas where sexual violence occurs. In contrast, many countries have a hard time extending secondary education among young males, which requires them to deal with the difficulties posed by child and youth labour in the poorest sectors, as well as the distance between culture and forms of youth socialization, and the norms and demands of school socialization, aggravated by low performance since primary school.

In terms of learning achievements, more profound changes are still needed to achieve gender parity. At a systemic level, schools and the various tools used to put in place education are of fundamental importance in defining the primary socializing function that produces, reproduces and transmits – whether consciously or not – stereotypes, symbols and meanings related to what is feminine and what is masculine. In this sense, one of the challenges would be to undertake a longitudinal study of the strategies used to teach languages, science and mathematics after taking into consideration the learning results of standardized evaluations.

In the school environment, suggestions have also been made regarding the need to identify and exclude sexist habits which are present in hidden curricula and tend to naturalize traditional gender relations and thus legitimize, through iconography or social representations in texts and classroom material, the sexual division of work, and the correlation between women and girls and notions of emotion, passivity and a service-oriented attitude. Additionally, women's scope of participation and action should also be broadened as they are often restricted to the domestic sphere and men to the public sphere. This in turn fuels and strengthens debates at the sociohistorical level regarding asymmetrical power relations between men and women.

Finally, forms of non-discriminatory cohabitation must be encouraged in the school organization; at the pedagogical level, teachers should be trained to prevent the reproduction of gender stereotypes and to generate non-discriminatory learning environments for the children; in the same way prejudices that, for example, distance girls from mathematics and professional science careers, should be challenged in teachers'

initial training. Lastly, non-sexist socialization of the professional careers should be ensured so as not to exclude women from the skills and abilities related to scientific fields and mathematics in textbooks, career guidance in schools and educational material in general.

## **10. INTERCULTURAL BILINGUAL EDUCATION: EDUCATION AND DIVERSITY**

*Goal 2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.*

The Dakar Framework for Action included just one mention of the education of ethnic minorities within the goal of universalizing primary education. However, the matter of interculturality in education has been assuming ever greater importance in the international structure of rights associated with children and young people in recent decades. Consequently, this section will address the challenge of intercultural and bilingual education from a more ambitious angle than that established in the context of education for all.

Indeed, international bodies such as UNESCO, ILO, IDB, UNICEF, OEI and ECLAC, together with various foundations, have addressed intercultural education, gathering relevant data for the building of public policies, reaching a consensus on agreements, offering loans and norms to be fulfilled by States Parties and granting training fellowships for the indigenous population. This priority has been firmly established for decades in international rights instruments and has, up till recently, continued to be specified.

Thus it is that, back in 1960, UNESCO's Convention against Discrimination in Education included protection of the educational rights of minorities and established their right to be educated in their own language, ensuring that this did not debar them from learning the dominant language and culture – official or majority – of their respective countries, or result in education of a poorer quality.

From a cultural and educational viewpoint, the International Labour Organization Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (ILO, 1989), specifically considers the need for appropriate education, which should consider cultural and linguistic aspects. It refers explicitly to childhood, in relation with education and language as essential ingredients for the development of a multicultural society. It is established that, wherever viable, indigenous boys and girls will be taught to read and write in their own indigenous language or in the language most commonly spoken in the group to which they belong.

The year 2001 saw the approval, by the United Nations General Assembly of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in which indigenous children are mentioned in order to be explicitly considered in the implementation of their rights. Since 2002 special references are observed to the indigenous reality in various bodies and the intention is stated of ending discrimination, offering specific assistance and guaranteeing equal opportunities when it comes to access to services, which, where education is concerned, is reflected in quality and respect for the cultural heritage. UNESCO for its part, in its 2002 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, voices principles for safeguarding the linguistic heritage of humanity, giving attention to national-level curricula with contents and proposals relating to diversity, guaranteeing continuity in the processes, and fostering technical resources (pedagogical, didactic, teacher training, etc.).

Finally, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child issued a General Comment (No. 11 of 2009) which establishes the rights of indigenous boys and girls, from the angle of ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities, and promotes the use of the language, culture and religious beliefs of these boys and girls and their communities. Furthermore, appropriate education is encouraged and the media are urged to take linguistic and cultural characteristics into account. Furthermore, the General Comment permits consideration of the difficulties hampering the guarantee and exercise of these specific rights for boys and girls of the indigenous population, besides emphasizing the special measures and good practices that the States Parties should adopt in order to fulfil these norms.

Incorporating these guidelines in the field of education in the region has not been easy. Interculturality means assuming the cultural, political and organizational diversity and the differences of specific beliefs that the groups have been forming, and which influence the individual and collective identity processes. From a sociocultural and political viewpoint, it considers self-respect and respect of others in dialogue and the recreating of new settings and relations between groups with dissimilar practices, world views and knowledge. The building of interculturality in Latin America and the Caribbean is of course not devoid of the conflicts and tensions that such diversity entails, owing to the generalized situations of inequity affecting the indigenous populations, which implies discriminatory attitudes on the part of the majority society and, where the indigenous population is concerned, processes of

linguistic displacement, ethnic disloyalty<sup>17</sup> and conflicts with the nation States regarding territorial and political demands.

Still, over a decade since the commitments put forward in Dakar 2000, several processes are to be observed concerning intercultural bilingual education implemented in some countries of the region with an indigenous population, some of which schemes have had major repercussions on educational policies.

## **Intercultural Bilingual Education in Latin America and the Caribbean**

Since the earliest days of the Republic and with the formation of nation States, education of the indigenous inhabitants of Latin America and the Caribbean has come through political and disciplinary scenarios determined by a great many historical and ideological contexts. These approaches have set the course of intercultural bilingual education up to our time, moving from cultural and linguistic homogenization to the assumption of diversity as an opportunity since it grants sociocultural identity and supposes a bilingualism of enrichment and perpetuation which, according to international and national conventions, should permeate the region's education systems and include indigenous and non-indigenous inhabitants (López 2011, Muñoz 2002). But this new vision comes up against major difficulties in practice.

The living conditions of the indigenous population of the region are affected by greater levels of poverty, land and water conflicts, misappropriation, fraudulent land sales, urban-rural migration, problems to do with access to and administration of justice, low level of opportunities and access to the school system, and lack of access to technical and vocational training schemes and higher education (Bello 2000). In addition, UNESCO's 2012 regional report concludes that, even though progress is observed regarding urban-rural parity and by ethnic group in access to education, it is a far cry to equity, besides which the quality of implementation of public policies in this area shows considerable disparities in countries with cultural diversity, on account of the difficulties met by the indigenous population in completing primary education and of the problems of access to and completion of secondary and tertiary education.

<sup>17</sup> These concepts emerge from sociolinguistics and characterize attitudes of resistance to the use or transmission of the language or sociocultural practices, generally indigenous and originating in Africa. It is associated with phenomena of diglossia, migration and discrimination, among others.



A further difficulty for implementing interculturality and bilingualism policies in the region is the haphazard way in which the indigenous condition is quantified in the various countries: surname, census data, geographical location, indigenous mother tongue, and so forth. However, there is no consensus regarding specific data on indigenous populations and/or speakers of indigenous languages owing to the shortcomings of the censuses and their implementation. The UNESCO report mentioned states, on the basis of ECLAC data, that the indigenous population has increased by roughly 30 million inhabitants, mainly in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru, the various States recognizing 642 peoples and 860 languages (with dialectal variations). It is also reported that people of African descent total 120 million, about 23% of the Latin American population, mainly in Brazil, Cuba and Colombia.

In addition, the effort of UNICEF to put together a sociolinguistic atlas of indigenous peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean provides a picture of linguistic and cultural plurality identified by geo-cultural zones: Amazonia, Middle America, Antioquia, Andes, Extended Chaco, continental Caribbean, Lower Central America, Oasisamérica, Pacific Coastal Plains, Patagonia, Easter Island and insular Caribbean. According to the atlas, this diversity at present characterizes the region, with the presence of roughly 29,500,000 indigenous persons, representing some 6.1% of the region, albeit with percentages that vary between the 23 countries involved and with about 665 languages at varying degrees of use and vitality, vulnerability, risk, diglossia and displacement.

This indigenous presence and vitality is decisively evident in Latin America and the Caribbean and has had a bearing on the construction of norms and policies that take account of this heterogeneity, raising the question of the dilemma of implementing strategies that emphasize interculturality and/or bilingualism, according to the linguistic characteristics, the investment of resources and the constitutional and educational policies of each country. These initiatives may be examined from a cultural, political, institutional and educational perspective.

From a cultural perspective, there are experiments that have organized and systematized knowledge associated with the cosmogony, cosmology, conceptions of time, science and other elements of the natural,

symbolic and religious universe of indigenous peoples<sup>18</sup>. From this angle, the indigenous languages are structured as singularly relevant aspects since they define and award identity and are vehicles of culture. In many countries of the region (e.g. Peru, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Paraguay, Colombia, Mexico and Ecuador), they are determined as axes of the policies of intercultural bilingual education.

In Paraguay after the 2002 language census, the Programme of Strengthening the Educational Reform of Basic Education “Escuela Viva Ekokatúva” implemented, from the Ministry of Education, a didactic and methodological treatment in keeping with the various sociolinguistic contexts that characterize the country, where Guarani and Spanish enjoy the same administrative status and are regarded as official, national languages. However, although there is no division of functions between the two languages that might give rise to diglossia, Guarani is generally relegated to contexts of day-to-day communication, while Spanish continues to be privileged in its use (laws, linguistic landscapes, the media, State language, etc.). This linguistic asymmetry further represents an imbalance in the socioeconomic and political relations of their speakers reproduced in the status and type of relations established between them.

From an intra-community political angle, the indigenous territory occupies a material and symbolic conception determining collective identity as a socio-geographical and sociocultural appropriation. It is configured as a political universe and establishes limits with other groups and peoples and with the majority societies. In the case of the Mapuche people in Chile, the Guambiano and Nasa peoples in Colombia, and the Awajun people in Peru, the national curricula are considered not to give socioculturally organized information in accordance with the needs of the communities, and the education dispensed is seen as not appropriate to the potential – economic, productive and political – that the young graduates of the establishments could offer those territories, since it

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<sup>18</sup> For instance, Dialogue and complementarity of knowledge in the natural sciences (Puno, Peru); Systematization based on ethno-mathematics (Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Ecuador, Guatemala, Peru); Own curriculum of the Tule people (Colombia); Local history (Jujuy, Argentina; Cauca, Colombia); In linguistic and educational management: Alphabetical unification from below (Ecuador); Local variation of Spanish (Jujuy, Argentina); Contextualization of plans and programmes in NB1 and NB2 for the Ayмара and Mapuche population; Guidelines for the preparation of educational improvement projects in Intercultural Bilingual Education (Chile).

would finally contribute to their migration. In this respect, distinctive education experiments are known to have been applied among indigenous peoples of Colombia, Guatemala and Nicaragua.

In this context, the school curricula and texts for the national population generally contain prejudices and stereotypes that tend to render invisible, naturalize and circumscribe the indigenous condition in a way that is static, folkloristic and centred in the past (“they ate, they lived, they cultivated, they fought”), without considering migration and the growing degrees of indigenous participation, professionalism and presence in the decision-making of the countries of the region. In the case of the literacy programmes for the indigenous population, although they are declared bilingual and intercultural, they do not offer strategies and forms of literacy teaching that take account of these variables. There are also shortcomings in classroom practices since, in general, the teachers are from outside the communities and apply methods that are out of context in relation to the sociocultural spaces into which the pre-school centres and schools are introduced.

In an “inter” dimension regarding indigenous peoples and nation States and the majority society, in most countries of the region the public policies have regarded the education systems as a bridge linking indigenous peoples, the State and society. In recent decades an effort has been noted to contextualize or incorporate referents suited to the structured body of goals and contents of curricular frameworks.

Furthermore, from the angle of the institutional nature of schooling, a set of measures is being structured for the achievement of these goals and guidelines from the ministries of education, such as the public consultations that establish participation based on international norms (ILO, Convention No. 169), in addition to activities based on national programmes to seek relevant information from traditional representatives or authorities<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> This logic has been behind the implementation of such programmes and initiatives as: Indigenous knowledge and community teachers (Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Chile, Nicaragua); The teaching couple and indigenous cultural advisers (Argentina, Chile); The local varieties of Spanish or English and local history (Argentina, Nicaragua); Indigenous joint management of education (Iquitos, Peru; Bolivia (Plurinational State of)); Community educational advice (Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Peru); and Community educational projects (Colombia).

In the case of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, after educational reforms under an indigenous President, the Ministry of Education sets out to “design, implement and execute policies, with inclusive educational strategies that are equitable, intra-cultural, intercultural, multilingual, scientific, technical or technological and of good quality, with social participation from the territorial, community, productive and decolonizing area through the Plurinational Education System” (Ministry of Education, Plurinational State of Bolivia, 2012). Hence activities have been established for identity strengthening based on communicative use of the indigenous languages, together with the need to incorporate the participation of the communities and organized civil society in planning of the teaching and learning processes, through the structuring of a curriculum. Ethnographic studies have been promoted that prepare and systematize information regarding guidelines for upbringing, ethno-development and oral history, inter alia, which provide significant information for curricular construction<sup>20</sup>. These government initiatives are criticized for involving very radical changes in public education policy.

These education policy guidelines have shown different degrees of intensity of implementation and impacts in the various educational cycles. As already observed, although the Dakar Framework for Action only mentions primary education, our discussion includes the system as a whole.

### **Early childhood education**

Various studies in the region investigate pre-school education and kindergartens, with special reference to the processes of transition undergone by boys and girls between the home and the early childhood institutions.

In the Añú community of Venezuela (Mendoza, Segovia, 2010) an experiment is reported that provides attention and care for children in their own homes, a situation that went well initially but has generated permanent and growing overcrowding inside the homes, sometimes disrupting the natural family dynamic. In schools with a kindergarten,

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<sup>20</sup> Namely: Knowledge and learning of the Mositén people (Mamani et al. 2010); Knowledge and learning of the Takana people (Daza et al. 2010); Knowledge and learning of the Tsimane’ people (Mayer et al. 2010); Knowledge and learning among the Tsimane’-Mositén people of Pilón Lajas (Salvatierra et al. 2010). All these initiatives were executed jointly by UNICEF and the Universidad Mayor de San Simón (UMSS).

the presence of teachers and “indigenous mother childminders” makes for harmonious changes and adaptations and, according to the study, no practices are observed that discredit the customs and culture of Añú boys and girls, with a generally favourable process of transition to school.

In the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua (peoples: Rama, Miskito, Sumu/ Mayangna, Garifuna, Creoles and Mestizos) the study of Davis, García (2009) points to a fragile transport and communication infrastructure, to precarious coverage in early childhood education because the population is so dispersed, to the scarcity of paid work for families, to problems of bad dietary habits and to the poor quality of services offered this population. All these factors impair pre-school education. However, coverage has been extended with the support of travelling educators. Attention has been given to boys and girls in scattered rural communities, with some 39% of the pre-school-age population enrolled in educational programmes promoted by the national education system.

In a context of rural-urban migration, a study conducted in Brazil among the Guarani-Kaiowá population (Nascimento, 2006) showed that mothers took their children to the pre-school establishment so as to be able to work and provide them with food and health care. In rural contexts it is mentioned that the provision of indigenous education in Brazil has increased in recent years, but with proposals unsuited to the indigenous population since they disregard the legal regulations brought into play in the country since 1988 regarding the right to autonomy of these peoples. In general, the kindergartens and nursery schools do not take into consideration standards of upbringing of the families but give preference to practices validated by the majority culture.

### **Primary and secondary education**

In primary and secondary education, the findings concur in showing that, in the region as a whole, the standard of schooling of the indigenous population and that of African descent is below that of the non-indigenous population. According to UNESCO data, there are significant adverse differences in the time spent by indigenous people in primary and secondary education as against the non-indigenous population. It is observed that, in primary education, only Cuba, Brazil and Chile have completion rates above 90%; in secondary education, Chile shows a narrower gap since it is observed that some 60% of the indigenous and about 75% of the non-indigenous population stay the course. With

respect to the conclusion of primary education, UNESCO finds that the indigenous/non-indigenous parity rates vary between 0.70 and 0.81 for the 15-19 age group, and between 0.52 and 1.03 for the 25-29 group. Panama and Guatemala increased their ethnic parity rates in the youngest group, where a rise from 0.63 to 0.75 was observed. By contrast, the data on Nicaragua show the ethnic parity rate to have declined in the youngest population. As to conclusion of the first cycle of secondary education, the rates vary between 0.45 and 0.95 for the population aged 20 to 24 years (with a country average of 0.71), and between 0.17 and 0.92 for the 30-34 age group (with an average of 0.61). Paraguay and Panama show the greatest disparity in the oldest groups, although progress is observed in the youngest population of both countries. Finally, in the 2012 Education for All report, it is concluded that indigenous/non-indigenous parity indices in the conclusion of the second cycle of secondary education vary between 0.2 and 0.8 for the population aged 20 to 24 years (with an average of 0.58) and between 0.1 and 0.9 for the population of 30 to 34 years (with an inter-country average of 0.55) (p. 75). The report finds that no State in the region achieves ethnic equity in the completion of secondary education.

In terms of regulations with an effect on school attendance, the school timetable is compared with socioeconomic processes in which boys and girls participate, pupil absenteeism being observed in such zones as Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Guatemala because of the farming schedule. Also noted is a lack of linkages between the initial and primary education levels on account of the geographical location of some indigenous communities.

With regard to basic learning, although there are differences between the various peoples, illiteracy is more common among indigenous people than in the non-indigenous population and is higher in rural than in urban areas (Hopenhagen et al., 2005).

In more general terms, the ethnic groups represent the most disadvantaged sector economically, a factor reflected as a significant variable with regard to the results for learning of reading, mathematics and sciences, according to the SERCE-2006 test. The report posits that belonging to an indigenous group is negatively associated with learning, mainly because of the deprivation in which the children and their families live, compounded by the low school enrolment of the parents. In addition to the economic inequities that impair learning results, the original linguistic and cultural factors are generally compared with

the contents and type of socialization offered indigenous pupils in the schools. According to the analyses based on SERCE-2006 data, at the pupil level the indigenous variable systematically (though not always) adversely affects results in language, mathematics and sciences when measured in the third and sixth grades. Furthermore, greater comparative disparities were observed in the third grade than in the sixth, a factor apparently explained by the high dropout rate of indigenous children in more advanced studies. Finally, in none of the grades or courses in any country of the region was the indigenous condition identified as a positive factor in the learning outcomes of pupils (Treviño et al., 2010).

Other regional precedents concur in indicating that indigenous boys and girls generally do worse than non-indigenous children in standardized tests. For example, the Zúñiga (2010) report, with respect to the results of public education policies applied for the indigenous population in the Peruvian Southern Andes, states that only 6% of pupils in intercultural bilingual education achieve the desired reading capacities in their original language. In the Awajun and Shipibo schools, between 2.2% and 3.1% manage to develop reading abilities in Spanish and 59.5% of teachers of the Indigenous Communities of Amazonia are Spanish-speaking or speak an indigenous language other than that of the area. This is thought to be due to a set of factors such as the standard of teachers in rural areas, knowledge or otherwise of the indigenous languages spoken by pupils, educational texts that are at odds with the language and culture in question, the scant resources of the schools, among others (it certainly also being possible that the standardized tests themselves introduce an additional bias against the ethnic minorities, a fairly well-documented matter).

### **Tertiary education**

In tertiary education, with respect to coverage and access, gradual progress has been observed in recent decades; however, the retention of indigenous people in higher education is still very inadequate since those students tend to drop out as the course continues in order to enter the world of work early.

Gallart (2006), regarding the access of indigenous people to higher education in Mexico, reports gradual though not substantial progress thanks to government measures and structural changes in the country, access of 4.7% being observed with a lower level of access among indigenous people living in rural areas. UNESCO's 2010 report examines the

many measures adopted by the countries of the region to give the indigenous population access to tertiary education. Achievements, however, are still in their infancy: in Brazil, 0.6% of indigenous people and 2% of those of African descent; in Colombia, only 0.6% (including vocational and technical education, university technology) out of a national total of roughly 3.5%; in Ecuador, in 2004, 3% of young indigenous people aged 18 to 24 years entered higher educational establishments. In terms of graduation, according to the same UNESCO report, one out of five indigenous Mexicans entering higher education completes the course and obtains a degree.

There are experiments conducted in the region that have been specially geared to the indigenous population, such as intercultural bilingual education courses with extensive indigenous enrolment and fellowship programmes with this emphasis (such as FUNPROEIB Andes Bolivia, Ford Foundation Fellowship Programmes, FLACSO Ecuador and Mexico Postgraduate Programmes, CIESAS, Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University (BICU), Kawsay Indigenous Intercultural University (UNIK), University of the Autonomous Regions of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast (URACCAN), Puno, Colombia, among others).

In a broader perspective, the emergence of indigenous professionals and intellectuals has helped to diversify the social map of their groups of origin, introducing themes of diversity, interculturality, and equity through participation in key programmes of the government, such as education, planning, justice and health. This has likewise helped to set up an intellectual corpus carrying weight in political and social changes and debate.

### **Challenges regarding the implementation of intercultural bilingual education**

After structural changes in the communities, marked by migration to urban sectors, various degrees of enrolment and professionalization, appropriation of institutional and organizational codes of the majority cultures and with varying degrees of ethnic and linguistic fidelity, indigenous people acquire visibility with a political participation that highlights demands in areas of political representation and legal norms to their advantage (such as possession of land and water, promotion of health and intercultural and bilingual education, and the declaration of indigenous development areas). This is important because, in education, the disadvantage of belonging to an ethnic minority is com-



pounded by the levels of poverty and social exclusion affecting them. In addition, as of the last few decades of the past century, constitutional reforms and legal norms introduce the concept of interculturality and diversity in the approach and education policy agenda of all the countries of the region.

For example, since 1997, the OIAS has guided government education policies for indigenous peoples, observing that where education is concerned governments must: “strengthen the active, necessary and essential participation of the indigenous communities so as to identify, structure, develop and assess education policies and programmes; promote the introduction, where none exist, or strengthen the teams and/or technical spaces in the ministries of education entrusted with intercultural bilingual education.” (Pardo et al., 2011). These guidelines have been expressed in pedagogical terms in the region, with curricular and school management proposals taking account of local contexts or curricula, the participation of indigenous experts and advisers in educational work (with the concept of cultural advisers or mixed couple with classroom teachers), retrieval and systematization of distinctive courses, of language teaching with an approach involving linguistic revitalization, the introduction of indigenous language courses and the preparation of bilingual classroom texts and material, among other measures.

A critical point for these policies is observed in the process of intercultural bilingual education coverage and implementation. Is interculturality for all? That is the topical question since the models of old focused on indigenous people as the sole targets of these educational approaches. From the real angle of implementing bilingual policies, given the characteristics of the region, promoting the teaching of indigenous languages does not represent a priority for education policies, although research indicates the cognitive advantages implied by bilingualism. Nevertheless, the State’s political decision to keep a language alive has to be shared with its speakers, considering the resolve to extend its uses and transmit it to children and grandchildren. This can be mediated by symbolic, sovereign or political necessity, influencing the linguistic and cultural future of the countries. In this logic and as this vitality increases at national level, professional needs are introduced for access to various posts in a context of high vitality (bilingual teachers, doctors, agricultural professionals, jurists, etc.).

To advance in interculturality “for all” as a policy for shaping identity in the countries, it is further suggested that action should go ahead to systematize indigenous knowledge and practices in such a way as not to slant the approach towards just the indigenous population segment, since the goals and contents of learning of the national curricula could be complemented by incorporating knowledge connected with numerical systems, calendars, conceptions of space and time, and communicative approaches for teaching of the languages, among other factors.

It is further recommended that studies and standardization of indigenous languages be conducted. Several studies, mainly in the Caribbean Atlantic Coast area, show the positive assessment made by the families when programmes of intercultural bilingual education include their languages in the curriculum, in the contexts of both indigenous people and those of African descent. In this way, the standardization and normalization of indigenous languages becomes a challenge, while mutual agreement has to be reached regarding their oral and written use at the private and public institutional level, permitting practices at the school level and influence on the linguistic landscape and the media of the countries.

With respect to national curricula, school texts and teaching materials, and considering the peoples with linguistic vitality, there is a need to increase opportunities since a language with more speakers is often standardized at the expense of other small minority language groups for which there is no budget to produce appropriate material. This challenge must also take account of the high rates of indigenous migration to the cities and the need for the policy and iconography of the study texts and classroom material to take account of the diversity of the urban areas in order to reduce the cultural and linguistic displacements, safeguarding this transmission to the new generations of indigenous boys and girls.

The “mixed couple” experiments or cultural advisers within the schools, who mediate in complementing and contextualizing knowledge, have presented shortcomings that need remedying since there is a lack of methodological strategies for applying the curricula and of didactic proposals for the teaching of indigenous languages. In evidence too is ignorance of the graphemic systems established in processes of normalizing languages on the basis of State systems.

In this respect, the processes of initial teacher training and the curricular fabric of tertiary education should explicitly include concepts of interculturality and teaching and learning strategies referring to contexts of cultural diversity, a characteristic of present-day societies in all the countries of the region.

Finally, a critical point in implementing intercultural bilingual education has to do with the assessment of learning outcomes of indigenous students in Latin America. A study by Treviño (2006) postulates a tension in the interpretations made of findings of standardized tests in a variety of contexts. In addition to noting the poorer academic performance of indigenous children, it identifies weaknesses and strengths in their skills and their development and situation in the face of the demands and standards of the dominant culture. The study concludes by affirming the existence of contradictions between the teaching and learning approaches promoted by the indigenous peoples and those embodied in western formal education.

In short, the intercultural approach applied in the institutionalized context of formal education should not overlook the political aspect and the facet of cultural transformation implied. The appraisal and appropriation of the cultural and symbolic legacies of the indigenous population must not only foster the social participation and more active role of ethnic minorities but also help build intercultural societies, assuming national identities that include cultural and ethnic diversity.

## 11. ADULT LITERACY AND LIFELONG LEARNING

*Goal 4: “Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.”*

Although the fourth goal generally refers to the continuing education of the adult population, and given the essential character of literacy in all processes of formal education and the high level of social, political and economic exclusion that illiteracy implies, the attention has usually been focused on monitoring this goal with a view to tackling adult illiteracy<sup>21</sup>. Nevertheless, beyond this operationalization, the fourth goal of the Dakar Framework for Action must be understood in a broad sense.

The first reason for this is that the notion of literacy has evolved; lately the notion has been perceived as related not only to learning a language, both orally and in writing, but also to acquiring the more general capacity of communicating and being a part of society both in terms of daily social communication and employment (UNESCO – INNOVEMOS, 2012). In this respect, the recent social, cultural and technological changes that every day require a better use of linguistic abilities and constant learning at different levels are of great importance.

The second reason is that the educational response to these social changes has enriched what is traditionally called adult education. Beyond adult education’s traditional objective of teaching literacy (which has always been seen as complementary education or a way of correcting the deficits of formal education) lies the notion of lifelong learning advocated by international organizations – and particularly UNESCO through the Institute of Lifelong Learning (UIL) – and various governments.

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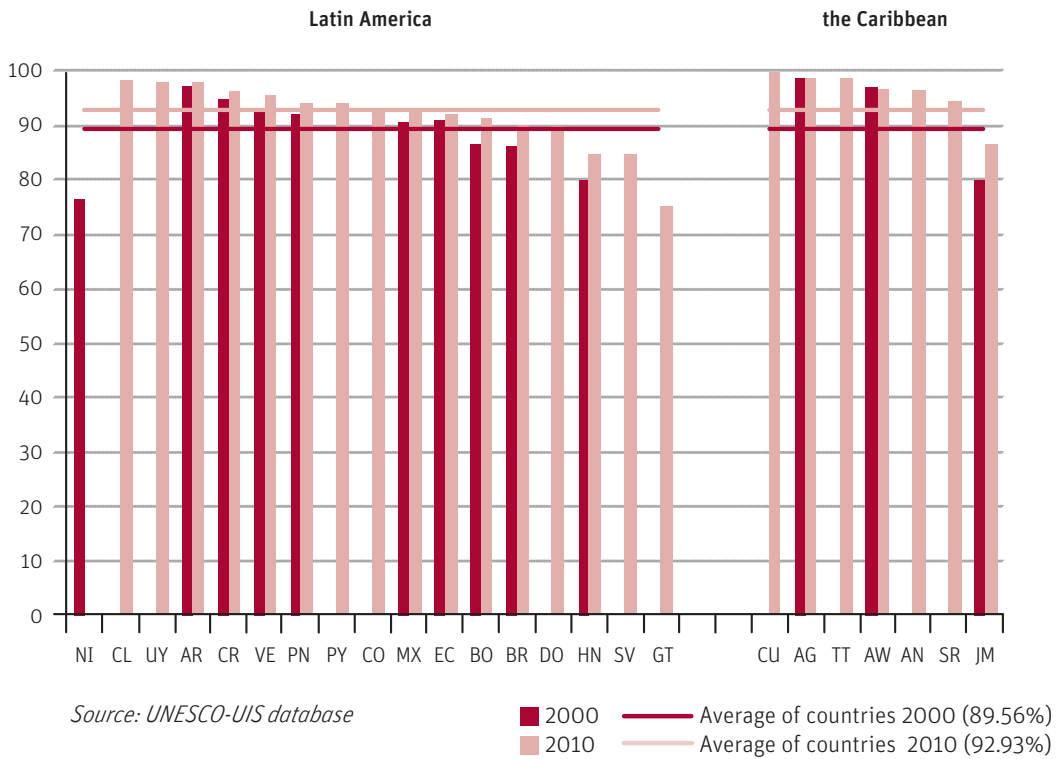
<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the original wording of the fourth goal contained a certain imprecision in terms of the reference to take in order to indicate the progress in the literacy level of countries. Indeed, it indicated an expected increase of 50% in the “number of literate adults” or “levels of adult literacy” which for most countries did not make sense as they already registered literacy levels above 67%. Subsequently, UNESCO “interpreted” this goal as indicating an aim to reduce by half the rate of adult illiteracy. This is the interpretation we have taken in this study.

## Adult literacy in Latin America and the Caribbean

With regard to the goal established in the Dakar Framework for Action of reducing illiteracy, the region is in a positive situation in comparison with the other regions in the developing world. Indeed, Latin America and the Caribbean already had comparatively high levels of adult literacy in 2000 (on average approximately 89.6%) which slowly continued to increase to an average of 92.9% in 2010. Of the 23 countries that have information, only four showed levels of adult literacy below 90% in 2010 and only one (Guatemala) registered levels lower than 80%.

Nevertheless, it is important to mention that the estimated progress in the previous decade, between 1990 and 2000, was similar: 3.8 percentage points. This would suggest that there has not been any particular acceleration post-Dakar. Had the region aimed for a 50% reduction in adult illiteracy as a goal, the region would not have achieved it yet given that it would imply an increase in literacy of up to roughly 95% by 2015. Nevertheless, the young population aged 15 to 24 lies above said level and it is estimated that until 2010 the literacy level of this age group was on average 97% in the countries of the region.

**Graphic 11.1. Literacy rate among the adult population (15 years old and above) (24 countries)**



Special attention was given to the issue of women’s literacy in the Dakar Framework for Action. However, the average situation in Latin America and the Caribbean was, and still is, relatively favourable in that gender inequalities are not as pronounced in the region as they are in other parts of the developing world. Furthermore, when considering only the young population (for which there were, already in 1990, no gender inequalities on average in the region), gender inequalities have practically disappeared in all the countries with information – with the exception of Guatemala and Jamaica that register unfavourable situations for women and men respectively (a trend that, in any case, is clearly being reversed).

All this suggests that, in general, the main way Latin American countries have continued to reduce their levels of illiteracy has been through improved access to primary education and not through policies explicitly aimed at improving literacy among adults. Nevertheless, this does not resolve the issue of students lagging behind, which is particularly

prevalent in areas far from the main urban centres where modernization has only just occurred. This harsh reality is a social condemnation that impedes the full exercise of citizenship in all its dimensions and – though figures are declining – affects an estimated 36 million Latin Americans. Moreover, the situation in Latin America is far less positive with regard to “functional illiteracy” – for which there are unfortunately no comparable indicators for all countries (Infante, 2000).

Finally, and from a broader perspective, the concept of literacy has evolved from the concept of knowing how to read, write and perform basic mathematical operations to a more global concept which defines literacy as a basic learning need acquired throughout life and allowing people to develop their knowledge and skills in order to fully participate in society (UNESCO, 2006). Therefore, the new concept of literacy developed by the OECD (2009), within the framework of the PIACC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies), implies a broader view of literacy: “it is the capacity to understand, evaluate, use and become engaged with written texts in order to participate in society, achieve one’s own objectives and develop one’s own potential and knowledge” (OECD, 2009, pp. 8). There is no comparable information for Latin American countries which evaluates this broader view of the concept<sup>22</sup>, although studies on functional literacy suggest that the region still faces a significant challenge in this area (OEI, 2011; OECD, 2009).

### **Knowledge society: changes in employment and education**

The sophistication of the concept of literacy in developed countries is in fact part of the larger process of change occurring in the relations between education, knowledge and society. The relation between education and employment, characteristic of twentieth-century society, is breaking down with the general end of the industrial society. It is not a finished or homogenous process in the world’s countries but the birth of what is known as the knowledge society has redefined and created new horizons in the processes of modernization which are influencing the development agenda of Latin America and the Caribbean (Castells, 2000).

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<sup>22</sup> In the 1990s, the OECD administered the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) but Chile was the only country of the region to participate.

Basically, we are shifting from a mainly industrial economy to an economy focused on services that are increasingly associated with new technologies (Drucker, 2001). This technologization changes industrial work, including the mining sector, by transversally transforming work in a more cognitive activity. The better jobs increasingly require abstraction skills, systems thinking, experimentation and collaboration (Reich, 1991); but the labour market in general is influenced to the point where good reading skills and effective communication, the capacity to work in a team, social skills and interpersonal relation skills, the use of computers and ICTs in general and –above all – the ability and disposition to continue learning throughout the career (Levy and Murnane, 1999) are needed in order to achieve success.

These new formative requirements are a challenge to educational systems. Education should develop new skills and acknowledge them in order to enable the labour market to distinguish formally between them. Additionally, education should offer opportunities for continuous training, adaptation and improvement; all in all, education should accompany people throughout life. By doing so, it generates new opportunities in personal and professional development for some as well as new risks of exclusion and loss of potential for all. These trends have been processed by international organizations (ILO, UNESCO and OECD), governments and academics; this has given rise to various approaches that serve as a basis to orientate policies in charge of these new challenges. Among these approaches, lifelong learning and skills-based training were the most relevant ideas.

Lifelong learning is mainly promoted by UNESCO and involves developing learning processes that are permanent and not just limited to a person's initial or professional training. The new paradigm advocates a reform of formal and non-formal education for greater interconnectedness between the two. It is necessary to find a more equitable and pertinent distribution of the training and learning possibilities in the population in order to give individuals and countries more tools to face contemporary formative challenges in a fair and competitive way. For its part, skills-based training recognizes learning processes as the ability to acquire skills as well as abstract knowledge. While traditional academic levels, and therefore the curriculum of education, reflect the management of knowledge, skills would recognize actual existing abilities and guide education systems in this direction. Skills-based training has had a considerable impact at all levels of education, but it has focused its influence on technical education directed mainly at the labour market.



These new approaches have partially been adopted in education systems, training programmes for adults and occupational training. For example, there have been improvements in introducing various applications of skills-based training in educational institutions; this has required revisions in the curriculum in order to build upon the learning not only of content but essentially of know-how. The latter has also influenced changes in the legislation that defines qualifications and degrees. In this respect, the European Union has made considerable progress since the Bologna Process. With the project “Skills for the twenty-first century” and its website dedicated to skills, OECD has promoted changes in legislation related to qualification frameworks by creating lists of skills based on the specific productive structure of countries and by seeking a more precise and standard link between training programmes (formal and non-formal) and the labour market. There has also been an increase and a diversification of non-formal education programmes for adult literacy and, above all, for occupational training (such as the Jovenes Bicentenario programme in Chile and the Aprender Siempre programme in Uruguay). These programmes have had a divergent evolution over time but they have nevertheless helped complement the efforts of formal education, above all in sectors with few resources. International organizations have only started compiling these experiences recently (UNESCO, 2012b). The compilation includes heterogeneous initiatives with a level of qualification that, according to the international standard, varies and thus makes them difficult to compare.

At the same time, given the general increase of post-secondary education, higher technical education (ISCED 5B) is expanding fast. The uneven nature of this increase in enrolment implies that the increase in vacancies in technical education is largely explained by the arrival of new social groups in tertiary education, many of whom come from a situation of vulnerability and are not limited to the typical age group associated with higher education (18-24 years old) (CINDA, 2007). Thus, this expansion represents a possible trend towards democratization and social inclusion and a way for workers to foster their efforts in improving their employability.

In Latin America, as in the more developed countries, one of the main trends in the transformation of the production structure over the last decades has been the expansion of the tertiary sector. Indeed, during the 1990s, nine out of ten jobs created in Latin America and the Caribbean were in the services sector (Weller, 2001). Nevertheless, the

growth of the tertiary economy did not mean that there was a proliferation of professions indicative of a knowledge society. After the deindustrialization of the 1980s, the lost decade according to ECLAC, there has been what academic literature calls false tertiarization (Pinto, 1984). False tertiarization is the growth of tertiary occupations of low productivity connected to a subsistence economy (street vending, housekeeping services, etc.). More recently, the situation of Latin America and the Caribbean in the evolution of the production structure shows tendencies of false tertiarization as well as genuine tertiarization, with both trends being juxtaposed within countries.

One of the hypotheses that can explain the difficulties that prevent Latin American economies from taking a leap forward in developing along the lines of a knowledge society is precisely the fact that the workforce is under-qualified. This impedes investment in technologically-intensive industries and services and in turn hampers productivity and economic profitability (Tokman, 2001). The Latin American labour market is also facing two additional problems. The first is the increase in the number of young people who do not study or work, the so-called ninis. The youth labour force participation rate in the region is estimated at an average of 54%, far below the adult rate of 69%. These young people are an enormous burden on the economy and furthermore, such a situation often becomes a breeding ground for criminal activities (ECLAC, 2011). The second problem concerns the difficulties of providing women with access to employment in general and particularly to jobs of high productivity. Being a young woman thus considerably increases the probability of living in poverty, especially if the problem of unwanted pregnancy and its effects on countries' gender parity are added.

### **Lifelong learning in Latin America and the Caribbean: reality and challenges**

Despite the efforts of international organizations and various governments, lifelong learning in the region is, in general, still tied to the old paradigm of adult education as an alternative to “non-formal” education aimed at correcting the deficits of formal education systems (UNESCO, 2012b). Indeed, although various countries undertook extensive national literacy campaigns in the past decades (Brazil on several occasions in the twentieth century, Cuba in 1961 and Nicaragua between 1979 and 1980), the dominant trend has been to rely on the development of the school system. Under this approach, formal and non-formal edu-

cation followed separate development trajectories, providing little feedback to one another (UNESCO – INNOVEMOS, 2012). Only at the end of the 1990s did the situation start to change: new centres for the development of lifelong education emerged. In this respect, UNESCO's commitment was fundamental in leading the United Nations Literacy Decade, the sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI), the Organization of Ibero-American States with its literacy plan, and the Dakar agenda which plays a stimulating role in this area (UNESCO – INNOVEMOS, 2012). UNESCO estimated that by 2010, 8% of the illiterate population in the region was participating in an adult literacy programme.

The trend has been highlighted by the increasing support of international organizations for employment training programmes for inactive youth, *ininis*. In addition to international cooperation, the actors behind this support were NGOs, private corporations and, in certain cases, governments. Additionally, programmes can also often be based on joint action (for example, the ENTRA21 programme in Chile received private funding from the International Youth Foundation (IYF), Nokia and public resources from the programme *Jóvenes Bicentenario*). Still outside the formal school system, there has also been an increase in the use of employment training programmes at post-secondary level for young people with difficulties entering the labour market. These programmes are often combined with subsidies for employers and focus on young people who have dropped out of secondary education. The existence and relevance of these kinds of programmes is sensitive to the conditions of youth employment and the political priority of the issue in countries. For this reason, despite the fact that various experiences have been accumulated in this respect in the last few years, these programmes nevertheless remain insufficient and very divergent (UNESCO, 2011).

The growing interest in reforming skills-based education is closely linked to the previous point. OECD's initiative was particularly important in this respect as it set the conceptual and methodological foundations for a better rationalization of the skills available for the labour market in order to refine the relation between the latter and the provision of education. This would enable education providers and governments to use reliable information concerning the challenges of work skills in their countries as guidance (Quintini, 2011).

Looking ahead, the coming agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean will be very demanding. Firstly, lifelong learning remains an emerging issue with insufficiently established regulation. Can lifelong learning be considered an enforceable right? There is no consensus on the subject yet but its inclusion to the Dakar Framework illustrates the central role it has acquired, even as an objective to achieve in reforming education worldwide. Requirements in the region vary according to national context but they all fall under the challenge of modernizing the provision of formal and non-formal education in order to improve the social integration and basic job skills of a population – and particularly young people in vulnerable situations – in a labour market with a shortfall. Indeed, while education cannot solve the limitations of the labour market by itself, it still has much to offer.

Secondly, the most important political challenge remains the eradication of functional illiteracy and the need to provide the population with basic life skills including the use of new technologies. This means moving away from the idea that formal education plays an exclusive role in literacy and incorporating new perspectives set out by international organizations. In other words, the concept of literacy should include other dimensions, including the notion of digital literacy.

It is also imperative to link the expansion of formal technical education with non-formal educational programmes (potentially by reapplying and renovating the tradition of popular education that exists in the region) to create a connectivity between the two and to enable them to tackle the challenges of society as a whole and thus facilitate long studies throughout an educational continuum. To reach this aim, close coordination between various actors (the productive sector, the State, NGOs and international cooperation) is necessary. Nevertheless, such partnerships in this area are still insufficient and limited to small-scale programmes.

Another particularly challenging aspect concerns inactive youth. It is necessary to develop and strengthen the programmes aimed at improving their employability in coordination with formal education. This involves apprenticeships but essentially relates to basic skills and skills known as “soft skills”. In this respect, ICTs can be of great help by enabling learning modalities such as, among others, distance education.

Finally, and in relation to the above, Latin American countries are faced with the challenge of modernizing the qualifications frameworks not only by incorporating measures of abstract knowledge – which should continue to be implemented – but also by complementing them with an accreditation both of general skills and of skills specific to various trades. Such a reform would represent an efficient way of defining the frameworks for education providers and the labour market to work together, and would thus improve their mutual relations.

## ANNEX 1.

### Regression analysis results: factors associated with achieving EFA goals in 2010

#### Dependent variable: Net rate of children in pre-primary education in 2010

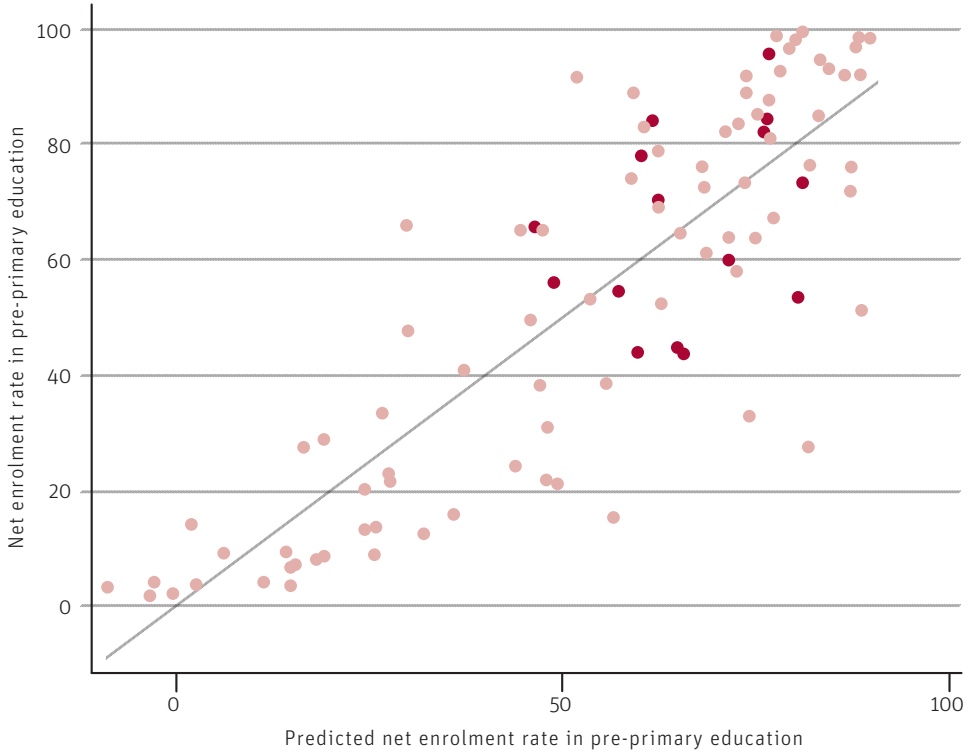
Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
GDP per capita	1.243*** (0,23)	-0,136 (0,24)	-0,0544 (0,24)	1.136** (0,52)	2.023*** (0,54)
GDP per capita squared				-0.0200*** (0,01)	-0.0264*** (0,01)
Expenditure on education as a % of GDP		2.881*** (1,09)	2.823** (1,11)	2.168* (1,11)	
Rural		-0.406*** (0,14)	-0.364*** (0,13)	-0.281** (0,13)	-0,0937 (0,12)
Infant mortality		-0.412*** (0,14)	-0.396*** (0,15)	-0.323** (0,15)	-0.294** (0,14)
Female labour-force participation		0,021 (0,15)			
% of the population of pre-school age		-3.499** (1,50)	-3.547** (1,44)	-2.973** (1,36)	-2.148* (1,29)
Latin America and the Caribbean			5,476 (5,53)	6,317 (5,26)	10.57** (4,62)
Constant	35.27*** (3,51)	86.87*** (10,74)	84.64*** (10,87)	70.24*** (11,26)	55.75*** (10,74)
Observations	122	94	96	96	120
R-squared	0,328	0,703	0,705	0,721	0,653

Note: The control variable "Expenditure on education as a percentage of government spending" was eliminated from the model, because it proved to be irrelevant.

\*\*\*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.05, \*p<0.1

## Relationship between the predicted and observed net enrolment rate in pre-primary education in 2010 (Model 4; 96 countries).

The chart shows the relationship: each country is a dot, with Latin American countries in blue; the vertical distance to the regression line shows the difference between the real and expected enrolment rate given the characteristics of each country. A dot above the line shows a real rate above expectations and a dot below the line shows a real rate below expectations.



## Dependent variable: Retention rate in the final year of primary school in 2010

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
GDP per capita	0.674***	0.263**	0,2	0,624	0.330***	1.301***
	(0,09)	(0,10)	(0,20)	(0,64)	(0,11)	(0,48)
GDP per capita squared						-0.0189**
						(0,01)
Expenditure on education as a % of GDP		1.379**	2.141***	2.080***	1.420**	1.046*
		0,645	(0,70)	(0,76)	0,615	0,541
Rural			-0,077	-0,106		
			(0,11)	(0,14)		
Infant mortality				-0,147		
				(0,12)		
Female labour-force participation			-1.173***	-0.909**		
			(0,27)	(0,34)		
% of the population of pre-school age		-1.839***	-0,794	-1,128	-1.658***	-0,951
		(0,40)	(0,67)	(1,23)	(0,41)	(0,62)
Latin America and the Caribbean					9.417***	7.643***
					(2,37)	(2,38)
Constant	75.90***	96.04***	92.46***	104.2***	91.31***	79.49***
	(2,15)	(6,63)	(8,79)	(19,97)	(7,12)	(10,41)
Observations	101	80	62	40	80	80
R-squared	0,333	0,494	0,58	0,577	0,535	0,564

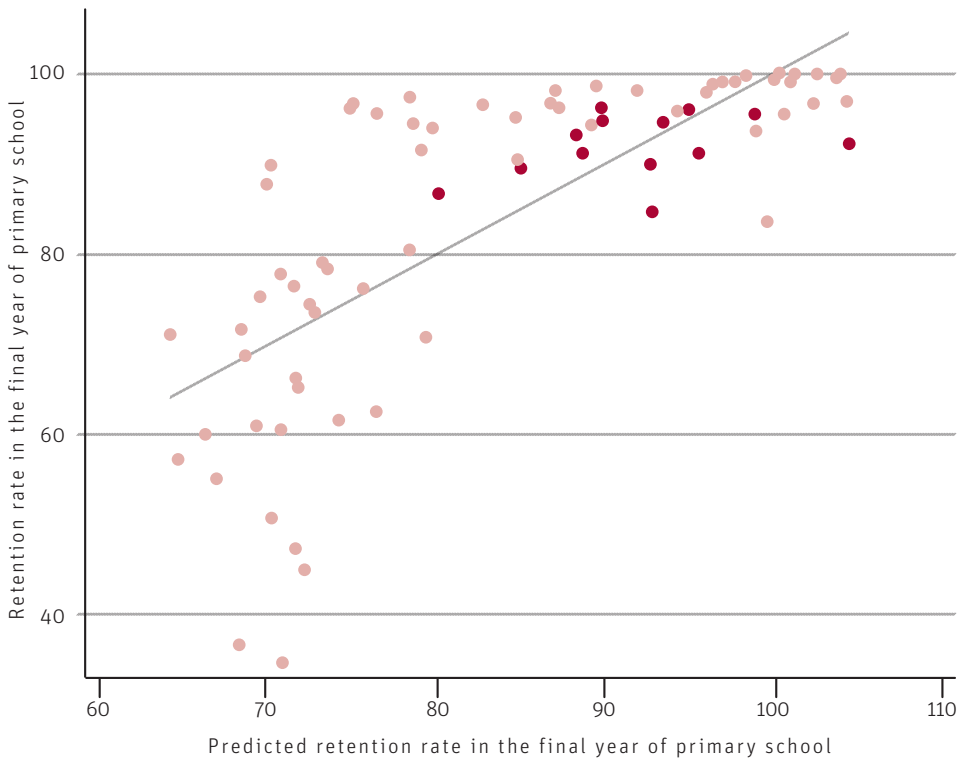
Note: The control variable "Expenditure on education as a percentage of government spending" was eliminated from the model, because it proved to be irrelevant.

\*\*\*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.05, \*p<0.1



## Relationship between the predicted and observed retention rate in the final year of primary school in 2010 (model 6; 80 countries).

The chart shows the relationship: each country is a dot, with Latin American countries in blue; the vertical distance to the regression line shows the difference between the real and expected enrolment rate given the characteristics of each country. A dot above the line shows a real rate above expectations and a dot below the line shows a real rate below expectations.



## Dependent variable: Net enrolment rate in secondary education in 2010.

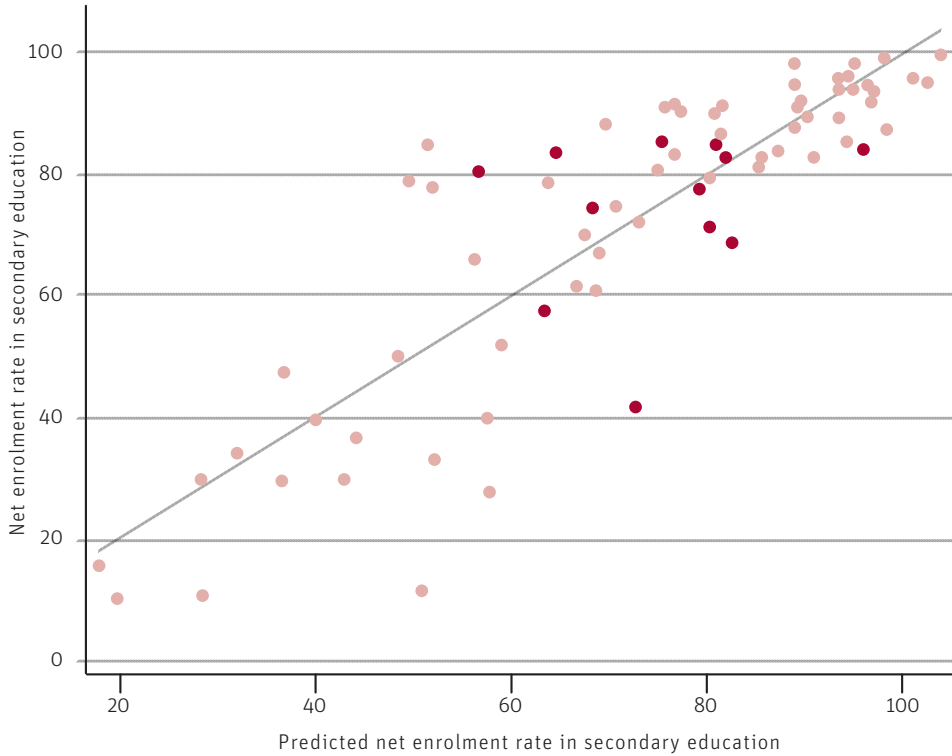
Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
GDP per capita	0.943*** (0,17)	0,111 (0,26)	0,128 (0,11)	0,0718 (0,19)	0,122 (0,19)	1.262*** (0,33)
GDP per capita squared						-0.0182*** (0,00)
Expenditure on education as a % of GDP		0,162 (0,91)	-0,515 (0,45)	0,411 (0,81)	0,537 (0,83)	0,0825 (0,71)
Rural		-0.271*** (0,10)	-0,062 (0,11)	-0,0508 (0,13)	-0,0472 (0,12)	0,0501 (0,11)
Primary school enrolment net rate		-4.479*** (0,92)	-1.507** (-0,73)	-3.579*** (1,01)	-3.471*** (0,98)	-2.808*** (0,95)
% of repeaters in primary school			1.003*** (0,09)			
% of the population of primary education age			0.571*** (0,18)	1.111*** (0,30)	1.089*** (0,31)	0.943*** (0,31)
Latin America and the Caribbean					4,437 (4,71)	4,495 (4,54)
Constant	56.77*** (3,42)	128.7*** (12,68)	-48.80* (24,60)	8,265 (39,04)	6,805 (38,93)	1,651 (37,50)
Observations	108	84	50	75	75	75
R-squared	0,333	0,638	0,908	0,715	0,719	0,747

Note: The control variable "Expenditure on education as a percentage of government spending" was eliminated from the model, because it proved to be irrelevant.

\*\*\*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.05, \*p<0.1

## Relationship between the predicted and observed net enrolment rate in secondary education in 2010 (model 6; 75 countries).

The chart shows the relationship: each country is a dot, with Latin American countries in blue; the vertical distance to the regression line shows the difference between the real and expected enrolment rate given the characteristics of each country. A dot above the line shows a real rate above expectations and a dot below the line shows a real rate below expectations.



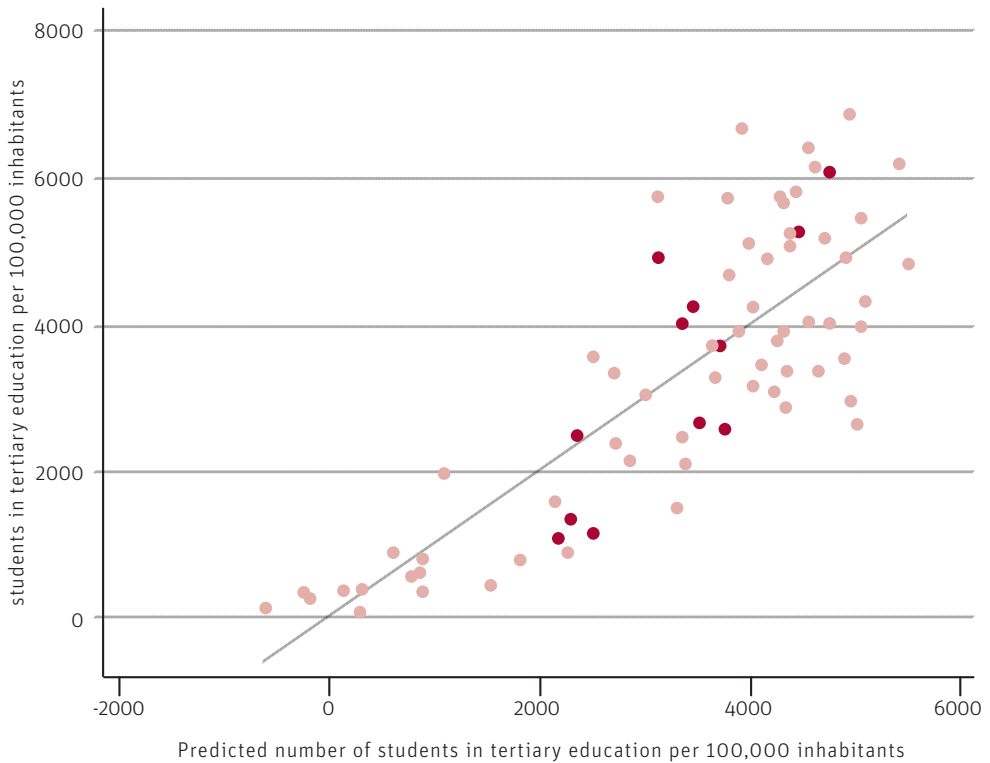
## Dependent variable: Number of students in tertiary education per 100,000 inhabitants in 2010

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
GDP per capita	58.39*** (19,07)	-49.55** (22,04)	-51.15** (19,62)	-41.03** (17,17)	-45.44** (17,80)	23,66 (39,34)
GDP per capita squared						-1.137** (0,49)
Expenditure on education as a % of government spending		100.1*** (36,35)				
Expenditure on education as a % of GDP			173.1** (65,23)	167.7*** (59,76)	159.4*** (59,56)	130.3** (54,74)
Rural		-48.54*** (11,24)	-45.87*** (10,18)	-38.31*** (9,85)	-39.09*** (9,93)	-33.77*** (10,21)
Net secondary education rate		43.18*** (6,82)	40.91*** (7,20)	45.55*** (7,11)	47.24*** (6,83)	39.48*** (7,62)
% of the population of tertiary education age		-141,3 (132,90)	-103,2 (122,70)			
LATIN					-434,2 (382,50)	-419 (371,10)
Constant	2,133*** (257,80)	2686 (1641,00)	2,962* (1528,00)	1277 (808,70)	1366 (824,80)	1286 (801,60)
Observations	128	53	60	74	74	74
R-squared	0,174	0,681	0,667	0,646	0,653	0,67

\*\*\*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.05, \*p<0.1

## Relationship between the predicted and observed number of students in tertiary education per 100,000 inhabitants in 2010 (model 6; 74 countries).

The chart shows the relationship: each country is a dot, with Latin American countries in blue; the vertical distance to the regression line shows the difference between the real and expected enrolment rate given the characteristics of each country. A dot above the line shows a real rate above expectations and a dot below the line shows a real rate below expectations.



## Descriptive statistics of the variables included in the regression analysis: EFA goals by 2010.

VARIABLE	Observations (countries)	Average	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
<b>DEPENDENT VARIABLES</b>					
Net enrolment rate in pre-primary education	127	53,67	31,65	1,77	99,51
Retention rate in the final year of primary school	102	84,66	16,09	34,58	99,95
Net enrolment rate in secondary education	112	70,81	24,17	10,23	99,54
Students in tertiary education per 100,000 inhabitants	135	2888,26	2008,20	72,00	7601,10
		(36,35)			
<b>EXPLANATORY VARIABLES</b>					
GDP per capita	172	12,15	13,42	0,32	69,80
Rural population percentage	182	44,97	22,48	1,20	89,00
Infant mortality	180	31,01	29,24	1,60	113,70
Female labour force participation	170	52,92	16,22	12,90	88,30
Net enrolment rate in primary education	98	67,13	18,92	16,38	98,54
Percentage of repeaters in primary education	115	6,62	6,49	0,50	33,87
Retention rate in the final year of primary school	109	83,11	18,45	26,96	99,95
Expenditure on education as a % of government spending	115	15,05	4,78	7,23	25,71
Expenditure on education as a % of GDP	131	4,97	2,10	1,19	13,97
Percentage of the population of pre-primary education age	185	5,24	2,65	1,16	13,35
Percentage of the population of primary education age	186	10,75	4,51	1,20	20,68
Percentage of the population of secondary education age	185	11,21	3,09	2,43	18,46
Percentage of the population of tertiary education age	143	8,98	1,63	1,81	12,65
Net enrolment rate in primary education	146	89,32	11,24	33,45	99,97

## ANNEX 2.

Results of regression analysis: Progress in Latin America during 2000 – 2010 regarding the achievement of EFA goals.

**Dependent variable: Net rate in pre-primary education (progress during 2000-2010).**

Variables	(1)	(2)
Progress in Latin America 2000-2010	14.29*	17.96**
	(8,28)	(8,68)
Latin America	1,39	-2,73
	(6,55)	(8,02)
Year	3,29	-3,08
	(4,20)	(4,35)
GDP		2.557***
		(0,44)
GDP2		-0.0323***
		(0,01)
Rural		-0,06
		(0,11)
% of the population of pre-school age		0,00
		(0,00)
Constant	46.56***	32.52***
	(3,44)	(8,95)
Observations	232	207

\*\*\*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.05, \*p<0.1

*Note: The control variable "Expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP" was also considered in the analysis process.*

**Dependent variable: Retention rate in the final year of primary school (progress during 2000-2010).**

Variables	(1)	(2)
Progress in Latin America during 2000-2010	4.310**	5.350**
	(2,10)	(2,35)
Latin America	1,86	-0,28
	(2,94)	(2,41)
Year	2.011*	-1,54
	(1,22)	(1,45)
GDP		1.223***
		(0,28)
GDP2		-0.0166***
		(0,00)
% of the population of primary education age		-0.999**
		(0,42)
Constant	81.53***	86.95***
	(1,78)	(7,56)
Observations	213	196

*Note: The control variables "Expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP" and "Rural population percentage" were also considered in the analysis process.*

\*\*\*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.05, \*p<0.1

**Dependent variable: Net enrolment rate in secondary education (progress during 2000-2010).**

Variables	(1)	(8)
Progress in Latin America during 2000-2010	1,58	11.53*
	(2,70)	(0,19)
Latin America	6,43	-7.263*
	(4,32)	(3,73)
Year	6.227***	0,62
	(0,96)	(2,76)
GDP		1.077***
		(0,24)
GDP2		-0.0158***
		(0,00)
Expenditure on education as a % of GDP		-0,10
		(0,46)
% of the population of secondary education age		-2.628***
		(0,66)
Primary education net rate		0.910***
		(0,14)
Constant	59.24***	6,89
	(2,86)	(16,32)
Observations	234	141

*Note: The control variable "Rural population percentage" was also considered in the analysis process.*

\*\*\*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.05, \*p<0.1



**Dependent variable: Number of students in tertiary education per 10,000 inhabitants (progress 2000-2010).**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(2)</b>
Latin America*Year	658.0*	-8,03
	(359,30)	(362,30)
Latin America	168,10	160,00
	(308,10)	(311,10)
Year	898.2***	707.5***
	(90,62)	(159,30)
GDP		74.88***
		(26,75)
GDP2		-1.774***
		(0,37)
Rural		-26.27***
		(7,92)
% of the population of tertiary education age		-0,11
		(0,12)
Secondary education net rate		25.60***
		(5,60)
Constant	1,783***	1,388**
	(132)	(663)
Observations	288	150

\*\*\*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.05, \*p<0.1

*Note: The control variable "Expenditure on education as a percentage of government spending" was also considered in the analysis process.*

### ANNEX 3.

#### *Projections for 2015*

This section describes the procedure used to develop projections of the achievement of some EFA indicators. Projections have been made for the 1998-2015 period and results have been obtained for one-year intervals. The estimate takes into account the whole region (Latin America and the Caribbean). The indicators selected for the projections were: gross enrolment rate in pre-primary education; net enrolment rate in pre-primary education; net enrolment rate in secondary education; and gross enrolment rate in tertiary education.

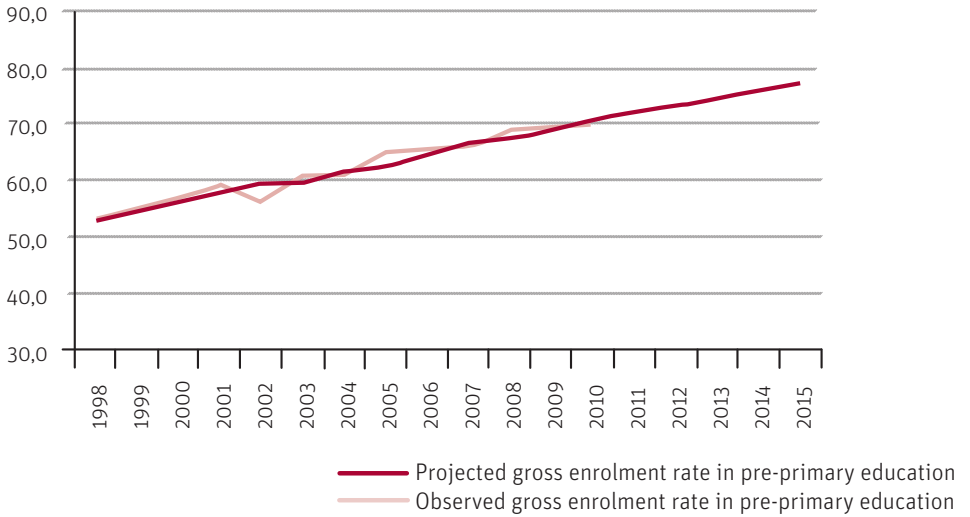
For the first projections, the series were smoothed using a double exponential smoothing method. The purpose of this technique is to develop estimators for a model that adequately describes the relationship of the  $Y_t$  series with its evolution over time. This procedure is applied to series whose average changes over time and also shows a trend, where the series can be modelled as followed:

$$Y_t = \beta_{0t} + \beta_{1t} + e_t$$

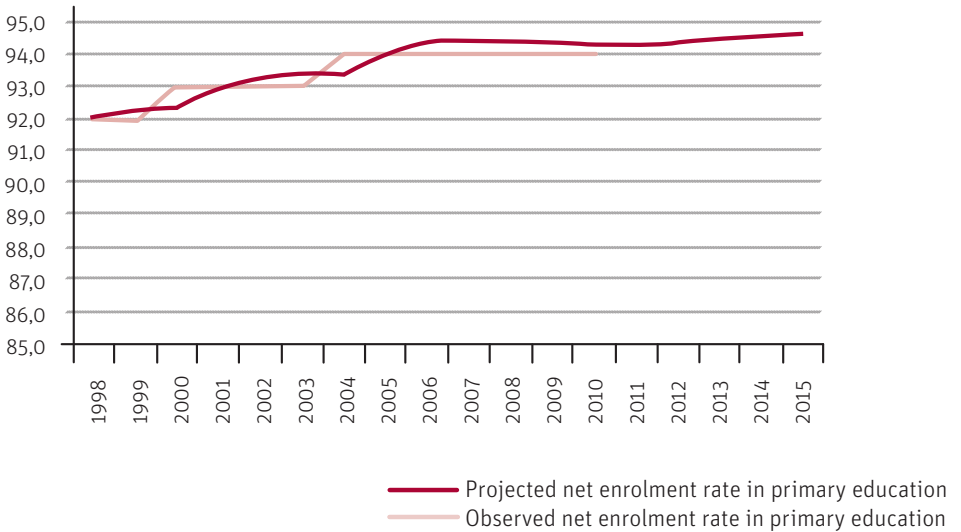
This allows the average of  $Y_t$  to depend on  $t$  and for the average to increase as time passes. Projections can be made from this smoothing, which are presented below.

<sup>23</sup> Estimates were made for the whole region rather than at country level on the basis of series developed by UNESCO. In view of the fact that data are missing at the country level, which would generate differences with the series developed by UNESCO, it was decided to use series developed by UNESCO for Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole and to base projections on these data.

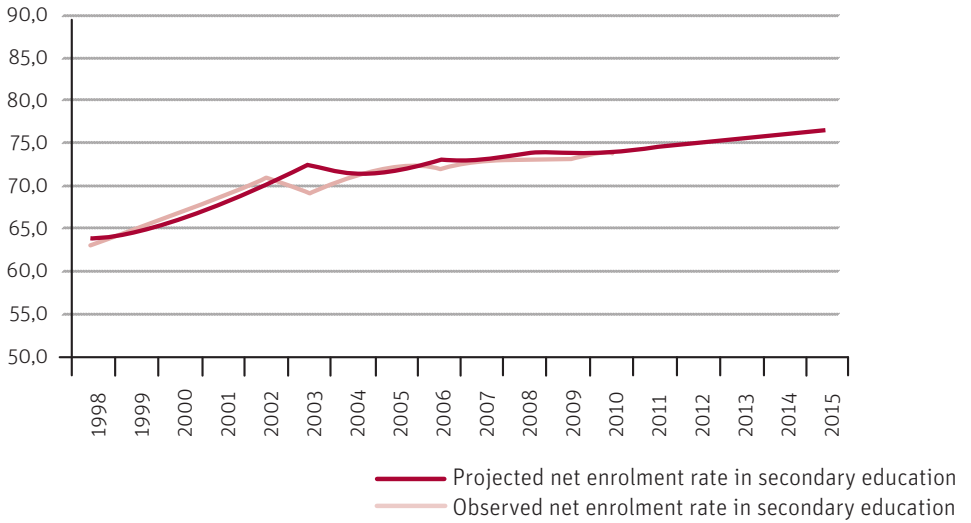
**Projected gross enrolment rate in pre-primary education for Latin America and the Caribbean (1998-2015).**



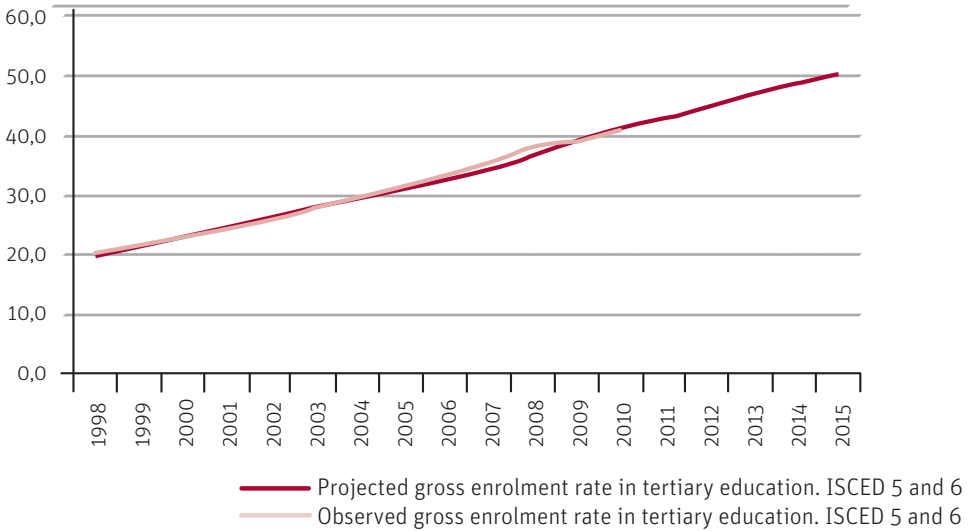
**Projected net enrolment rate in primary education for Latin America and the Caribbean (1998-2015).**



## Projected net enrolment rate in secondary education for Latin America and the Caribbean (1998-2015).



## Projected gross enrolment rate in tertiary education – ISCED 5 and 6 – for Latin America and the Caribbean (1998-2015).





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