

# QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL: A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

Educational policies within the framework of the  
II Intergovernmental Meeting of the Regional Project  
in Education for Latin America and the Caribbean  
(EFA/PRELAC). Background document.

March 29 - 30, 2007; Buenos Aires, Argentina



# QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

Educational policies within the framework of the  
II Intergovernmental Meeting of the Regional  
Project in Education for Latin America and the Caribbean  
(EFA/PRELAC). Background document.

March 29 - 30, 2007; Buenos Aires, Argentina



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

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

© UNESCO, Regional Bureau of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC/UNESCO Santiago)

**Working team:**

*Director:*

Rosa Blanco

*Authors:*

Alfredo Astorga

Rosa Blanco

Cesar Guadalupe

Ricardo Hevia

Margarita Nieto

Magaly Robalino

Alfredo Rojas

OREALC/UNESCO Santiago would like to thank UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP-Buenos Aires) for its contribution to the contents of Chapter IV of this document. We would also like to extend our gratitude towards United Nations' Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), particularly its Division of Social Development, for their assistance and constant sharing of information.

The entire professional staff of OREALC/UNESCO Santiago participated in various working sessions aimed at defining the structure and contents of this document, as well as in revisions of its various drafts: Gloria Alberti, Marcelo Avilés, Mary Bend, Iván Castro, Mauricio Castro, Gilles Cavaletto, Javier Córdoba, Ricardo Cuenca, Gulliana Espinosa, Carolina Hirmas, María Luisa Jáuregui, Carolina Jerez, Anton Körner, Beatriz Macedo, Nora Mora, Javier Murillo, Libe Narvarte, Paz Portales, Carol Salgado, Daniel Taccari, Lilia Toranzos, Usune Zuazo.

The members of the working team are responsible for the contents of this document. The opinions expressed herein are theirs alone and not necessarily those of UNESCO.

The names used in this publication do not imply on the part of UNESCO any opinion or position in regard to the legal status of countries, cities, territories, or zones; nor regarding their authorities or the drawing of their borders.

This publication is available on-line at [www.unesco.cl](http://www.unesco.cl) and may be reproduced in its entirety or in part provided that explicit reference always be made to the source.

Design and lay-out: Marcela Veas

ISBN: 978-956-8302-70-2

Santiago, Chile. February 2007

## CONTENTS

Preface .....	5
Executive Summary .....	7
1. Human Rights and Social Inclusion: Keys to Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. ....	15
2. The Move from Equal Access to Equality in the Quality of Learning .....	23
3. Teachers and Guaranteeing the Right to Education.....	47
4. The Financing of Quality Education for All: Four Critical Themes. ....	61
5. Policy Recommendations .....	79
References .....	103

## PREFACE

This document is intended to aid in the deliberations of the Second Intergovernmental Meeting of the Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean, PRELAC, to be held in March 2007 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The central theme is a quality education for all, with education being understood as a public good and basic human right that States have the obligation to respect, foster, and protect in order to assure equal opportunity of access to knowledge for the entire population.

The countries of the region have made outstanding efforts to increase the coverage of compulsory education, improve infrastructure, design new curricula, and improve teacher training. However, it is necessary to redouble efforts in order to achieve the goals of Education for All. The most vulnerable individuals and groups are at a disadvantage in regards to access to and continuation of study and learning achievement. This shows the need to improve the design of public policies and to develop specific activities in order to achieve a quality education for all. The region must move from providing equal access to education towards guaranteeing equal opportunity to a quality education and improved learning results.

The first chapter of this document presents an overview of the regional context, showing major political, social, economic, and cultural changes that have occurred since 2000, and addresses the challenges that these changes currently present for education. Although the last four years have witnessed improvements in national economic indicators, widespread poverty and unequal distribution of income produce social and cultural fragmentation expressed in high rates of exclusion and violence. Within this scenario, it is necessary to reflect on how education can contribute to economic growth, reduce inequality, foster social mobility, aid in living with diversity, and achieve greater social cohesion and the strengthening of democratic values.

Chapter 2 presents the position of the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean in regard to the attributes that comprise a quality education for all. It begins with a brief overview of different conceptions of quality currently present in the region, where the concept of quality as being related to efficiency and efficacy is frequently seen.

Besides being efficacious and efficient, quality education viewed as a fundamental right should respect the rights of all persons, and be relevant, pertinent, and equitable. The exercise of the right to education is essential for personality development and in order to implement other rights; therefore, no one can be excluded. The right to education means the right to life-long learning. It is based on the principles of free and obligatory schooling and the right to not suffer discrimination.

Relevance refers to the development of skills necessary for individuals to be able to participate in different areas of human life and to construct life projects in relation to others. Pertinence speaks to the need to make education more flexible so that it can respond to the diversity of individual needs and contexts. Equity means assuring equal opportunity to access a quality education for all, providing each person with the resources and aid required. Efficacy and efficiency are attributes of public action that show us the extent to which objectives are adequately achieved and how resources dedicated to education are utilized.

The subsequent chapters address two themes – teachers and financing – critical in making the right to education a reality. The first theme begins with reflections on the tasks of teachers in the current complex scenario, and then discusses key factors that influence the quality of teaching and which need to be considered in the formulation of comprehensive teacher policies. These factors include creating: an inter-woven system of initial teacher training, placement, and subsequent in-service skills enhancement; transparent career development and assessment; and appropriate working and welfare conditions. The chapter concludes by

describing the characteristics of state, integrated, systemic, and inter-sectoral policies necessary for fostering the strengthening of the teaching profession.

The chapter on the financing of education presents four critical themes necessary for offering a quality education for all. The first deals with the availability of public resources and mechanisms necessary to achieve greater investments in education such as contributions from the private sector, foreign debt swaps, and international cooperation. The second point addresses the need to improve the efficiency and management of resources by facing the problems of grade repetition and inadequate management policies. A third point deals with resource allocation mechanisms to foster more equitable distribution, while emphasizing the fact that the costs of a quality education are different according to the needs and characteristics of students and contexts, and recommending the avoidance of making flat resource allocations. The fourth point analyzes current management schemes and concludes by emphasizing the need to move toward consensus and a new fiscal pact in order to guarantee financing and management that are appropriate to needs.

The document concludes with eleven recommendations for educational policies that must be addressed in the mid and long-terms in order to fulfill the objectives of a quality education for all within the framework of the five strategic focuses of PRELAC. These involve general policy measures as well as changes in the different levels of educational systems – especially in schools. State policies must be comprehensive, integrated, and rights-focused and arrived at through agreements between governments and society.



**Ana Luiza Machado**

Director

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

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### I. Human rights and social inclusion: keys to the development of Latin America and the Caribbean.

1. Although during the last four years the Latin American and Caribbean region has improved its economic indicators, it has done so at a rate below that which is required for achieving – prior to 2015 – the development objectives to which it committed itself in the Millennium Goals. The extension of poverty (209 million people) and extreme poverty (81 million), as well as unequal income distribution – the worst in the world – correlate with social and cultural fragmentation that is expressed in high rates of exclusion and violence as well in high degrees of corruption and a fragile “democratic density”.
2. With this in mind, the proposal for life-long quality education for all in the region faces at least four important challenges:
  - a) How to effectively contribute to economic growth, a key factor that affects the well-being of all persons;
  - b) How to contribute to reducing social inequalities and become a true channel for social mobility;
  - c) How to help combat cultural discrimination, social exclusion, and to prevent violence and corruption;
  - d) How to contribute to greater social cohesion and to strengthening democratic values, broadening the options for people to live with dignity, value diversity, and respect human rights.

### II. Quality education for all from a human rights-based focus

3. The countries of the region have made considerable efforts to, among other things, increase obligatory education, improve infrastructure, design new curricula, and improve teacher training. Nevertheless, there are persistent problems in the quality of education which affect, to a large extent, the most vulnerable individuals and groups. These people find themselves in situations of inequality regarding access to and continuity of studies and in terms of learning achievements. It is necessary to improve the design of public educational policies and develop specific actions in order to achieve a quality education for all.
4. The meaning of “quality education” varies, depending upon the kinds of people and societies that countries demand in order to prepare their citizens. One of the most frequent focuses is to equate quality with efficiency and efficacy – considering education to be a product and service that must satisfy its users. Undoubtedly, these dimensions are important. But they are insufficient.
5. From the perspective of OREALC/UNESCO Santiago, the quality of education, in terms of being a basic right of all persons, must combine the following dimensions: *respect for rights, relevance, pertinence, equity, efficiency, and efficacy*.
6. Education as a *human right* and public good makes it possible for people to exercise their other human rights. For this reason, no one may be excluded from education. The right to education is exercised to the extent that people, in addition to having

access to schooling, are able to fully develop and continue to learn. This means that education must be a life-long, quality education for all.

7. The rights-based focus in education is centered on the principle that schooling *be free* and *obligatory* and on the rights of non-discrimination and full participation. The extension of obligatory education has been increased throughout the entire region to cover the so-called lower secondary level, and, in some cases, has also been extended to include upper secondary and early childhood levels as well. An increased level of education for the entire population is a crucial element for a country's human development— both to raise productivity and strengthen democracy, as well as to increase the possibility for individuals to attain a higher quality of life.
8. Truly free schooling is a pending task in the region, since in many cases parents are obliged to assume the obligations of the State through direct costs such as enrollment, indirect costs such as food and transportation, and through "opportunity costs" incurred when children attend school rather than working and contributing to family income. Poor families dedicate a greater proportion of their income to educational costs than do the more fortunate.
9. Given the fundamental role that public schools play in guaranteeing the right to education, especially for the poor, the weakened condition of these schools and the increasing gap between them and private institutions is of concern. Public schools should seek to eliminate all expenses incurred by families, since these are obstacles to enrollment and attendance. Complementary measures aimed at compensating for the "opportunity costs" involved are necessary.
10. Guaranteeing the right to *non-discrimination* is a sine qua non condition for exercising the right to education. The basic principles that guide education must be the same for all people, regardless of their origin or condition. But it is also necessary to consider some differentiated rights or specific recommendations for particular minority groups or those who are especially vulnerable. The United Nations System has adopted various conventions and declarations in order to assure equal opportunity in the full exercise of the right to education.
11. Assuring the right to *non-discrimination* involves eliminating the different practices that not only limit access to education, but also the continuation of studies and full personal development and learning as well. The selection and expulsion of students are widely extended practices in educational systems. These practices, besides violating the right to education, limit social integration and cohesion and lead to the concentration of those with greater educational needs in particular schools – especially public schools in underprivileged areas.
12. The right to *non-discrimination* is closely related to that of participation. Participation is of vital importance for the exercise of citizenship and is related to participating in social life and to the possibility of sharing decision-making in things that affect the lives of individuals and their communities. It is, then, linked to freedom of expression, which is a fundamental right in democratic societies.
13. The tensions between quality and equity, and between inclusion and segregation, are objects of controversy in various countries. Quality and equity are not incompatible; but furthermore, are vitally linked. Education possesses quality if it offers the resources and aid that each person requires in order to have equal conditions to be able to take advantage of educational opportunities and to exercise the right to education.
14. From the perspective of *equity*, one must balance the principles of equality (that which is common) and differentiation (that which is diverse). Educational systems have the



obligation to assure equity in three dimensions: in access, in process, and in results. Education should address in differentiated manners that which is unequal in terms of origin, in order to arrive at comparable results and not reproduce current social inequalities.

15. Advancing toward greater equity in the region assumes developing more inclusive schools that receive all children of the community, transforming school practices and culture in order to respond to the learning needs of all. The development of inclusive schools is vital in order to have more just and democratic societies. Due to their nature, public schools must be inclusive and foster the encounter between different social groups.
16. *Relevance* responds to the “what?” and “what for?” of education. From a rights-based focus and in addition to confronting exclusion, one must ask what are the purposes of education and if these represent the aspirations of society as a whole and not only those of particular power-holding groups. Education possesses quality if it fosters the development of skills necessary for participating in the different areas of human life, to confront the challenges of today’s societies, and if it develops life projects in relation with other people. The comprehensive development of human personality is one of the purposes assigned to education in all international instruments and in national legislation throughout the region. Education is also relevant if it focuses on the purposes that are fundamental at a given moment within given contexts as a political and social project.
17. Selection of what constitutes the most relevant learning acquires special meaning in today’s knowledge society in which potential educational content multiplies rapidly while former educational topics lose their pertinence just as quickly. The overloaded nature of current curricula makes it urgently necessary to decide what kinds of learning are most relevant and should be part of school-based education. This selection should be made considering in what way particular kinds of learning contribute to achieving the end-goals of education while seeking balance between social demands, those of personal development and those based on the social and cultural project to be fostered by education. The four pillars of education of the Delors Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century –*learning to know, to do, to be, and to live together*– are an indispensable reference for establishing what should be the most basic and relevant kinds of learning in education.
18. The *pertinence* of education refers to the need for education to be meaningful for people of different social and cultural strata and with different capacities and interests so that they may take ownership of the content of world and local culture and develop their self-autonomy, self-government, and their own identities. In order to be pertinent, education must be flexible and adapt to the needs and characteristics of students within different social and cultural contexts. This requires moving from a pedagogy of homogeneity toward one of diversity, seeing diversity as an opportunity to enrich teaching and learning processes and to optimize personal and social development.
19. Development of a relevant and meaningful curriculum for the entire population faces a series of dilemmas that should be seen as balances to be achieved: between world and local, universal and singular. That is, to become a citizen of the world and to actively participate in one’s community of origin; to achieve a balance between the needs of the labor market and those of personal development, between that which is common and that which is diverse; and between individual disciplines and the integration of content.

20. *Efficacy* and *efficiency* are two basic attributes of a quality education for all that should be central in the concerns of public action in the area of education. It is necessary to identify the extent to which education is *efficacious* in translating the right to a quality education for all into concrete terms. It is necessary to analyze the degree to which public education is *efficient* in respecting the right of citizens to have their material efforts adequately recognized and honored. Efficiency is not an economic imperative; but rather an obligation based on respect for the condition and citizens-rights of all people.

### III. Teachers and assuring the right to education

21. The quality of teachers and the environment generated in classrooms, excluding extra-school variables, are the most important factors for explaining the learning results of students. This means that policies aimed at improving the quality of education can only be viable if efforts are centered on transforming, with teachers, the culture of schools. At the same time, without the active cooperation of teachers, no educational reform can be successful.
22. The countries of the region face the challenge of implementing policies and strategies that guarantee having teachers with appropriate professional competencies and high ethical standards, as well as providing the necessary means to make effective the right of students to learn and fully develop. Actions that countries have carried out in order to improve the quality of teachers work have had less impact than expected, in spite of great efforts made. The two most frequent efforts have been raising salary levels and implementing large-scale, in-service teacher training programs. These measures, although necessary, are insufficient.
23. Achieving good professional performance demands addressing a set of factors that are vital for the development and strengthening of the cognitive, pedagogical, ethical, and social skills of teachers in a comprehensive manner. Three of these require priority attention by countries: an inter-related system of initial training and ongoing professional development; a transparent and motivating career development and teacher assessment system; and an appropriate system of teacher working and welfare conditions.
24. In order to attract the most well-qualified candidates to the profession, to retain the best professionals, and to guarantee their on-going development, partial actions and those in reaction to specific, momentary conditions are not enough. What are needed are comprehensive State policies of a systemic nature that are enriched by a cross-cutting perspective. A fundamental aspect for the viability of these policies is their formulation in a broad social and political consensus that involves long-term solutions, stimulates a culture of co-responsibility, and can be translated into concrete agendas and commitments.
25. The participation of teachers in educational changes is vital in order for them to be successful. For this to happen, conditions and institutional mechanisms to strengthen the active participation of teachers in the formulation of educational policies must be created. This will therefore facilitate reversal of the traditional focus that treats teachers as followers of directions and decisions defined without their input or knowledge. Disregarding teachers' experiences has limited the ability of educational policies to be translated into effective school and classroom practices. Ideally, States and societies should guarantee that teachers enjoy better working conditions, while teachers should be required to demonstrate the highest levels of performance, translated into the effective learning of their students.

#### IV. Financing a quality education for all

26. It is necessary to revise traditional educational financing schemes in order to produce the changes necessary for States to fulfill their roles as guarantors of the right of all to a quality education. The allocation of public resources is *clearly insufficient*. Efforts must be made to determine the cost of providing a quality education in different contexts while overcoming homogenized approaches and resource allocations based solely on what has been done in the past.
27. Increasing public financing of education necessarily passes through the investigation of different options that include, among others, greater participation of non-governmental actors, debt swaps, or international cooperation. There are, however, two key factors to consider: a substantial increase in the priority assigned to education in terms of the public resources invested, and a radical improvement in the efficiency of educational systems. Changes in these factors can produce significant increases in available resources, and are a reflection of social commitment to education. One of the many negative effects of current inefficiencies is the limitation of the possibility of legitimately calling for greater investments. Spending better is indispensable for spending more.
28. Together with the availability of necessary resources, the management schemes for them must correspond to a rights-based focus. Flat resource allocations in the region do not correspond to the diversity of situations that education faces and therefore cannot assure comparable learning experiences for all. This means that spending schemes must be revised so that the concern for equity is not just another added factor, but rather a fundamental part of the design process of financing policies. The essentially redistributive character of public action in education cannot be resolved only by using marginal finances but rather, demands that the financing of education place concern for equity at the center of all decisions. This involves a revision of current legal regulations and management schemes that resist flexibility in the educational system, particularly in the area of teacher contracts which currently represent the majority of educational budget allocations.
29. All of the above require social agreements that sustain and facilitate the fiscal and regulatory changes necessary to allow greater resource allocation and management flexibility, as an appropriate response to diversity.

#### Policy recommendations

30. In order to effectively guarantee the right of a quality education for all, educational policies should have some general attributes, the absence or scant development of which have limited the range of many efforts carried out by countries in recent years: State policies agreed upon with society; integral and integrated policies and those with a rights-based focus. Presented below is a set of eleven educational policy areas where it is necessary to act in the middle and long-term in order for the region to progress more decisively toward achieving the EFA goals.
31. Assure the role of the State as guarantor and regulator of the universal right to a quality education. States must foster, protect, and guarantee this right through:
  - Providing educational services accessible to all of the population.
  - Assure a plurality of offerings that allow parents the ability to choose the kind of education they desire for their children, without this violating the right to education.

- Define basic quality criteria for all schools.
  - Strengthen public schools and improve their quality.
  - Establish regulations that avoid different forms of discrimination, improving existing systems of guarantees.
  - Guarantee mechanisms for treating the causes of inequality that occur outside educational systems.
32. Assure the right to life-long learning. It is necessary to move away from linear systems organized by grades and age and toward flexible systems with diverse and interrelated modalities and trajectories. Primary education has historically been the level most served. For this reason – and without forgetting that there are pending debts at the primary level - more effort must be focused on early childhood, secondary, and adult education.
33. Move from homogenized and standardized focuses toward comprehensive educational policies, taking into account diversity along with social cohesion.
- Take diversity into account in the design of general policies, which will reduce the needs to create targeted programs and allow for strategies meeting specific needs be carried out within a general framework for serving diversity.
  - Contemplate specific strategies for guaranteeing particular groups the right to quality education under equal conditions: paying attention to cultural and linguistic diversity; isolated geographic areas; gender, individual differences; and to those who have special educational needs.
34. Emphasize policies aimed at guaranteeing inclusion.
- Grant priority of access to early childhood care and education programs to children in situations of vulnerability.
  - Develop schools with diversified classes.
  - Implement support systems in order to identify and serve those with learning difficulties.
  - Provide computer resources to students in order to improve learning and equity: one laptop per child.
35. Equitable distribution of resources in order to assure free quality public schooling for all.
- Increase the priority assigned to education in public budgets and mobilize a larger quantity of the available resources.
  - Equitably redistribute public resources, analyzing the different needs of people and schools in order to program the differentiated costs required for responding to them.
  - Calculate direct, indirect, and opportunity costs in order to carry out a policy of truly free schools.
  - Improve the managerial efficiency of the system.
  - Foster national agreements in favor of education in order to increase resources and encourage change in norms that introduce rigidity and inefficiency into the system.
36. Improve the balance in allocations of tasks and responsibilities between different levels of management, strengthening the active participation of local actors. It is necessary

to move from an emphasis on the design of national or sub-national educational policies that must be implemented at the local level to a different approach that enables local actors so they may make decisions regarding school operation. To do so, there is a need for:

- Technical and administrative support in order to guarantee the development of skills and the resources for exercising delegated responsibilities.
  - Supervision and monitoring in order to determine if the country as a whole is progressing towards guaranteeing the right to education and if there are problem areas that demand additional efforts of central authorities.
  - Coordination of different plans or actions developed on the local level.
37. Comprehensive policies for strengthening the teaching profession. Teacher policies must be systemic, comprehensive, and cross-cutting State policies that make possible:
- Creating and strengthening coordinated systems of initial training, placement, and professional development.
  - Assuring the role of schools as centers for the training and professional development of teachers.
  - Strengthening teacher career plans, interrelated with teacher assessment, professional development, and salary.
  - Developing cross-cutting programs and sectoral programs that contribute to creating adequate working and personal welfare conditions for teachers.
  - Generating policy and technical skills for the formulation of comprehensive and cross-cutting policies relating to teachers.
38. Design and development of relevant and pertinent curricula for all students. Permanently up-date curricular designs and give priority to curricular development processes, while paying particular attention to:
- Essential skills for the exercise of world and local citizenship.
  - Skills related to *learning to be* and *learning to do* because these are the dimensions least present in curricula of the region.
  - Open and flexible designs that can enrich and be adapted to the learning needs of each person and to the characteristics of contexts, fostering inter-cultural education for all.
  - Development of educational materials that allow new focuses on learning to be put into practice.
  - Training processes sustained over time so that groups of teachers can develop skills required for curricular design and development.
  - Assistance systems to support teacher teams in adapting and enriching the curriculum.
39. Policies that have as a focus the transformation of schools so that they may be more inclusive and achieve better learning. Offering a quality education with the described dimensions demands a *new school* model and the development of policies that facilitate putting such a model into practice. Additional resources are of little use if changes do not take place in school culture, organization, and practice. The characteristics of this model should be:

- An inclusive and participatory culture.
  - Learning and collaboration communities.
  - Organizational and pedagogical flexibility.
  - Sufficient and equitable human and material resources in order to meet the variety of student learning needs.
  - Teaching teams committed to the learning of students and their professional development.
  - School principals as pedagogical leaders.
  - Schools open to the community and to working in networks.
  - Schools with the competencies and resources necessary for exercising their autonomy.
40. Coordinated educational assessment policies aimed at the progressive improvement of the quality of education and of the functioning of educational systems.

It is important to instill a culture of assessment, coherent with the concept of quality education as a right. Such a culture should incorporate and take advantage of the experience gained in the region through national and sub-national assessment systems, while going beyond and enriching this experience through diversification of the assessment of the different components that determine the proper function of educational systems.

It is therefore suggested:

- To develop integrated assessment policies that coordinate assessment activities of educational systems and their various components.
  - To strengthen and optimize student assessment systems, considering:
    - broadening assessment frameworks beyond the instrumental areas traditionally assessed
    - incorporating the criteria of diversity of students within assessments
    - employing diversified methodological strategies
    - linking these systems to curricular development and expected learning outcomes, and
    - improving the dissemination and use of generated information.
  - To develop and improve teacher performance assessment systems and those of schools, complementing external processes with self-assessment.
  - To open up discussion on the need to assess educational management in the region.
  - To coordinate educational assessment processes with systems of information.
41. Construction of integrated educational information systems that provide timely, reliable, and relevant information for decision-making. It is necessary to revise and integrate the analytical models of different information sub-systems so that that these can adjust to a perspective centered on the nature of education as a fundamental human right. Information and knowledge generated by research that is usually developed outside State entities should be considered.

## CHAPTER I

### HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL INCLUSION: KEYS TO DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN.

#### 1. The Millennium Development Goals: overcoming poverty and inequalities.

At the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, which called together heads of state and government in September of 2000, countries committed themselves to achieving eight development objectives by 2015 (Resolution AG 8/09/2000). These objectives are based on a sustainable development concept supported by the realization of human rights. The concept of sustainable human development outlines the importance of economic growth, the need for equitable re-distribution of wealth in order to overcome poverty, integration of women into all spheres of public life, the self-determination of all peoples, including indigenous groups, care for the environment, and improvement in the capacity of people to decide their own futures (UN, 2001). According to this development view, and from the perspective of how education can contribute to it, UNESCO has defined development as "the process that increases the effective freedom of people to carry out that which they value" (UNESCO, 1996a).

The eight Millennium Development Goals are aimed at combating manifestations of poverty that prevent people from being able to achieve improved well-being in their lives. They are:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
2. Achieve universal primary education;
3. Promote gender equality and empower women;
4. Reduce child mortality;
5. Improve maternal health;
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
7. Ensure environmental sustainability;
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have reiterated their commitment and political will to achieve these objectives in order to reduce poverty, broaden educational opportunities, and achieve development. This has not been easy. During recent years some public policies implemented by governments in the region have facilitated the appearance of barriers that will likely impede some countries from achieving the proposed goals within the allotted time frame.

The majority of these barriers are the result of economic policies that, although in some instances have been successful in stabilizing economies through control of inflation and fiscal deficits, achieving a balance of payments, and supporting trade liberalization, have not acted with the same determination to reduce poverty and inequalities within the agreed-upon time frames.

In recent years, Latin America and the Caribbean have made significant efforts, and poverty has been reduced - but at a slower pace than desired. In 2005 (ECLAC, 2006), 39.8% of the Latin American population was still living in conditions of poverty (209 million people), and 15.4% (81 million) was in extreme poverty. These figures represent an improvement over those of 2002, when poverty and extreme poverty were at 44% and 19.4%, respectively. In

absolute terms this means that between 2002 and 2005, poverty was decreased by 12 million people and extreme poverty fell by 16 million. This means that for the first time, the poverty rate decreased below its 1980 level, where 40.5% of the population was defined as being poor.

Although we do not currently have such promising figures regarding poverty reduction up until 2006, in 2005 a study carried out by ECLAC (2005) analyzing the situation of 18 Latin American countries concluded that if they continued to perform as they had during the 1990s, in 2015 only seven will have adequately fulfilled their goal of reducing extreme poverty<sup>1</sup>; another six will have only slowly decreased it<sup>2</sup>; and the remaining five<sup>3</sup> will likely see their poverty levels rise, either due to increased inequality or through a reduction of per capita income, or due to both situations occurring at the same time.

In order to be able to reduce extreme poverty by one-half by 2015, countries must make efforts to significantly increase their rates of economic growth. It is estimated that the poorest countries must grow at an average annual rate of 7% - a rate very difficult to achieve. On the other hand, those that are less poor can achieve the goals by maintaining current growth rates (ECLAC, 2005). Although 2006 was the fourth consecutive year of economic growth in the region - the best performance within the last 25 years -, and was aided by favorable performance of the major world economies, average growth rates continue to be low (2.2% between 1980 and 2000) (ECLAC, 2006) if compared with the necessity countries have of fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals.

Furthermore, in spite of the fact that poverty in many countries has decreased, the inequality of income distribution continues to be of great concern in Latin America and the Caribbean. Regionally, the 10% wealthiest part of the population surpasses that of the 40% poorest by a factor of 20 or more. Among the causes attributed to the unequal distribution of income are unequal distribution of goods, which is even more marked than that of income; the demographic composition of households (families with fewer resources have more children than those with more resources); education (the poor have not yet reached an education threshold that would allow them to rise out of poverty); employment (poor households are more numerous and have fewer members receiving an income); and finally, regressive, rather than progressive social spending, not completing its redistributive role (in many countries, the wealthiest quintile of the population benefits from a percentage of social spending that is similar to that of the poorest quintile) (Franco, 2002).

Although social spending (in education, health, and social security, among others) has increased in the decade from 10.1% to 18.8% of public spending (Bárcena, 2005), in general these resources have not been distributed in an equitable fashion; therefore, social spending has not been converted into an effective redistribution tool.

However, there are differences in terms of the effect that different components of social spending have in terms of their influence on income redistribution. In effect, the public resources allocated to social security are very concentrated in medium and high income levels, and therefore do not have a greater impact on improving the conditions that cause inequalities. For their part, the resources dedicated to education tend to reach broader segments of the population. The redistributive efficacy of targeting spending depends both on investment efforts and the provision of services to lower income levels, and of beneficiaries having effective access to their benefits. This means that achieving universal conclusion of primary education with comparable learning results, universalization of secondary education, and the progressive growth of higher education are among the most important challenges of education policies aimed at the redistribution of income and social equity (ECLAC, 2005).

---

1 Argentina (before the crisis), Chile, Colombia, Honduras, Panama, Dominican Republic, Uruguay.

2 Brazil, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Nicaragua.

3 Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela.



The challenge for countries is to institutionalize social policies that assure minimum guaranteed benefits for the entire population. Although targeted policies are important, they are not sufficient for constructing more equitable societies in a stable fashion. Although these policies have had a positive short-term impact, if they are extended in time they can end up establishing a situation that is segmented in terms of the quality of social benefits (education for the poor, and for everyone else; health for the poor, and for everyone else), which reinforces inequalities in trajectories and results, no matter how great the effort made through them to equalize opportunities of access (ECLAC, 2005).

Undoubtedly, economic policies are the most important explanatory variable for the increase or decrease of poverty, as well as for creating more or less equality in the distribution of income. However, it is difficult to say at what time, and in what countries which particular kinds of policies should be fostered, given that similar economic policy measures may produce quite different results in different countries, given the fact that the poor produce and consume different goods and their sources of income are affected in different ways (Ganuza, 2002).

In addition, investment in science and the use of new technologies, still scarce throughout the region, appear to be vital necessities in order to improve the internal scientific development of countries and in this way, form social capital, incorporate added value, and raise productivity levels in order to combat poverty. This is a direct challenge for the design of education policies that should avoid widening the digital divide, which could result in even more inequalities between those who have and those who do not have access to the use of new technologies.

Enrique Ganuza (2002) states that, for a variety of reasons, macroeconomic policies in recent years have not had the positive impacts expected of them. Policy design in various countries has been made similar, when in fact diverse policies have been needed; stabilizing mechanisms have been excessively recessive, strongly affecting production and employment; the sequence of reforms was not appropriate (sufficient levels of supervision were not created simultaneously with processes of deregulation); privatizations were encouraged before private initiative could materialize; and social protection networks began to be considered when the number of the poor had already greatly increased.

The result of the application of these policies has been a greater concentration of wealth, an increase in social exclusion, unemployment, the informal economy and job precariousness - all of which has had a negative impact on the productive capacities and growth of countries. Contrary to what was formerly thought, that low growth produces inequality, analyses now agree that inequality is one of the causes that affect the rate and quality of economic growth (Franco, 2002; Ganuza, 2002).

## **2. The challenges for social, political, and cultural inclusion.**

Together with the challenges of economic growth and overcoming inequalities, Latin America and the Caribbean must face the social, political, and cultural exclusion of much of its population, particularly those of indigenous and African descent, with still greater resolution. Ours is the region of the world with the greatest income inequality. Today, social polarization is increasing due, among other things, to the effects of globalization, the presence of which has not had the same repercussions for all sectors of the population.

This history of poverty and inequality has led to a situation of social exclusion in which many people living near to each other maintain markedly different ways of life. To this is added the irruption in recent years of indigenous movements in the political and social arenas, the effect of which has been greater visibility of a structural discrimination that is expressed in marginality, exclusion, and poverty. The international legal order has developed a special area

on the collective rights of indigenous peoples (ILO, 1989; UN, 2006) that addresses the rights to non-discrimination, cultural preservation, access to land, development, social well-being, and political participation (CEPAL, 2006). States are called upon to adopt these resolutions that, for the case of education, represent enormous economic, technical, and political challenges. Similarly, the steady increase of migrant populations which have been displaced as a result of internal wars, violence, and poverty also constitutes a challenge for educational policies.

This polarized society, which makes visible the divide between wealthy and poor, indigenous and non-indigenous in an unprecedented way, those of African descent and whites, also provides fertile ground for the increase of insecurity and violence. Among males, the mortality rate due to homicides for the Americas as a whole in 2000 was 17.8 per 100,000 inhabitants. But when we disaggregate the data by sub-region, it rises to 25.1 in Latin America and the Caribbean (PAHO, 2005), thus making it one of the highest in the world. Moreover, death caused by homicide varies as a function of income levels. While for the high income levels death by homicide among males in 2000 was 6.5 per 100,000 inhabitants, for low and middle income males it was 27.5 (WHO, 2003). Social inequality cannot be considered the only cause of increases in violence. Violence is also related to different expectations resulting from differences between desired and actual material consumption, educational levels attained and access to employment, and the desire for autonomy and the impossibility of its attainment. This having been said, the increase of violence has been of such magnitude that the costs of combating it have been estimated in figures that vary between 7% and 12% of the gross domestic product of the region (Ganuza, 2002; Bourguignon, 1999).

In this panorama of poverty, inequality, and social violence, women are doubly affected. On the one hand, poverty and inequality have a greater impact on women - especially those who are single mothers and heads of households - who are forced to confront greater difficulties in access to the labor market as well as salary discrimination. Moreover, women are more frequently victims of domestic and social violence.

In addition, polarization is reinforced by public policies that tend to reproduce the social segmentation caused by the implementation of economic policies based almost exclusively on the benefits of the market and little institutionalized State regulation. In the field of education, public policies have tended to reproduce social segmentation, offering those of lower income levels a poorer quality of education than that offered to those of middle and high income levels. It is those of lower income who, due to the structural situation, more frequently drop out of school, repeat grades, and show lower achievement on standardized tests. Educational systems, which in the past were channels for social mobility and vehicles of integration, have increasingly become segmented between rich and poor and are thus generating a dangerous reproductive cycle of inter-generational inequality.

In the field of social policies, special mention should be given to what is happening in labor markets. The flexibilization of labor relations as a result of the implantation of liberal policies not accompanied by adequate social protection regulations and measures, has consolidated a situation of precarious links of labor with the economy. This has resulted in a weakening of the labor market's capacity to incite social integration. Increasing fragmentation of the economy, the scarcity of labor opportunities in the formal sector of the economy, the weakening of salary links, the increase in pay inequalities, and the expansion of the informal sector and unemployment have created a new scenario with profound implications for the social dynamics of the region. Unemployment has gone from 6% to 11% in a decade; of every ten new jobs created, seven of them are in the informal sector of the economy (Bárcena, 2005). It is increasingly necessary to apply integrated economic and social policies that make competition and economic efficiency compatible with the demand for protection, security, and the exercise of labor and citizens rights (ILO, 2005).

Another challenge faced by the region is the corruption that weakens democratic institutions by affecting areas of government, political parties, judiciary power, companies, the police, and others. These constitute a factor of political instability that can even further delay capital flow and economic investment. In a report presenting perceptions on the degrees of corruption in 163 countries (Transparency International, 2006), of the 28 countries located within the region, only three of them had a rating above five points on a scale from one to ten (with 10 indicating the least corruption, and one the most); another 14 countries had scores between 3.0 and 4.9 points; and eleven countries did not attain three points. For the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, the average score for perception of corruption is 3.5 - considered to be a very low score in comparison with countries of other regions. These facts show a strong correlation between corruption and poverty.

### 3. Social cohesion: the meaning of community and pertinence

Poverty, the instability and vulnerability of middle sectors, and the erosion of social protection institutions have resulted in a profound cultural transformation in society which is today more centered on individuals, autonomy and personal freedom as guarantees for success. The social fabric has become more fragile. The concept of community has been shattered, and solidarity is no longer seen as something the State need support. Citizens rarely see themselves as being part of a collective "we". All of this affects "our ways of living together", as UNESCO has defined culture (UNESCO, 1996b).

Cultural changes increase the diversity of actors and factors that make up the social fabric. Social and cultural diversity represent some of the greatest riches of the region, as long as they are contained within an agreed-upon order of values. Without such an order, diversity tends to transform itself into fragmentation - which a United Nations report calls "disassociated diversity" (Ganuza, 2002). Much of the population, especially indigenous peoples and those of African descent (nearly 200 million inhabitants in the region) - is, and feels excluded from social protection networks and from the fruits of development.

This exclusion is not only from that of economic well-being and social networks; but also from communities connected by a sense of shared meaning where living together is of central concern. Currently, the risks of a fragmented society lend new importance to the theme of cohesion and to institutions that, like schools, make up part of social life.

In this regard, the positive impact of the installation of democratic governments in the region should be noted. The last 18 months have witnessed 13 democratic presidential elections in which the passing of power was carried out in a normal manner.

The strengthening of representative democracies has been, together with measures for economic stabilization, one of the pillars created in recent decades for carrying out structural reforms that permit the launching of regional economies. Nevertheless, most citizens express some degree of frustration in regard to the efficacy of democratically-elected governments, since limitations in the installation of the economic model that has accompanied these democracies has meant that it has been installed have not been able to improve the living conditions of a large majority of the population.

In effect, regional surveys carried out by *Latinobarómetro* in 2004, show that while 72% of the population says that democracy is the only system through which their country can attain development and 53% see democracy as the best system of government, only 29% say they are satisfied with its current functioning. Similarly, although the majority (60%) of the Latin American population says that the market model is the only system through which their countries can attain development, their satisfaction with its results is even lower (19%) than their opinion about democracy.

This reflects the complex relations that exist between democracy, the functioning of the market, and social cohesion; resulting in multiple tensions within countries. The social fragmentation to which countries of the region have been exposed makes the establishment of a cohesive and participatory social pact difficult, and it serves as a brake on the change and adaptive capacity that development requires. This is because such fragmentation weakens democratic governability and erodes the climate of internal confidence needed by institutions in order to function, and countries in order to develop.

Thus appears the importance and urgency of strengthening a kind citizenship in which different social actors act as dynamic elements to foster civic values and knowledge of the rights and duties of the population. To this end, it is indispensable to understand the meaning of that which is "public" - not as something belonging to the State, but rather as a venue of collective interest for basing the kind of trust that fosters the development of harmonious social relations founded on tolerance and respect for differences. Within this context, there is a need to reassess the concept of the "public school" and the public role that education can play in generating greater social cohesion.

Moreover, it is important to consider the role of the State as facilitator of public venues for empowerment, participation, and fostering of social capital of the most disadvantaged sectors of society. One still notes the absence of a culture of civic responsibility of individuals toward themselves and the State. It is necessary, therefore, not only to seek improved functioning of government machinery; there is also a need to create more opportunities for civil society participation. This is a case of improving the "democratic density" of countries through creation of multiple institutions and opportunities for participation within which one may strengthen the relations of solidarity and responsibility for consolidating a culture of harmonious relations and collective development (Ocampo, 2005). There is a need for greater emphasis of public policies on participation, transparency, and accountability.

In spite of this need, neither community participation nor the creation of networks to increase the social capital of the population have become clear priorities within the social policies of the majority of countries. The focus of fostering social capital has not yet been adequately placed into practice in the specific areas of the design and management of public policy.

#### **4. Fulfillment of the right to education: assuring peace and harmonious relations**

Based on the above, the proposal of quality education for all in Latin America and the Caribbean faces at least four important and closely-related challenges:

- The first is how education can aid in overcoming poverty by means of its effective contribution to sustained economic growth as a key factor that fosters peoples' well-being. Growth levels have been insufficient in recent years. In a knowledge society, growth increasingly depends on the incorporation of the added value of production and global exchange systems. To this end, it is necessary to massively improve the training levels of new generations entering the labor market at a time when the region is falling behind in the pace of progress of secondary and higher education and in the level of effective and up-to-date learning of all of the population.
- The second challenge is how education can contribute to reducing social inequity. There is a close relation between household income, the educational achievement of children, and the kind of employment they will have, based on their level of

education. To a large extent, this in turn determines household income levels of the following generation, where inequalities tend to be reproduced from generation to generation. Strengthened public schools, the quality of which should be duly guaranteed by the State, can effectively contribute to decreasing existing education gaps between those with the least and the most income; between rural and urban and between indigenous and non-indigenous populations, and thus become true channels for mobility.

- The third challenge has to do with the way that public education can foster greater social inclusion and cultural integration, placing individuals at the center of sustainable development processes, expanding their skills and their options to live with dignity while valuing diversity and respecting the rights of all human beings.
- The fourth challenge lies in how education can contribute to greater social cohesion and the prevention of corruption and violence. In the future, education for peace and democracy should aid in having a human substrate more favorable to reducing and applying sanctions to corruption, demanding social and cultural rights, strengthening social participation, and consolidating a culture of equality - a basic element for attaining societies with more solidarity.

Most definitely, these challenges can be summarized as how to incorporate into educational policies the focus of education as a human right, making possible the exercise of other human rights (UN, 1948), increasing the skills of individuals for the exercise of their individual freedoms and consolidating pluralistic communities based on justice.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MOVE FROM EQUAL ACCESS TO EQUALITY IN THE QUALITY OF LEARNING

#### 1. Different conception of the quality of education

Achieving quality education is a constant aspiration of all educational systems, an aspiration that is shared with society as a whole. It is one of the major objectives of education reforms in the countries of our region. It is a concept with various meanings, often not agreed upon by different actors, because it involves making a value judgment regarding the type of education required in order to form the ideal person and construct the ideal society. The qualities demanded of education are conditioned by ideological and political factors, by the meanings given to it at any given time and by any given society, by the different conceptions of human development and learning, and by the predominant values of a given culture. These factors are dynamic and changing; therefore, the definition of what comprises a quality education also varies in different periods, from one society to another, and from groups or individuals to others.

HOW TO PROVIDE A QUALITY EDUCATION IS ALWAYS AT THE CENTER OF THE PUBLIC DEBATE, AND IS A CONSTANT ASPIRATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS IN ALL COUNTRIES.

Policy-makers, researchers, and institutions responsible for the public and private resources invested in education have developed scientific interpretations, along with their corresponding methodological focuses and tools in order facilitate the making of judgments or shared opinions regarding the phenomenon of quality. Frequently, this approach is similar to efficiency and efficacy, considering education as if it were a product and service existing in the market that had to satisfy its users. Obviously, these dimensions are fundamental aspects for assessing quality. But education is based on a set of values and conceptions that in large part determine the value judgment that is made regarding its quality. In other cases, the quality of education is not explicitly defined, but a number of indicators that can give an idea of the background focus are constructed to measure it.

According to UNESCO (2005a), from the major interpretive currents in education, one finds significant differences in regard to what constitutes quality. For Humanistic focuses what is important is the development of learning capacities in students so that they may construct and assign meaning to what they learn, with teachers seen as mediators in this process. As a function of this, it is concluded that study plans should consider the characteristics and needs of each student. Behavioral currents, on the other hand, emphasize the importance of structured teaching, measuring step by step what students learn, and verifying the results. In this case teachers direct learning, controlling stimuli and responses. More radically, in Critical focuses that encompass a wide range of theories, and stimulate critical analysis of reality, the major concern is that education contributes to social change and to the reduction of inequalities, fostering autonomy and the emancipation of marginalized groups.

In Latin American and Caribbean societies, all of these focuses continue to be current, and jostle one another in academic debates, the formulation of policies, and in pedagogical practice, with the various actors or influence groups involved in education tending to subscribe to one of the three, more or less consciously<sup>1</sup>.

In spite of efforts carried out to, among other things, increase learning time, define new curricula, develop teaching materials, and/or train teachers, there is consensus in the region

1 For instance, in general the interpretations of economists lean more towards a Behavioural focus, while teachers unions tend to favour Humanist or Critical conceptions.

regarding the low quality of education. This judgment is backed by disappointing learning results obtained through comparative measurements and assessments, especially in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. Although such competencies provide a basis for other kinds of learning, defining the quality of education only by learning results in particular areas carries the risk of biasing both policy formation and teaching practices.

One of these biases, known as *instrumental reductionalism*, assumes limiting quality to aspects measurable in standardized tests, while disregarding learning of vital importance which cannot be easily assessed by these instruments- such as creativity, conflict resolution, care for the environment, etc. In contexts where instrumental reductionism prevails and policies are implemented based on incentives linked to the results of standardized tests, one runs the risk of impoverishing the meaning of education with net losses in the curricular areas most difficult to measure and in which there is learning essential to the comprehensive development of persons and societies.

A second kind of bias, *erroneous normativity*, consists of attributing so much importance to measurements that the kinds of questions asked and the themes they pose replace the more general objectives that education has proposed for the country in the minds and practices of educators. That is, only that which is the object of assessment ends up being valued.

A third bias, typical of those who do research, propose agendas, and formulate policies, can be called *reductionist rationalism*. This consists of confusing two phenomena with their own rationales. The phenomenon of learning is produced through interactive processes between teacher and students and among students themselves. What each one contributes makes learning unique and unrepeatable in each case. Explanations regarding why learning does or does not take place at aggregate levels come from quality assessments that consider the factors associated with such achievements. The bias in this case is that of supposing that by positively modifying the factors studied, one can immediately and mechanically produce improvements in learning. Although modification of factors that limit learning is a key consideration, given the importance of subjective, relational, and emotional dimensions within the learning phenomenon, altering them will not automatically solve the problem because the transformation of these dimensions is both complex and unpredictable (Rojas, 2006).

The lack of knowledge and abilities to more directly influence what happens in the classroom, and the difficulty of incorporating subjective dimensions into analysis has caused the discussion of quality in the policy arena to concentrate on focuses coming from the economic field – giving great importance to aspects such as efficacy, efficiency, and competitiveness. These measures, although necessary, have not shown themselves to be sufficient for solving problems related to the low quality of education.

At least two ethical interpretations regarding the “quality of education” in Latin America and the Caribbean should be noted. The first views education as the basis for harmonious relations and democracy, and assigns importance to dimensions related to citizenship and values. The second is related to the social and economic impacts of education, in terms of how education limits or supports economic growth, access to employment, and social integration. The richness of the ethical framework is reflected in international legislation, which is an indispensable point of departure for any broad discussion on the quality of education.

## 2. Quality education for all from a human rights perspective

As we have noted, determining quality involves making a value judgment, but in respect to what? What are its characteristics, and why? The Global Monitoring Report on Education for All (UNESCO, 2005a) mentions that a quality education should include three fundamental dimensions: respect for rights, equity, and pertinence. To these dimensions must be added relevance as well as two of an operative character – efficacy and efficiency.

### 2.1. Exercise of the right to education

Education is a fundamental human right and a public good because thanks to it we develop as persons and as a species, and contribute to the development of society. As Fernando Savater (2006) notes, humans are unfinished beings who permanently require education in order to fully develop because the purpose of education is to cultivate humanity. This humanizing character means that education has a value unto itself and is not merely an instrument for economic or social growth (although it is that as well) as it seems to be seen from more utilitarian perspectives.

The full development of the human personality is the primary purpose attributed to education, both in international human rights instruments and in the legislation of various countries. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UN, 1948), states that education must have the objective of attaining the full development of human personality and of strengthening respect for human rights and basic freedoms; fostering understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations and all ethnic or religious groups. The *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights* (UN/ECOSOC, 1966) contributes the development of a sense of dignity and the preparation of all people to effectively participate in a free society. The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNICEF, 1989) further contributes the purpose of edifying children with a respect for the natural environment, their own cultural identity, language, and values, the values of their country and those of other civilizations.

The right to education facilitates the exercise of other fundamental human rights, and consequently of citizenship. One can hardly have access to a proper job, or exercise the freedom of expression or participation without an education. This assumes that education cannot be considered as a mere service or a product to be bought and sold, but rather as a right that States have the obligation to respect, assure, protect, and foster. Services can be deferred, postponed, and even denied, while a right can be demanded and is answerable to the law for the consequences resulting from its violation or non-compliance (Muñoz, 2004).

Achieving universal access is the first step in the attainment of the right to education. But the full exercise of this right demands that it be one of quality, fostering full development of the multiple potentials of every person through socially relevant learning and educational experiences that are pertinent to the individual needs and characteristics and to the contexts of all students. That is, the right to education is “the right to life-long learning”. An important achievement of the Education for All movement has been precisely to place

QUALITY EDUCATION, AS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT OF ALL PERSONS, HAS AS ESSENTIAL QUALITIES THE RESPECT FOR RIGHTS, EQUITY, RELEVANCE, PERTINENCE, AND TWO ELEMENTS OF AN OPERATIVE CHARACTER – EFFICACY AND EFFICIENCY.

“EDUCATION IS A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT. IT IS THE KEY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE AND STABILITY WITHIN AND AMONG COUNTRIES, AND THUS AN INDISPENSABLE MEANS FOR EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE SOCIETIES AND ECONOMIES OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY”.

Source: UNESCO (2000). *Dakar Framework for Action: Meeting our Common Collective Commitments*.

“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.

EDUCATION SHALL BE DIRECTED TO THE FULL DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMAN PERSONALITY AND TO THE STRENGTHENING OF RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS. IT SHALL PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING, TOLERANCE AND FRIENDSHIP AMONG ALL NATIONS, RACIAL OR RELIGIOUS GROUPS, AND SHALL FURTHER THE ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF PEACE.

PARENTS HAVE A PRIOR RIGHT TO CHOOSE THE KIND OF EDUCATION THAT SHALL BE GIVEN TO THEIR CHILDREN.”

Source: United Nations (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 26*.

UNIVERSAL ACCESS AND CONCLUSION OF STUDIES WILL DEPEND, TO A LARGE EXTENT, ON THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION.



the required emphasis on basic learning needs, an act which constitutes a kind of metaphor to remind all of us that the objective of any educational activity is that learning take place (Ferreiro, 1998).

Learning is not limited to a particular phase of life, nor to the context of schools; rather it begins at, and even before birth, and continues throughout life within multiple venues which are not necessarily found only in schools. The *Dakar Framework for Action of Education for All* (UNESCO, 2000) states that all children must have the opportunity to exercise their right to a quality education in school or through alternative programs.

“LIFE-LONG LEARNING IS A RIGHT AND ONE OF THE KEYS OF THE XXI CENTURY. IT IS AT THE SAME TIME THE CONSEQUENCE OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND THE CONDITION FOR FULL PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY”.

Source: *Declaration of Hamburg on Adult Education* (1997).  
V International Conference of Adult Education.

Life-long learning requires that multiple and varied educational opportunities with different purposes be offered, such as: having access and completing studies at any educational level, including higher education; offering different modalities and possibilities of entry or re-entry; facilitating the acquisition of skills and technical training linked to professional advancement and career or workplace changes, increasing the links between education and the world of employment.

It also means facilitating different training itineraries and the establishment of links between them, making it possible for every person to construct his or her own development project aimed at personal and professional enrichment (UNESCO/OREALC, 2002).

Exercise of the right to education is founded on the principles of free and obligatory schooling and on the right to non-discrimination and full participation. These will be further discussed below.

### 2.1.1. The obligatory and free nature of education: fundamental conditions for assuring the right to education

The obligatory and free nature of education are two fundamental conditions for guaranteeing the right to education present in the international human rights instruments mentioned above. In them, it is established that primary education be free and compulsory, and that secondary technical and professional education be promulgated and made progressively free. In regard to higher education, it is stated that it should be made accessible to all according to the merits of each person.

The Dakar Framework for Action states that all States are obligated to offer free and compulsory primary education according to the above-mentioned instruments; this statement is reflected in one of its six objectives. This having been said, in most countries of the region obligatory education goes beyond the primary level; therefore its free provision should be assured beyond this level as well.

NEARLY 63 MILLION PEOPLE BETWEEN THE AGES OF 20 AND 39 (36.5% OF THE TOTAL) HAVE NOT FINISHED LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION. TO THIS FIGURE ONE MAY ADD NEARLY 97 MILLION MORE (56.2% OF THE TOTAL) IF UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION IS INCLUDED.

THIS POPULATION GROUP REPRESENTS A LARGE PART OF WHAT WILL BE THE ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION IN COUNTRIES DURING THE COMING DECADES. THUS, THE SITUATION NOT ONLY REPRESENTS A DEPRIVATION OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PRESENT; BUT ALSO A PHENOMENON WITH STRONG IMPACT ON FUTURE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL WITHIN COUNTRIES.

Source: UNESCO (2007). *The State of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Guaranteeing Quality Education for All*

Compulsory education should be understood as a duty for all children and their families, as well as for the State. Parents cannot deny education from their children, and States should guarantee that all have access to a basic education, eliminating financial and other obstacles that impede conclusion of the years of study considered to be obligatory in each country.

Two debates emerge in regard to the obligatory nature of education: the first is related to making basic or fundamental education compulsory; the second, to its duration.

Compulsory education has been traditionally identified with basic education, the duration of which varies between countries, and whose purpose is to guarantee all basic learning needs. Education systems are organized in a rigid and linear manner in such a way that

people only have one opportunity and as if, once obligatory education is finished, it makes no sense to talk about basic education. This view should be re-defined in light of the concept of life-long learning, which assigns a new meaning to education.

For two reasons, basic education is not an exclusive characteristic of compulsory education. On one hand, during different phases of life, basic learning needs appear that require being satisfied and should be satisfied in spite of the fact that they appear at ages more or less distant from those of obligatory education (Coll and Martín, 2006). On the other, basic learning needs that are part of obligatory education may be satisfied at ages different from those legally established for such education. In this regard, it is vital to broaden and improve the kind of education offered to young people and adults who have not concluded their basic education and to increase and improve literacy-training programs for those who so require it. This broader view of basic education involves moving toward more flexible education systems which have bridges (allowing for entry and exit) between different education levels and modalities, in order to satisfy different learning needs at any time of life.

Regarding the number of years obligatory education should encompass, one must ask what the minimum length should be in countries with great inequalities such as those of our region in order to extend educational opportunities to those who are at a greater social and educational disadvantage. All countries have made significant efforts to increase the number of years of obligatory education – which vary between 6 and 13 years. This legal requirement, however, has not been sufficiently guaranteed for all school-age children to have access to education and to be able to conclude the years of schooling foreseen in the laws of their respective countries.

**DISTRIBUTION OF COUNTRIES ACCORDING TO THE NUMBER OF YEARS OF OBLIGATORY SCHOOLING AND AGE AT ENTRY.**

Entry age	Duration in years								Total
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
4								1	1
5		1		1	5	3	9		19
6	5		2	2	6	2			17
7	1		1	2					4
<b>Total</b>	6	1	3	5	11	5	9	1	

Source:  
UNESCO (2007). *The State of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Guaranteeing Quality Education for All.*

According to ECLAC data (1998), people living in low-income households tend to have less than 8 years of schooling, and in general do not move beyond the condition of manual laborers. Those who grow up in households having higher incomes tend to have 12 or more years of education and work as professionals, technicians, or supervisors. This means that 12 years of obligatory schooling would be a minimum or desirable threshold for overcoming poverty and guaranteeing equal opportunity, although this does not have a linear effect. In fact, although younger generations throughout all socio-economic strata have higher levels of schooling, this has not translated into greater social mobility because higher-productivity occupations require higher levels of study and are concentrated in the highest socio-economic strata (Reimers, 2002). The threshold for exiting the condition of poverty and having access to better and more productive employment continues to increase. For this reason, secondary education is now essential for leaving poverty, and tertiary education is what can make the difference in attaining greater social mobility.

Considering the intrinsic value of education for the growth and dignity of all people, a higher level of education for the entire population is a crucial element in the human develop-

ment of a country, independently of its economic or social mobility returns. A greater number of study years is fundamental, both in regard to the possibilities for attaining knowledge and jobs, and due to the positive influence education has on children.

Extension of obligatory study years is associated with another debate: that of when to begin and when to finish. Most countries of the region have increased obligatory education up to the secondary level and, in most cases, through the lower secondary level. Additionally, and especially during the last decade, various countries have established the beginning of compulsory education to be at five years of age, and in some cases at four years. In other countries, without being obligatory, education policies have proposed setting the goal of progressive universal attendance for children of five and four years of age.

Numerous studies show that education in the early years has a great impact on human development, with high social and economic returns, and that it is vital for attaining the objectives of Education for All. For this reason, countries in the region are initiating schooling before the obligatory phase. Furthermore, the obligatory nature of education can also be understood as a duty of the State to offer sufficient numbers of places in different modalities and programs in order to satisfy family demands—especially those living in situations of increased vulnerability—regardless of whether or not children are required to attend.

Expanding obligatory schooling to secondary education has advantages that should be taken into consideration. The principal one is that obligatory education does not end before the minimum legal working age in each country. Therefore, those students who do not continue their studies can directly enter the labor market, thus achieving continuity between school and adult life<sup>2</sup>. Also, the end of obligatory schooling should coincide with the age at which a person is responsible before the law.

In any case, discussions about the obligatory nature of schooling should be placed within the framework of life-long education for all, which has two distinct and complementary purposes. One refers to its temporal aspect (*life-long*); the other to its social extension (for all). Both respond to the principle that education, at all levels, is a right “of all persons” as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Brovetto, 1999).

### 2.1.2. Free public schooling guarantees the right to education

Being obligatory is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for guaranteeing the right to education. In order for education to be effective it is necessary to assure that it is free. This is still a pending task in the region, in spite of being written into the law of many countries.

In order to guarantee obligatory and free education, the countries of the region established public school systems with State-financed services very early on in their histories as independent nations. Given the fundamental role that public schools play in assuring equal opportunities in the right to education, especially for those who most need it, their progressively weakening position and the increasing gap between them and private schools is worrisome. Furthermore, there is a growing imbalance between public and private investment in education, and the line between them has been clouded due to the payment of fees and other charges that have been established in public schools which transfer a large amount of the educational costs onto families.

The financial barriers faced by children and their families can be classified into three types: *direct costs* such as tuition fees, “voluntary” cooperation with schools, purchases of school supplies and textbooks; *indirect costs* such as uniforms, meals, and transportation; and

---

2 The Convention concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (ILO, 1973) recommends progressively raising the minimum working age to no less than 15 years, or, in exceptional cases 13 years, and only when employment does not interfere with school attendance.

*opportunity costs* that are generated when children attend school instead of working and contributing to the family income. In some cases, parents also pay for construction of classrooms or other parts of buildings through their labor or by means of quotas. These costs are very significant for low-income families, and produce the paradox that poorer families are obliged to dedicate a larger portion of their incomes to education than families in better economic circumstances (Tomasevski, 2006).

FAMILIES END UP SUBSTITUTING FOR THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN TERMS OF THE OBLIGATION TO PROVIDE FREE EDUCATION THAT ASSURES THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION.

Public schools should try to eliminate all costs for families that are obstacles to enrollment and attendance. This, however, is not enough. Complementary measures aimed at compensating for opportunity costs are increasingly required, such as some which have been implemented by different countries in the region.

More recent discussions have referred to the contribution of various *mixed* forms of education such as privately owned or community-owned schools that operate with public financing. Such institutions contribute to making the right to education a reality. In countries whose laws guarantee freedom of education and the right of parents to choose, the presence of these types of institutions is a clear manifestation of such freedom. To the extent that they operate with public funds, they must be subject to public scrutiny in the use of received funds, which must be rigorously and strictly directed towards educational services without discrimination of any type.

*Private schools* also contribute to the realization of the right to education effective to the extent that they offer educational services. However, given the fact that the services are not free and do not operate off of public funds, the relation of private schools with students and their families is a private one. This kind of offering must obey national legislation and be coherent with the ends assigned to education – both in instruments of an international nature and the education laws of countries.

In Latin America and the Caribbean – with the exception of Cuba which has no private schools – the learning results achieved by students in public schools are below those of students in private schools (UNESCO/OREALC 2001). This fact reinforces the arguments of those who suggest privatization is the only guarantee for quality. However, there is evidence showing that the greater achievement results in private schools are largely due to processes of selection and exclusion of students, and that private education does not necessarily add to the quality of the system as a whole<sup>3</sup>. The result of these selection processes leads to the stratification of students, due to the fact that learning achievement is highly connected to socio-economic context and the cultural capital of families – a situation that threatens equal opportunities in the exercise of the right to education.

Making effective constitutional guarantees of free, quality education necessarily requires increased public investment and equity-based distribution of resources. These aspects will be presented in Chapter IV, which deals with financing.

### 2.1.3. The right to non-discrimination and full participation

Assuring the right to a quality education for all necessarily requires assuring the right to non-discrimination. All people develop more fully as human beings when they have the opportunity to participate with others in any human life activity. For this reason, no one should be made the object of any type of restriction that limits his or her ability to participate based on factors of gender, age, social background, and political or religious beliefs.

3 In their 2000 study entitled, "The effectiveness and efficiency of private schools in Chile's voucher system", McEwan and M. Carnoy show that results of private non-secular publicly-subsidised schools were slightly below those of municipal schools in tests measuring quality. This was not the case for private religiously-affiliated schools, which obtained significantly higher scores than municipal schools of similar socio-economic level.

"STATES PARTIES SHALL TAKE ALL APPROPRIATE MEASURES TO ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN ORDER TO ENSURE TO THEM EQUAL RIGHTS WITH MEN IN THE FIELD OF ACCESS TO EDUCATION, (...) THE ELIMINATION OF ANY STEREOTYPED CONCEPT OF THE ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN AT ALL LEVELS AND IN ALL FORMS OF EDUCATION (...) BY THE REVISION OF TEXTBOOKS AND SCHOOL PROGRAMMES AND THE ADAPTATION OF TEACHING METHODS".

Source: UN (1979). *Convention on Eliminating All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, Art. 10.

"STATES PARTIES RECOGNIZE THE RIGHT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TO EDUCATION. WITH A VIEW TO REALIZING THIS RIGHT WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION AND ON THE BASIS OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY, STATES PARTIES SHALL ENSURE AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM AT ALL LEVELS AND LIFE LONG LEARNING".

Source: UN (2006) *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, Art. 24.

"THE DEFENSE OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY IS AN ETHICAL IMPERATIVE, INSEPARABLE FROM RESPECT FOR HUMAN DIGNITY. IT IMPLIES A COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, IN PARTICULAR THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS BELONGING TO MINORITIES AND THOSE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES".

"ALL PERSONS ARE ENTITLED TO QUALITY EDUCATION AND TRAINING THAT FULLY RESPECT THEIR CULTURAL IDENTITY (...) BY RESPECTING THE MOTHER TONGUE — AT ALL LEVELS OF EDUCATION, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, AND FOSTERING THE LEARNING OF SEVERAL LANGUAGES FROM THE EARLIEST AGE".

Source: UNESCO (2001). *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, Art. 4, 5 and Main Line No. 6 of the Action Plan for Implementation.

COUNTRIES TEND TO FOLLOW THREE STAGES IN ASSURING THE EXERCISE OF THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION:

**SEGREGATION:** GRANTING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION TO ALL PERSONS WHO HAVE BEEN HISTORICALLY DEPRIVED, OR WHO CONTINUE TO BE EXCLUDED, BUT WITH SEGREGATED OPTIONS IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS, OR DIFFERENTIATED PROGRAMS.

**INTEGRATION:** ADMITTED GROUPS ARE OBLIGED TO ADAPT THEMSELVES TO AVAILABLE SCHOOLING, INDEPENDENTLY OF THEIR NATIVE LANGUAGE, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ORIGIN, GENDER, OR DISABILITIES. THE EDUCATION SYSTEM MAINTAINS THE STATUS QUO.

**INCLUSION:** DEMANDS THE TRANSFORMATION OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS, ADAPTING THE EDUCATION OFFERING AND TEACHING TO THE DIVERSITY OF EDUCATION NEEDS OF STUDENTS.

Source: TOMASEVSKI Katarina (2006). *The State of the Right to Education Worldwide. Free or Fee 2006 Global Report*.

The concern regarding access for the entire population to a quality education was the motive of the *World Conference of Education for All* held in Jomtien. One of the main recommendations made at this conference was that access to primary education be universalized by means of adopting systematic measures to reduce inequalities and overcome discrimination in terms of learning possibilities for those living in vulnerable situations: those living in poverty, homeless people, workers, rural populations and others living in isolated areas, ethnic and linguistic minorities, people with disabilities, and refugees and those displaced by wars.

Ten years later, at the *World Forum of Education for All* in Dakar, it became apparent that in spite of efforts carried out by countries in the United Nations system, much remained to be done so that all people, without exception, could have access to a quality education. At that time, countries ratified the objectives of Education for All by 2015 and emphasized the need to pay special attention to students living in situations of vulnerability, those out of school, illiterate adults, and persons with special educational needs.

The basic principles that guide education must be the same for all persons, irregardless of their origin or condition. But it is also necessary to consider some differentiated rights or specific recommendations for certain minority groups or those who are particularly vulnerable. The United Nations system has held various conventions and issued multiple declarations in order to guarantee equal opportunities for the full exercise of the right to education. These have been adopted to a greater or lesser extent by the countries in the region.

In the area of education, the most powerful international instrument is the *Convention Against All Forms of Discrimination in Education*. This document deals with discrimination of all kinds: exclusion, limitation or bias according to race, gender, language, religion, political or other kinds of beliefs, social and economic origin, country of origin, that have as a purpose or effect: i) that certain persons or groups have limited access to any type or level of education; ii) that establish or maintain separate educational systems or institutions for persons or groups; iii) that inflict treatment that is incompatible with human dignity on particular persons or groups (UNESCO, 1960).

Non-discrimination means, finally, that all individuals or groups have access to a quality education at any level, wherever they are educated (including the geographic area in which they live), their personal characteristics, or their social and cultural background.

The discrimination in education of individuals or groups tends to be a reproduction of the social prejudices and stereotypes present in society, which are a reflection of those holding power within this same society. Discriminatory practices within educational systems lead to exclusion and inequality and strengthen patterns of social reproduction.

Guaranteeing the right to education demands eliminating the different practices that limit not only access to education, but also

the continuation of studies and the full development and learning of every person. Selection and expulsion of students are very common practices; not only in private schools, but also in those that are financed or subsidized by the State. These practices may be more or less subtle and are based on the social and cultural origin of students, their life situations (including pregnancy or HIV/AIDS), and their learning capacities. The selection of students according to their competence levels is possibly most frequent in schools of different socio-economic strata and management modalities, and largely affects those with special educational needs, who are the most excluded from education within the region.

Discriminatory practices, besides affecting the dignity of students in regard to their rights, have two very negative additional effects. First, they limit contact of students of different contexts and cultures, thus affecting integration and social cohesion. Second, they lead to a concentration of those with the greatest educational needs in particular schools, especially public schools in underprivileged areas. This has a severe impact on providing appropriate attention to students, given limitations of available resources.

The right to non-discrimination is closely connected to participation – something of vital importance for the exercise of citizenship and for developing more inclusive societies. Exclusion goes beyond poverty; it is strongly correlated with difficulties that curtail personal development such as the absences of a life project, full social participation, and access to systems of protection and well-being.

Participation means not only taking part in an activity but is also related to the possibility of sharing decision-making processes that affect one's own life and the community in which one lives. It is the right to express one's own opinion and is one of the basic freedoms of democratic societies. Participation involves democratic decision-making processes, considering the points of view of other actors in the education community, and is a fundamental mechanism of parents and students for exercising the rights. Participation is essential not only in order that communities be protagonists responsible for their own educational activities; it also serves as a means of assuring greater transparency by having direct control over the decisions and results achieved in different actions.

In education, making non-discrimination and full participation effective demands the development of inclusive schools that adapt to all children of the community, independently of their social and cultural condition, gender, or personal characteristics. This discussion will be more fully-developed in the following section.

## 2.2. Equity is an essential condition for quality education

It is a fact that children of the region arrive at school in very unequal conditions and often these conditions are further exacerbated by internal factors of educational systems such as the socio-economic and cultural segregation of schools and unequal distribution of educational opportunities. Schools that serve students living in conditions of poverty, with some exceptions, have fewer resources and less-qualified personnel. Furthermore, educational processes tend to discriminate against students having cultural capital differing from the dominant tendencies and who typically come from low-income families or from other ethnic groups and cultures.

Tensions between quality and equity, and between inclusion and segregation, are sources of controversy in many countries around the world. Related to this, it is possible to identify three ideological positions that have different consequences in terms of equity and inclusion (Marchesi and Martín, 1998).

WITHIN THE COUNTRIES OF THE REGION THERE ARE ESTABLISHED PRECEDENTS REGARDING THE RIGHT OF EACH STUDENT TO NOT BE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST; THE RIGHT OF BOTH GENDERS TO RECEIVE AN EDUCATION THAT ASSURES FULL DEVELOPMENT. NEVERTHELESS, VERY FEW COUNTRIES HAVE REGULATIONS AND SANCTIONS TO GUARD AGAINST DISCRIMINATION IN THE PROCESSES OF STUDENT ADMISSION OR EXPULSION, NOR DO THEY HAVE MONITORY MEASURES WHICH GUARANTEE THE RIGHT OF STUDENTS TO NOT BE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST.

Source: UNESCO (2007). *The State of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Guaranteeing Quality Education for All*. Ch. 2.

The more *liberal ideological* positions argue that it is not possible to achieve a high level of educational excellence for all because one runs the risk of lowering quality-expectations and of offering a poorer education to all. Among some of the mechanisms used to foster greater quality are competition between schools, freedom of school selection, and free access to information regarding the learning results of schools. As a result of these approaches, schools, pressured to obtain better results, tend to select those students who exhibit greater possibilities of success. Therefore, rarely do those who live in more underprivileged social contexts have access to schools that have a reputation for offering high-quality education. Although, this conception prioritizes excellence, it may likely lead to less equity within the education system as a whole.

*Egalitarian ideology* argues that schools should be equal and emphasizes compensatory elements in order to attain greater equality of opportunity. This ideology involves high regulation and centralization by the State. It does not allow room for individual schools to develop their own projects, nor to provide differentiated and varied educational offerings. These premises can hinder the response to diversity and equity.

Finally, *pluralist ideology* shares with the egalitarian view the belief in education as a public service and the rejection of its regulation by market forces. However, unlike the egalitarian view, it sees the autonomy of schools as important in order to allow them to develop their own projects and supply differentiated offerings. While it values the ability of parents to choose schools, it also emphasizes the establishment of regulatory mechanisms to avoid inequity. Pluralist ideology calls for greater resources to be provided in the schools of more underprivileged areas, and for the development of common norms that can be adapted by schools according to their own realities.

LEVELS OF CONCLUSION OF STUDIES PRESENT SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES WITHIN COUNTRIES IN TERMS OF GENDER (PRINCIPALLY TO THE DISADVANTAGE OF THE MALE POPULATION), AREA OF RESIDENCE (TO THE DISADVANTAGE OF THE RURAL POPULATION), ETHNIC MEMBERSHIP (TO THE DISADVANTAGE OF NATIVE GROUPS AND THOSE OF AFRICAN DESCENT), AND IN TERMS OF INCOME. THE GENDER DISPARITIES ARE THE LEAST MARKED, WHILE HOUSEHOLD INCOME IS THE FACTOR THAT SHOWS GREATEST DISCRIMINATION. MOREOVER, THE GAPS TEND TO BE GREATER THE HIGHER THE LEVEL OF EDUCATION CONSIDERED.

Source: UNESCO (2007). *The State of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Guaranteeing Quality Education for All*. Ch. 5.

From the perspective of OREALC/UNESCO Santiago, quality and equity are not only compatible, they are indivisible. A quality education is that which offers the necessary resources so that all students can attain their maximum levels of development and learning, according to their individual capacities. That is, an education is one of quality when all students, and not only those who belong to dominant cultures, develop the skills necessary for the exercise of citizenship, to be part of the current knowledge society, to have access to a worthy job, and to exercise their individual freedoms. From this perspective, equity is essential to assessing the quality of education.

Equity is not the same as equality, although they are closely related. Treating both as the same has resulted in homogeneous treatment for all that has deepened inequalities. Equity includes the principles of equality and differentiation, since only an education adjusted to the needs of each individual can assure that all persons have the same opportunities to make effective their right to attain the end-goals of education under equal conditions.

Assuring the full exercise of the right to a quality education for all therefore requires, guaranteeing the right of equal opportunity; that is, to provide more to those who require more while giving each person the help and resources he or she requires to take equal advantage of educational opportunities. Providing opportunities is not enough; one must generate the conditions for these opportunities to be best used by all people so that they may participate, learn, and develop fully (Blanco, 2006). This idea is of vital importance because some focuses consider that the only obligation of educational systems to be the creation of uniform opportunities and, after this, to leave all the rest to learners. This is to say, to leave in the hands of students the "merits" they earn and the "efforts" they make. However, one must ask if this



is realistic and fair in education systems as fragmented and unequal as those in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Considering "merit" as an element of equity in education is problematic, at least in basic education. Development and learning are by nature inter-active and depend not only on individual capabilities but also on the characteristics of the environments within which students develop and learn. Therefore, students coming from underprivileged backgrounds, even those with capabilities and making an effort, will always be at a disadvantage if they are not offered additional resources and support.

If one assumes that equity is a principle for organizing diversity around a fundamental equality, one must ask, "What are the fundamental equalities that should guide equity policies in education?" From a rights-based approach, as earlier noted, *equality of access* is not sufficient. Rather, it is necessary to move toward *equality of conditions* so that all students may develop to the maximum of their potential and achieve the best results possible; that is, so that they may exercise their right to learn.

In regards to the above ideas, one may speak of three closely linked levels:

### 2.2.1. Equity of access

When opportunities of access to different levels of education or to an activity or program are the same for all, without making distinctions of any kind. Full access by the entire population to education and continuation of studies requires that the State assure available, accessible, and comparable schools for all.

**a) Availability.** Schools and programs should be adequately distributed throughout the country. Achieving this is influenced by a variety of factors such as school construction, prepared teachers, teaching materials, and other desirable elements such as computers and access to new information and communication technologies. This latter aspect is increasingly crucial in the case of schools located in less-privileged areas in order that the digital divide does not grow further and with it, exacerbate current inequities in the access to learning.

**b) Accessibility.** Schools and programs should be accessible to all, without any type of discrimination. Accessibility includes the following elements (UN/ECOSOC/UNESCO 2003):

- *Physical accessibility.* Education should take place in a secure environment, and schools should be within a reasonable distance to where students live or should be carried out with the use of new technologies. It is important to eliminate architectural barriers in order to facilitate the access to, and mobility and autonomy of students, especially those with disabilities.
- *Curricular accessibility.* Particular students may require means or special help in order to have access to the curriculum and to participate in educational activities under equal conditions. This means, for example, assuring the right of children to learn in their native language, or that students with disabilities have the necessary equipment and material to facilitate their access to learning established in the school curriculum and to participate in educational activities.
- *Economic accessibility.* The existence of enrollment fees and other expenses such as uniforms, transportation, books and materials, is, has been noted, a great impediment to the exercise of the right to education, since many parents are unable to sustain the costs.

OVER 35.4 MILLION INDIVIDUALS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 3 AND 18 (24.7% OF THE TOTAL) ARE NOT ENROLLED IN ANY KIND OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM. OF THESE, 34 MILLION ARE IN LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES (25.9% OF THE SUB-REGIONAL TOTAL) AND NEARLY 1.3 MILLION ARE LOCATED IN THE CARIBBEAN (24.6% OF THE SUB-REGIONAL TOTAL). IN ONLY FIVE COUNTRIES IS AT LEAST 85% OF THIS POPULATION IN SOME KIND OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM OF ANY LEVEL, AND IN SEVEN COUNTRIES THIS PROPORTION IS LESS THAN 70%.

Source: UNESCO (2007). *The State of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Guaranteeing Quality Education for All*. Ch. 3.



From a political perspective, equal opportunity in access to and continuation of studies presents problems linked to a dual freedom (De Ketele, 2004):

- *Freedom of teaching (public, private, and subsidized)*. The freedom to teach cannot impede fulfillment of the right of all to enjoy a quality education. This requires that both public and private institutions offer quality education and are coherent with the purposes that education pursues. It is important that the equality of all in the face of education be made compatible with the plurality of school options and models offered so that the right of parents to choose the type of education they desire for their children is guaranteed.

The *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights* states that the freedom of individuals and organizations to establish schools exists along with the obligation to offer education that is coherent with the end-goals of education expressed in its Article 13, and must include certain minimum standards related to admission, curricula, and certification. This, as will be seen below, requires strengthening the regulatory and supervisory role of the State in order to assure that the conditions under which schools operate do not violate the right to education – for example, regulating and sanctioning the selection or expulsion of students.

- *The freedom of parents to choose*. The freedom of parents to choose schools for their children is established in various instruments of international law and within the laws of many countries. Nevertheless, in practice many families, above all those having scant resources, cannot exercise this right for reasons such as: the unequal distribution of schools throughout the country, direct and indirect economic costs, and the student selection processes of many schools.

The freedom of parents to choose the type of education they wish for their children should not be confused with the freedom of schools to select their students. In order for the selection process carried out by schools to assure equal opportunity, admission standards must be made public and common for all schools and nearness to where the student lives must be the main element when there is more demand than places in a school.

IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE FULL ACCESS TO, CONTINUITY, AND CONCLUSION OF STUDIES, IT IS NECESSARY TO DIVERSIFY EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS IN ORDER TO REACH THE EXCLUDED AND THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN BY THE WAYSIDE, OFFERING DISTINCT ITINERARIES AND MODALITIES THAT ARE OF EQUAL QUALITY.

Source: UNESCO/OREALC (2002). *Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean – PRELAC*.

In regard to educational access, the challenge for the region is to reduce the gaps in early childhood, secondary, and tertiary education between students of different social and cultural origins. In primary education, although some countries have still not achieved universal coverage, the challenge lies in guaranteeing continuity in and conclusion of study, since certain students cannot complete obligatory education for different reasons such as not having complete schools at a reasonable distance from where they live, the lack of pertinent

curriculum and teaching, rigidity in educational offerings, or costs. Education has the moral obligation to avoid letting differences of origin among students be converted into inequality of educational opportunities and thus once again into social inequalities.

### 2.2.2. Equity in resources and in the quality of educational processes

Providing equal opportunities in terms of resources and in the quality of educational processes requires differentiated treatment, but not treatment that is discriminatory or exclusive, in terms of financial, material, human, technological, and teaching resources, according to the different needs of persons or groups, in order to achieve comparable learning results. As Lasch (1996) suggests, as long as everyone does not have equal access to the means of acquiring competencies, the theoretical equality of rights will not confer real dignity upon all people, and they will be equal on a merely idealistic level. The activities of compensatory

education and affirmative action currently being carried out in countries of the region can be located within this trend.

Equity in resources and in processes requires, among other things: a broad and flexible curriculum that is pertinent for all students; additional resources and support for all those who, for different reasons, need them in order to make learning progress; allocation of the most competent teachers to those schools and/or groups of students with greater needs; a school calendar appropriate for different needs; assuring the right to learn in one's own native language; pertinent educational materials; and equitable distribution of human, financial, and material resources.

### 2.2.3. Equity in learning results

Equity in learning results seeks for all students, regardless of their social and cultural origin or the geographic location in which they live, to achieve comparable learning according to their possibilities. That is, to assure that differences in learning results do not reproduce the inequalities related to the origin of students, nor condition their future options. Equity in results is also related to the years of study completed by students.

True equity means more than guaranteeing access to and permanence in education. It involves *democratization in the access to and appropriation of knowledge*. According to Amartya Sen (1999), true equality of opportunity must pass through equality of capacities in order to act in society and increase the abilities of people to choose.

The primary debate at this point is what the level of equality should be. Is there a common baseline? What might it be based on? The idea of a common, minimum level for all, although politically attractive, has faced some opposition because it can be understood as a limitation on the right to education as conceived in a more ambitious and egalitarian fashion (Bellei, 2006). In other cases, however, the criticism is that minimum determined levels of learning often become the maximums. This means that many students, especially those who have less cultural capital or capital different from that of schools, do not attain desired levels of learning, and therefore become part of the statistics of grade repetition and school drop-out present throughout the region. Additionally, the content overload that characterizes the curricula of many countries threatens the quality of education.

The need to re-define that which is basic or fundamental for students to learn is a constant subject of pedagogical debates. Although this aspect is developed in greater detail in the section on relevance, it is important to emphasize that the World Conference of Education for All in Jomtien, 1990, arrived at a certain consensus by establishing that basic learning needs encompass the fundamental instruments of learning (literacy, oral expression, arithmetic skills, and problem-solving abilities) as well as basic learning content (knowledge, capacities, values, and attitudes) that human beings require in order to survive to work with dignity, to participate fully in development, improve their quality of life, make fundamental decisions, and continue to learn.

The UNESCO report on education for the XXI century took a step forward in stating that not only should education foster the traditional basic competencies, but that it should also provide the elements necessary for the full exercise of citizenship, contribute to a

THE FIRST COMPARATIVE INTERNATIONAL STUDY OF LANGUAGE, MATHEMATICS, AND ASSOCIATED FACTORS IN 13 LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES CARRIED OUT BY THE LATIN AMERICAN LABORATORY FOR ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION COORDINATED BY UNESCO MADE MANIFEST THE SERIOUS INEQUITY IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF KNOWLEDGE. IT SHOWED THAT ONLY A MINORITY OF STUDENTS, THE MAJORITY OF WHOM WERE ENROLLED IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS, WERE ABLE TO DEVELOP THE COMPETENCIES IN LANGUAGE AND MATHEMATICS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO SUCCESSFULLY ENTER THE LABOR MARKET IN THE CURRENT KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY.

Source: UNESCO/OREALC (2001).

**LEARN TO BE** IN ORDER TO KNOW ONESELF, VALUE ONESELF, AND CONSTRUCT ONE'S OWN IDENTITY IN ORDER TO ACT WITH INCREASING CAPACITY AND AUTONOMY, JUDGMENT, AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY IN DIFFERENT LIFE SITUATIONS.

**LEARN TO DO**, DEVELOPING COMPETENCIES THAT TRAIN PEOPLE TO CONFRONT A GREAT MANY SITUATIONS, WORK IN TEAMS, AND DEVELOP THEMSELVES IN DIFFERENT SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL CONTEXTS.

**LEARN TO KNOW** IN ORDER TO ACQUIRE A GENERAL CULTURE AND SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE THAT STIMULATE CURIOSITY IN ORDER TO CONTINUE TO LEARN AND DEVELOP IN THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY.

**LEARN TO LIVE TOGETHER**, DEVELOPING UNDERSTANDING FOR AND VALUE OF OTHERS, THE PERCEPTION OF FORMS OF INTERDEPENDENCE, RESPECTING THE VALUES OF PLURALISM, MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING, AND PEACE.

Source: UNESCO (1996). *Learning: the Treasure Within*. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century.

culture of peace, and to the transformation of society. To this end, the report proposed four pillars of learning: *learning to know*, *learning to do*, *learning to be*, and *learning to live together* (UNESCO, 1996). Today, these pillars have been reflected in the curricular reforms of some countries in the region.

From an equity-based perspective, it is necessary to balance principles of equality (that which is common) and differentiation (that which is diverse). It is the duty of all educational systems to ensure that all students develop some of the same competencies that permit them to participate and act in society, and to develop life projects; but these systems must also offer the opportunity to incorporate learning that is relevant for different contexts and cultures, and to incorporate the multiple talents, interests, and motivations of each person. In order for this to be made possible, it is necessary to support schools and teachers through training, guidance, educational materials, and resource-support.

The region has made great progress in terms of providing equality of access. But it must make a leap toward equality in the quality of educational programs and in learning results; so that no student learns less due to his or her social background, culture, personal conditions, or place of residence.

#### 2.2.4. Toward more inclusive educational systems and more pluralistic and democratic schools

As stated in the previous chapter, Latin America and the Caribbean comprise the most unequal region in the world. This region is characterized by highly fragmented societies due to the persistence of poverty and unequal income-distribution. One of the most serious consequences of the predominant economic model is an increase in the inequality, spatial segmentation, and cultural fragmentation of the population (Tedesco, 2004). Educational systems reflect this social and cultural fragmentation and the discrimination present in society. Therefore, schools have difficulty fulfilling one of their principal functions: assuring greater equality and promoting social mobility.

THE MOST IMPORTANT AREA IN WHICH EDUCATION FOR ALL CURRENTLY WORKS IS IN THAT OF INCLUSION. IF WE DO NOT GRANT THE MINIMUM NECESSARY CONDITIONS FOR INEQUALITIES TO BEGIN TO BE CORRECTED, NOT ONLY ARE WE FACING A PROBLEM OF JUSTICE; WE ARE FACING A CHASM BETWEEN HUMAN BEINGS WHO NOT ONLY DISCRIMINATE AGAINST THE UNDERPRIVILEGED, BUT EJECT THEM PERMANENTLY FROM SOCIETY.

Source: SACRISTÁN, Gimeno (2000). *La educación obligatoria: su sentido educativo y social*.

The social and cultural segregation of schools limits relations between different groups and results in differentiated educational circuits with schools (both public and private) that differ greatly in their quality. Given this situation, it is not surprising that at both an international level and within countries the term “inclusion” or “inclusive education” has acquired special meaning, however, the concept is not always adequately understood. In some cases, it is thought that this term is a new name for “special education”. In others it is used as a synonym for the integration of children with disabilities or others with special education needs into regular schools. This confusion has the consequence that inclusion policies are seen as the responsibility of special education, thus limiting analysis of the totality of exclusion and discrimination that take place within educational systems, and hindering the development of comprehensive inclusion policies.

Inclusion is not a mere technical or organizational change; but rather a movement with a clear philosophy. Its principal aspiration is to guarantee the right to a quality education for the entire population, since there is a high percentage of children and young people, besides those with disabilities, to whom this right has been denied. *Inclusion is related to access, participation, and the achievement of all students, with special emphasis on those who are at risk of being excluded or marginalized* (UNESCO, 2005b). From this perspective, inclusion is a fundamental catalyst for advancing toward Education for All. Therefore, it should be conceived of as a policy of ministries of education as a whole and of other ministries such as those pertaining to health, welfare, and the economy.

One of the purposes of inclusion is to confront exclusion and social segmentation. Therefore, one of its principal identifying factors is access to pluralistic schools that form the basis for moving toward more inclusive, democratic societies. Inclusion demands the development of schools that accept all children of the community, independently of their social and cultural backgrounds or personal conditions. Greater inclusion in education involves strengthening and developing public schools, since it is this institution that has the function of not only facilitating access to education for children from underprivileged environments, but also that of integrating diversity into the educational system.

Inclusion, therefore, implies a new view of education based on diversity rather than homogeneity. It is a process aimed at responding to the different needs of all students and increasing their participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and at reducing the exclusion from and found within educational systems (UNESCO 2005b). This demands a profound transformation of the culture, means of organization, and practices of schools so that they may adapt teaching according to the learning differences of students instead of students having to adapt to the available educational offerings. It also demands the elimination of different types of discrimination that take place within schools. This aspect will be further developed in the following section on pertinence.

Differences are inherent in human nature, they are not an anomaly nor do they deviate from that which is "normal or frequent". Differences occur between different groups of people (based on their social origin, different cultures, places of residence, etc.), among people in the same group (having different capacities, motivations, interests, learning rhythms and styles, etc.), and within the same individual. Differences are not static categories, and each child, young person, or adult possesses a set of them which make him or her unique and irreplaceable.

It is important not to confuse difference with inequality – although inappropriate treatment of differences can lead to inequality. Diversity is present in all schools and classrooms. Nevertheless, we continue to teach students as if they were all the same. This is why many of them have learning difficulties and end up abandoning school.

The response to diversity involves assuring *the right to one's own identity*, respecting each person as an individual, along with his or her own inherent biological, social, cultural, and personality traits, and providing each individual with fair treatment that does not violate his or her dignity. Education in diversity is a key means of learning to live together, developing new forms of sharing our lives based on pluralism, mutual understanding, and democratic relations. For its part, perceiving and living with diversity makes it possible to construct and reaffirm one's own identity and distinguish it from others; that is, to learn to be.

We must take advantage of the great cultural and linguistic diversity of the region, understanding it as an educational opportunity. Intercultural and bilingual education must be further developed because it is an important factor in the quality of education and for harmonious relations. "Inter-culturality" means that the relations between people who are part of different ethnic groups and cultures are based on respect and carried out from positions of equality (Smelkes, 2004).

From an inclusive-perspective, difficulties in education are not principally attributed to individuals (their competencies, social origins, the cultural capital of their families), but rather to schools and to the system. The progress of students depends not only on their personal

INCLUSION POLICIES IN THE REGION DEMONSTRATE WEAKNESSES IN PROCESSES OF TRAINING, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND MONITORING OF TEACHING TEAMS IN REGARDS TO THEIR ATTENTION TO DIVERSITY; IN PROVIDING SUPPORT SERVICES AND RESOURCES FOR THOSE WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES. ADDITIONALLY, TEACHER TRAINING INSTITUTIONS LACK ORIENTATION AND ARE NOT EFFECTIVELY REGULATED.

Source: UNESCO (2007). *The State of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Guaranteeing Quality Education for All*. Ch. 2.

"THE CONSIDERATION OF DIVERSITY AS AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF EDUCATION RESULTS FROM THE FULFILLMENT OF THE RIGHT TO NOT SUFFER DISCRIMINATION AND FROM HAVING APPROPRIATE EDUCATIONAL CONTENT THAT GOES BEYOND ANY INSTRUMENTAL MANDATE, AND WHICH SEEKS TO INCREASINGLY CALL OUT IN FAVOR OF THE INCLUSION OF DISCRIMINATED GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS".

MUÑOZ, Vernor (2004). *The right to education*. Report submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Commission by the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education.

characteristics, but also on the kinds of opportunities and support they are offered or denied. Thus, the same student can experience learning and participation difficulties in one school or program, and not in another (Blanco, 2006). The rigidity of teaching, the lack of curriculum pertinence, the lack of preparation of teachers for serving diversity and for working in teams, and discriminatory attitudes are some of the factors that limit not only student access to, but permanence and achievement within the educational system as well.

Inclusion is a never-ending process, because discriminatory practices that affect certain individuals and groups are always appearing and can vary from one school to another. All countries have examples of inclusive schools. But the challenge is for them to not be the exception to the rule. The fact that only certain schools are inclusive means that the rest are exclusive, and that those which have been made accessible to more diverse populations end up having a higher concentration, as has been noted, of students with greater needs.

### 2.3. Relevance and pertinence

Relevance and pertinence are two basic and closely related qualities of education that respond to the questions, "education for what?" and "education for whom?" From a rights-based perspective, in addition to confronting exclusion, inquiries about the purposes of education, and whether they represent the aspirations of society as a whole or only those of particular groups that hold power within it must be made.

Education is relevant if it promotes meaningful learning from the point of view of social demands and that of personal development. This is unlikely to occur if education is not also pertinent; that is, if it does not consider learning differences inherent in each individual which are at the same time mediated by the social and cultural context within which people live.

#### 2.3.1. Relevance

Relevance refers to the "what" and "what for" of education. It deals with the intentions of education which in turn shape other decisions regarding such things as teaching practices and learning assessment. As noted, the major purpose of education is to attain the full development of human personality and dignity. Therefore education is relevant if it fosters the acquisition of competencies necessary for participation within different sectors of society, facing challenges of the current knowledge society, obtaining a proper job, and developing a life project in relation with others. This is to say that education has achieved relevancy if it facilitates the socialization and individualization of all human beings. From the perspective of UNESCO, education for the XXI century should develop competencies related to "*learning to know*", "*learning to do*", "*learning to be*", and "*learning to live together*".

"STATES PARTIES AGREE THAT THE EDUCATION OF THE CHILD SHALL BE DIRECTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, AND FOR THE PRINCIPLES ENSHRINED IN THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS".

Source: UNICEF (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Art. 29.1b.

Along with its objective of fostering the comprehensive development of people, one of the purposes of education is to promote respect for basic human rights and freedoms. Therefore, education can be considered relevant if students have the opportunity to know and to live these rights. This involves not only obtaining knowledge and skills, but also values, attitudes, and behaviors. An environment that is respectful of rights and a curriculum that includes their being learned are two "sine qua non" conditions for achieving quality education (Muñoz, 2004).

On numerous occasions, the United Nations System has reiterated the importance of education in human rights, requesting its member states to adopt progressive measures aimed towards stimulating the teaching of those principles proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights within their educational systems, especially within primary and secondary schools. It is necessary to assure that curricula, teaching methods, the educational environment, and textbooks are consistent with the learning of human rights and that these rights

be respected and made into reality throughout the educational system. Education in human rights in many countries is part of the so-called transversal themes – meaning that they are present in all educational contexts and processes. The knowledge and practice of human rights is a fundamental tool for *assuring respect of all rights by and for all people*.

Relevance is also related to the purposes assigned to education as a political and social project in a given historical moment and context. School-based education is increasingly assigned different purposes and functions that vary according to the development model upon which it is based, on ideological and political positions, and on social demands and needs. The end-goals of education depend upon the expectations of society and on the concept of education itself. This can be understood as either an element of transformation, or as a means of reproducing the social structure; as a way of homogenizing differences, or of respecting them. The conception adopted will have influence and in turn, cause the emphasis of certain kinds of learning over of others (Blanco, 2005).

The selection of the most relevant lessons to be taught through education acquires special meaning in the current knowledge society where concepts multiply rapidly and many lose their currency just as quickly. On the other hand, considering new societal demands and pressure from different social actors, new contents are continually added to the school curricula without eliminating others in equal measure and without sufficient reflection over what content should ultimately be taught by schools and what should be left to others.

The decision regarding what learning is most relevant should be determined by considering the way in which what is taught contributes to achieving educational objectives, seeking a balance between social demands, those of personal development, and those stemming from a pre-determined socio-cultural project to be implemented through school-based education (Coll and Martín, 2006). Responding to this set of demands can lead to curriculum overload that might threaten the quality of education. Choices must be made, because not everything that is important can, or should be taught in schools. Coll and Martín supply a distinction that, although not without its own difficulties, can aid in selecting what is most relevant for students to learn – learning that is *absolutely essential*, and that which is *desirably essential*.

*Absolutely essential* types of learning are those which, if not achieved during basic education, will have a negative impact on the personal and social development of students, compromising their life projects and placing them at clear risk of social exclusion. Moreover, they are of a type that if not acquired during the period of compulsory education, will present the learner with future difficulties. The *desirably essential* types of learning are those which, although important for the personal and social development of the learner, will not negatively condition the individual's future if not acquired during his or her years of compulsory education. Furthermore, it is possible to acquire them without great difficulty after the completion of mandatory education. Once having identified these two types of learning, one must decide which should be included and to what extent during compulsory education or at other levels of education.

The idea of making this distinction, according to the authors, is to pay greater attention to those competencies that if not achieved will have significant consequences for future learning. It can also serve as a reference for assessment and definition of standards of school performance as well as for the assessment and validation of learning. This being said, it is important to be careful that education not be reduced to absolutely essential learning, for this would limit student development opportunities and, consequently, their right to a quality education.

THE MAJORITY OF COUNTRIES IN THE REGION HAVE MADE REFERENCE TO THE FOUR PILLARS OF EDUCATION, ALTHOUGH ALL FOUR ARE NOT EQUALLY EMPHASIZED. THE OBJECTIVES OF LEARNING TO KNOW AND LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER ARE MORE FULLY DEVELOPED IN THE REQUIRED CURRICULUM, GENERAL CURRICULUM GUIDELINES AND IN SOME LESSON PLANS WHILE THE OBJECTIVES OF LEARNING TO DO AND LEARNING TO BE HAVE NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED AS SYSTEMATICALLY OR PROFOUNDLY.

Source: UNESCO (2007). *The State of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Guaranteeing Quality Education for All*. Ch. 1.

Another important debate related to relevance has to do with the form in which essential learning is expressed. Should essential learning be expressed in contents, competencies, or standards? There is a growing trend in the region to define curriculum by competencies and even, in some cases, to simply establish learning standards. In this regard, it is important to note that content, competencies and standards define the expected results of learning in different ways – and standards go further in defining the quantitative achievement levels expected to be gained from such learning.

Cecilia Braslavsky (2001) defines *competencies* to mean those abilities linked to autonomous development, applied and applicable knowledge, knowledge in action, knowing how to do something and how to explain what one does. The building of competencies requires creating connections between the appropriation of knowledge and the development of cognitive skills. Traditionally, pedagogy has been more concerned with knowledge understood as information or concepts rather than with the development of intellectual procedures for working with knowledge and producing new knowledge.

The definition of relevant learning in terms of competency-building is seen as an alternative to deal with content overload. But it should be made clear that this option by itself does not solve the problem. The concept of competencies involves, as we have seen above, the application of different kinds of knowledge (values, concepts, skills, and attitudes), but in order to apply them they must first be appropriated and mobilized. Competencies are necessarily associated with content, although they are not explicitly defined in curricula. The simultaneous use of *key competencies* and *fundamental content* associated with their mastery may be very useful when defining basic learning at different levels of education (Coll and Martín, 2006).

Regarding the idea of replacing curricula with standards, various studies carried out on the repercussions of these policies reveal the insufficiencies, and even the risks of overemphasizing this route. The need to “align” curricula and standards, making them both coherent and complementary, is a principle currently accepted in a broad array of educational sectors (Coll and Martin, 2006). Standards are an important complementary instrument for assessing, improving, and up-dating curricula, but should not be made an alternative to them.

### 2.3.2. Pertinence

The pertinence of education deals with the need for it to be made meaningful to people of different social and cultural backgrounds, and with different capacities and interests, so that they may take ownership of the contents of world and local culture, becoming subjects of society and developing autonomy, self-government, freedom, and their own identity. Pertinence, coherent with a focus on rights, means that students are at the center of education. Therefore, it is vital to take their idiosyncrasies into consideration in the processes of teaching and learning.

Therefore, in order for pertinence to exist, education must be flexible and adapt itself to the needs and characteristics of students of different social and cultural contexts. “Adaptability”, along with accessibility, availability, and acceptability, is one of the internationally-established parameters in order to assure the right of a quality education for all. (UN/ECOSOC/UNESCO, 2003).

On a curricular level, pertinence requires open and flexible educational designs that can be enhanced or adapted to different levels (states, provinces, schools, and classrooms) according to the educational needs, aptitudes, and interests of students, as well as for the particular characteristics and demands related to the contexts within which students develop and learn. That is, a common curriculum with the necessary adaptations and diversifications must be the reference point for the education of all children, including those with special educational needs, irregardless of whether or not they are in special schools. It logically follows from this



that different levels of decision-making should permit the development of a curriculum custom-designed for each student. However, the existence of a personalized curriculum will not be enough to achieve greater pertinence in learning, due, among other factors, to a highly homogenized culture of teaching.

The key decision is how much latitude should be granted to diversity without overloading students and teachers, especially when the basic learning established in required curricula tends to be more of a ceiling than a minimum. In this regard, it is important to note that dealing with diversity should not be merely reduced to diversification within the curriculum or to providing a choice of options; the required curriculum should also consider diversity by incorporating learning aimed at the understanding of differences and mutual respect, or knowledge of different cultures and religions, etc.

The adaptability of teaching can be carried out through decentralization processes that foster true and greater decision-making autonomy in schools, although even this will not sufficiently guarantee an appropriate response to diversity. In many cases, decentralization has not been accompanied by actions aimed at strengthening the competencies of local authorities and of teachers in such a way that they are able to see to it that the curriculum is relevant and meaningful for all students.

Although curricular design is an important element in making education more pertinent, it is in teaching practices that it acquires greatest meaning. A pertinent education is student-focused, adapts teaching to the characteristics and needs of learners, is based on who students “are”, and what they “know” and “feel”, and is mediated by their social and cultural contexts. Additionally, a pertinent education fosters the development of the different capacities, potentials, and interests of all students.

Making learning pertinent for all requires a profound transformation from homogenized educational practices to a pedagogy which embraces diversity and views it as an opportunity for enriching learning and teaching processes and for optimizing personal and social development. “Developing pedagogy of diversity is what modern times require if schools wish to raise strong moral values against all the kinds of discrimination that affect them (Ferreiro, 1998)”. This statement speaks against a current culture of homogeneity which treats all learners as if they were the same student and considers differences to be anomalous and in violation of established norms. It is fundamental that students, in all of their diversity, be the object of differentiated educational programs.

Attention to diversity is key for the quality of education, because the only way to assure that different students learn is to adjust pedagogy to their specific needs and to offer more help to those needing it. Teachers must plan learning activities in a way that generalized lesson plans can be personalized in order that each student can become competent in areas established by both general and diversified curriculums. Effective use of various teaching strategies is essential in order to adjust to students’ different interests, learning rhythms, styles, and ability levels. In this regard, cooperative learning strategies have been shown to be beneficial, not only for academic achievement, but also for the development of social and emotional skills.

Relationships, established between teachers and students and among students themselves, and the kinds of norms that regulate school life are two influential elements in assuring pertinence. The decisions to be adopted in educational policies and practices are shaped to a large extent by the belief that all students can learn if they are provided with the necessary help and resources.

ALTHOUGH THERE IS GENERAL CONSENSUS IN THE REGION REGARDING THE NEED TO ADAPT THE CURRICULUM AND TEACHING TO THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS, IN ORDER TO ACCOMPLISH THIS IN A VARIETY OF SETTINGS (REGIONS, LOCALES, SCHOOLS, CLASSROOMS, ETC), MECHANISMS AND PROCEDURES NEED TO BE BETTER-ADJUSTED.

Source: UNESCO (2007). *The State of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Guaranteeing Quality Education for All*. Ch. 2

THERE IS A TREND IN THE REGION TO FOSTER THE AUTONOMY OF SCHOOLS AND THE PARTICIPATION OF EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITIES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF SCHOOL EDUCATION PROJECTS. HOWEVER, THERE DOES NOT YET EXIST A SYSTEM TO ACCOMPANY SCHOOLS IN ORDER TO FACILITATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUCH PROJECTS WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF VARIOUS ACTORS.

Source: UNESCO (2007). *The State of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Guaranteeing Quality Education for All*. Ch. 2



THE INTERACTIVE NATURE OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IS POORLY EXPRESSED IN THE CURRICULAR PRINCIPLES OF THE REGION, WHICH CONTINUE TO CONSIDER THEM TO BE BASED ONLY ON THE PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS. ONLY CERTAIN CURRICULAR FRAMEWORKS MAKE EXPLICIT THE IDEA THAT ALL STUDENTS, WITHOUT EXCEPTION, CAN LEARN AND DEVELOP THE BASIC AND NECESSARY COMPETENCIES IF THEY ARE OFFERED QUALITY EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.

Source: UNESCO (2007). *The State of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Guaranteeing Quality Education for All*. Ch. 2

Different social, ethnic, and cultural groups have norms, values, beliefs, and behaviors different from those predominate in school culture. This can negatively influence learning progress and school drop-out rates. It is therefore vital to foster the participation of students in the establishment and enforcement of school rules, for students to communicate their interests and concerns in order to connect school-based learning with their daily lives so that all may feel represented in school culture. Furthermore, curricular content must be validated by students, their families, and their communities.

### 2.3.3. Toward the definition of more relevant and pertinent curricula

Definition of a curriculum relevant and meaningful for the entire population necessarily confronts a series of dilemmas, and adopted decisions will be mediated by a variety of factors present in the education systems of each country. The following are some of the most frequent dilemmas that should be considered as equilibriums which must be achieved:

- *Balance between the world and the local, or the universal and the singular.* This means to become a citizen of the world without losing sight of one's own background while actively participating in national and local community life (UNESCO, 1996). A relevant education from this point of view is one which considers learning needs derived from the nearby social and cultural environment and those related to the exercise of world citizenship in an equally balanced manner.

The dilemma between that which is universal, and that which is local is also related to pertinence. Education cannot be limited to that which is local if it wishes students to feel and to be citizens of the world. An excessive emphasis on what is local enormously limits learning opportunities and the possibilities of the learner being part of an increasingly globalized world. On the other hand, disregarding the value of knowledge that students bring with them can create difficulties to learning and participation in school and can lead to school drop-outs who do not feel welcome and valued. The point, therefore, is to achieve a balance between both kinds of knowledge, taking local knowledge not only as a point of departure for global learning, but also for further personal development and for that of the local culture (Torres, 1998).

- *Balance between the needs of the labor market and personal development.* This dilemma is especially important in secondary education where it is necessary to offer training that prepares students both to continue studies and to enter the labor market.

In order to be competitive, countries require a labor force that can adapt, throughout their working lives, to the fast pace of changing knowledge and technological progress. Therefore, one must offer secondary education for all and throughout life, since this magnitude of education is vital for the individual to have access to more productive occupations.

The predominance in many countries of a preparatory and pre-university view of secondary education has led those graduates who do not continue their studies to have great difficulties in successfully entering the labor force. It is therefore vital to reflect on the orienting function of this level of education, which should not be limited only to university preparation, but also to significantly contributing to the search for identity and transition to adult life.

Educational programs for young people and adults should also seek a balance between professional preparation needs and those of personal development, given that on the one hand, students wish to complete their basic education studies, and on the other enter the world of employment in the best possible conditions.

- *Balance between what is common and what is diverse.* As has been argued, there is a need for basic learning common to all that assures equal opportunity and national unity, incorporating at the same time learning that is relevant to the needs of particular groups or individuals and for different contexts and cultures. The question is how to provide access to a common base of knowledge and values in societies as heterogeneous as those of Latin America and the Caribbean.

In regard to cultural diversity, it is important that the common curriculum have an inter-cultural orientation for all that includes knowledge of different cultures and their contributions, and learning the values of mutual respect and understanding. But there is also a need to educate indigenous populations in a culturally pertinent manner which fosters the learning of common national objectives, full bilingualism, and knowledge of and appreciation for one's own culture (Smelkes, 2004).

The balance between what is common and what is different is especially important in secondary education, given that its students are very different, both at the beginning and end of this educational phase. These differences require establishing specific trajectories within secondary education that respond to the special requirements of each age group, assuring a gradual passage from comprehensiveness to specialization without eliminating any of these principles. The diversification of different options, in any case, should not be transformed into discriminatory itineraries, or limit passage between different educational experiences.

That which is common and that which is different is usually related to another tension between centralization and decentralization. What is common or homogeneous is usually associated with centralization, and decentralization with diversification, the concrete definition of which is carried out at different levels (provincial, local, and the school) (Torres, 1998).

- *The balance between academic disciplines and integration of content.* How do we organize knowledge that is increasingly interdisciplinary in character and subject to permanent change? What weight should be given to area-specific knowledge and that related to the acquisition of more general skills?

From a rights-based focus, students, rather than teachers or subject matter, are at the center of education. However, there is a long tradition of organizing curricula and teaching based on different disciplines without sufficiently considering underlying logic nor the characteristics of those who are learning. This leads to a compartmentalization of knowledge that neither represents reality nor facilitates learning.

These difficulties are accentuated in secondary education, where the weight of disciplines is much greater than in early childhood or primary-school levels. Traditionally, secondary education has been seen as a juxtaposition of disciplines, each responding to its own logic, with the resulting inflation of content and with teachers working in isolation.

The debate about scholastic disciplines is not new, and the present discussion will not be focused on whether subject matter should be abandoned because here its utility will not be questioned. Rather, the present topic of debate is centered on

how the various disciplines should be presented and structured. Disciplines are not taught simply because they exist, but because each is capable of making a specific contribution in the comprehensive training of students.

A more interdisciplinary organization of the curriculum, based on key themes or particular competencies is fundamental for fostering more pertinent and meaningful learning. Many students have difficulties in learning precisely because they find it difficult to relate to, transfer, and generalize knowledge when it is presented in a fragmented manner (Martín, 2006).

#### **2.4. Attributes of public action on the quality of education: efficacy and efficiency**

The above sections have established that quality education for all, seen as a fundamental human right, is associated with three fundamental dimensions: equity, relevance, and pertinence.

The basic attributes of a quality education for all need be reflected in the central priorities of public action in Education, because it is through public action that contemporary societies work to guarantee individual rights as elements that affect everyone as a whole. It need hardly be reiterated that not guaranteeing citizens-rights threatens the founding principles of civil life.

Public action in education, primarily through the functioning of state-supported institutions, is another area to be analyzed when verifying the extent to which provided education is in fact education for all. This is true because it is through operational and institutional mechanisms that underlying human will as expressed in rights-recognition is or is not successfully articulated.

This analysis seeks to reveal two complementary dimensions that embody the very nature of public action available for further reflection. First, it is necessary to identify the extent to which one does or does not succeed in guaranteeing principles which have been previously articulated and concretized into goals; that is, the extent to which we are efficacious in the achievement of aspects that translate the right of a quality education for all into concrete terms: to what extent do children have access to school? To what extent are the educational needs of adults met? To what extent do people conclude obligatory education? To what extent do people learn what they should learn in each level of education? To what extent are educational resources and processes allocated and organized in order that they contribute to relevant and pertinent learning? To what extent are these educational goals achieved by all, in such a way that social differences are neither reproduced nor translated into an unequal distribution of opportunities and skills?

Second, it is necessary to analyze the degree to which the operation of public action honors the concrete efforts of the national community that assigns a particular amount of resources to education; that is, to what extent is public action efficient, and to what degree does it respect the right of citizens to have their concrete efforts adequately recognized and compensated? Efficiency, then, is not an economic imperative, but rather an obligation derived from respect for humanity and the inherent rights of all people.

Furthermore, there is an important interaction between both dimensions, because efficiency-problems negatively impact the ability to guarantee these basic goals. Thus, for example, grade repetition and the resulting graduation delays not only involve a waste of both public and familiar resources; they also negatively affect the likelihood of a student's continuing and completing schooling. From this point of view, and according to the concept of education as a right, "school failure", typically understood as a failure of the student for whom repetition provides a "second chance", should rather be seen as a failure of the educational system which

has failed to guarantee students due passage through the course of study and that is effectively reducing a student's educational opportunities rather than providing new ones.

It is evident from the example above that the problems of efficiency and efficacy are linked to key dimensions of the educational tasks described in preceding sections, since problems of access translate into the non-attainment of goals related to the universalization of services. Thus, problems of adequate resource-allocation and configuration of educational services that can frequently result in students having uneven school trajectories and problems of grade repetition and school drop-out that limit school-effectiveness and explain resource-waste, while conversely, attending to aspects of relevance and pertinence can help create real possibilities of assuring learning and fulfilling the opportunity-providing function of education.

Ultimately, difficulties manifested as operational problems in the educational systems (non-achievement of goals and inefficiencies) tend to be produced heterogeneously in societies; that is, they are distributed in unequal manners among different population groups, and reproduce patterns of inequality, exclusion, and social marginalization that in turn reinforce the continued inequitable operation of educational systems. Thus, efficiency and efficacy, as dimensions that affect the functioning of public action, are inseparable from the substantive dimensions of relevance, pertinence, and equity which together define the meaning of a quality education for all as defined in this chapter.

## CHAPTER III

### TEACHERS AND GUARANTEEING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

The Ministers of Education of the region, in the second strategic of the Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean, PRELAC, state that teachers are key actors for and contribute to improving education policies in the region (UNESCO/OREALC, 2002)<sup>1</sup>. Their professionalism and ethical commitment have direct impacts on the possibilities of people to exercise their right to learn and the ability of states to implement efficacious education policies with the development aspirations of countries.

In fact, excluding variables outside of school such as the socio-economic origin of students<sup>2</sup>, the quality of teachers and the environment they are able to maintain in the classroom are the factors that best explain student learning results. No education reform has, nor probably will, be successful without the support of teachers. Policies aimed at improving the quality of education can only be viable if efforts concentrate on changing, with teachers, the culture of schools.

The countries of the region face the challenge of implementing policies and strategies that guarantee teachers with appropriate professional skills and ethics, as well as the conditions and means necessary to make effective the right of students to learn and fully develop.

In order to contribute to the formulation of policies aimed at strengthening the teaching profession, this chapter will provide frameworks and proposals to aid in reflecting on the current working demands of teachers; the competencies and conditions necessary for addressing these demands; factors which should be considered in order to assure teacher effectiveness and motivation and student achievement; and the major characteristics such policies should have.

#### 1. The role of teachers: professionalism and professionalness in the current complex scenario

The education scenario has become more complex in direct relation to the depth and velocity of current social changes. These include changes in the configuration of families and their role in the education of their children; the emergence of new education actors, the values of whom do not always coincide with those developed in schools; the impact of ICTs in the production and circulation of knowledge; the weakening of “lettered culture”, and the communication codes constructed by children and young people. All of this, without forgetting that the contexts within which most teachers work are affected by poverty, unemployment, forced migration, and child labor. Teachers need to work in new scenarios for which they have not and are not being sufficiently prepared.

Society expects schools and teachers to offer students that which they do not find elsewhere, or that which others are doing without success (Tedesco and Tenti, 2002), while at the same time fulfilling their essential role: contributing to assuring the comprehensive learning of students. Schools are no longer the only educational institution in society; nor are teachers the only educational agents. However, they continue to be those who continue to be able to

---

1 The second strategic focus of PRELAC refers to “*teachers and their active participation in changes in education in order to respond to the learning needs of their students*”.

2 Various studies – such as those of the OECD, the IDB and the Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE) coordinated by OREALC/UNESCO Santiago, document the importance of the work of teachers for the learning results of their students.

create learning situations that provide a training spiral, combining pedagogical goals with the physical conditions, time frames, disciplinary base, and media resources in order to balance the cognitive, emotional, and value development of students (Rizo, 2005).

What kind of teachers do Latin American and Caribbean societies need today? According to Tedesco and Tenti (2002), "The definition of the ideal teacher is related to the meaning and function granted to school systems in contemporary Latin American and Caribbean societies in each stage of their development" These authors question the tendency to think about improving teaching through the formulation of a complex, ideal, and unattainable profile that lists the qualities of an individual who doesn't exist.

*"(Currently) the task that awaits teachers is something that is broader than transmitting knowledge to students – which until very recently was their principal task and for which they were trained. Now, many other qualities are lacking, without which it is difficult for students to progress in the acquisition of knowledge: dialogue with students, the capacity to stimulate interest in learning, the incorporation of information technologies, personal guidance, care for affective and moral development, attention to the diversity of students and working in teams"* (Marchesi, 2006). Moreover, teachers are expected to be able to take co-responsibility for the results of work in the school, joining its policies with those of local and national education.

Current teacher policies, whether explicit or implicit, have not been able to strengthen these conditions, nor assure their active involvement in changes in education, and guarantee the learning of all students.

The actions that countries have taken to improve the quality of the work of teachers, has had less impact than expected. In spite of all that has been done, for a large number of students, schools are not guaranteeing acquisition of basic life skills such as reading, writing, calculating, listening, speaking, thinking, and communicating (UNESCO/OREALC, 2001; Namo de Mello, 2005). Unfortunately, due to the deficient manner in which policies regarding teachers have been set forth, they have become part of the problem, often due to a lack of preparation and to their excessive corporativism.

In general, these policies have been short-term, isolated, and often as reactions to teacher union demands. Two paths have been preferred: raising salary levels and the implementation of large-scale training programs for in-service teachers (Calvo and Jarque, 2002). These measures have been important and necessary, but have not been sufficient. The old problems persist: traditional focuses in teacher training, the difficult conditions under which most of them work, flat salary plans that lack transparency, promotion based on time in service, the passive role of teachers and the lack of commitment to the results of their labor. These factors, among others, are the causes of poor student learning achievement and of teacher dissatisfaction, frustration, and conflict.

However, in recent years it has become clearer that in order to assure that teachers carry out what is expected of them, more is needed than salary and training increases. The work of teachers is now being considered in a more integrated, long-term perspective associated to the formulation of government policies arrived at through consensus and public discussion<sup>3</sup>.

Teaching is a profession that requires much more than vocation, which is an important and necessary, but not sufficient condition. Public policies regarding teachers should be oriented to permit them to develop a dimension related to the rational and technical competencies of their task, which should be learned at specific times and places, and a dimension related to socio-ethical competencies that have to do with responsibility for their work and commitment to student learning.

3 For example, Chile is preparing to begin a discussion on designing a teaching career system. Argentina is discussing an education law that foresees the creation of a teacher training institute. Uruguay has much discussed defining an education project for the country.

*Professionalism* and “*professionalness*” are two large dimensions of the identity of the teaching profession, the synergy of which makes up the ethical and professional strength of teachers (Braslavsky, 2004, p. 7).

*Professionalism* is a continuous process that develops abilities of “learning to teach” and “teaching to learn”. This is learning that requires acquiring, throughout professional life, *cognitive competencies* (knowing, managing information, and continuing to learn about one’s own discipline), and *pedagogical competencies* (knowing how to teach the subject, how to work in diverse contexts, how to generate appropriate conditions for learning in highly difficult contexts and with heterogeneous groups, and to creatively use available teaching resources).

What we call “*professionalness*” has to do with responsibly fulfilling the mission assigned to teachers by society: that of guaranteeing the comprehensive development of students through relevant and pertinent learning for all. Professionalism involves the development of ethical and social skills. *Ethical skills* enable a teacher to fulfill the social commitment inherent in the profession. *Social skills* are those that enable them to satisfy basic learning needs: to adapt and respond to permanent changes in knowledge, to work in networks, to foster dialogue and consensus; in short, to exercise their citizen rights and responsibilities in decisions regarding education, schools, and their own practice (UNESCO/OREALC, 2002).

## 2. Key factors that influence the quality of teaching

The professionalism and professionalness of teachers is constructed and strengthened through a set of factors that are fundamental for good professional performance. Some of these factors can be influenced through short-term policies. But others, for example raising the cultural capital of those entering the field, will require much more long-term changes.

Many of these factors have been considered in reforms, although at times in a partial or isolated manner, and without the required depth (UNESCO/OREALC, 2002)<sup>4</sup>. It is crucial to emphasize them because they are the aspects around which the discussion, of formulation, and implementation of teacher policies takes place. In this section we will analyze three of these factors: an organized system of on-going teacher training and development; a transparent and motivating teaching career and teacher assessment system; and an appropriate system to address the labor conditions and well-being of teachers.

### 2.1. An organized system for the learning of teachers throughout their careers

“The education that we want for students – a vast set of learning opportunities, dedication and commitment to research, access to solving real problems, learning linked to their previous experiences, and opportunities to work with others – can also be provided to teachers in their own learning” (Lieberman and Goolnick, 2003, p. 266).

The right to learn is the fundamental criteria for creating a system that brings together, in a coherent and sustainable manner, three basic components forming a continuum for career-long learning: *initial training*; *professional entry*; and *in-service training* (OECD, 2005).

In order to make this system effective, it is necessary to favor and strengthen coherent institutional strategies among those responsible for and involved in this process. The idea is for them to work toward the same objectives, defining standards of quality and designing plans in regard to them, recuperating the value of schools as natural venues for teacher training, assessing their work, and being accountable to society for the quality of teacher learning. One of the results of this process should be that teachers change from “specialists in routine” to

---

<sup>4</sup> The most illustrative case of the need to coordinate efforts has to do with salary adjustments that are made without connection to issues related to professional performance, the career path, or responsibility for the result of the work of teachers.

“specialists in adaptation”; that is to say, to help them so that they may act as persons who are prepared for efficient, life-long learning within a complex and changing world, and able to work with heterogeneous groups (Marcelo, 2002).

### a) Initial training

The tendency in many countries of the region is to locate initial teacher training within tertiary-level institutions, usually universities or those associated with universities. This is the case in Bolivia, Colombia, and Honduras. Other countries are currently debating the pros and cons of adopting this process. Teacher training in normal schools possesses advantages such as strengthening a sense of vocation, interaction with schools, and relations with communities. But it is criticized for its emphasis on pedagogical training in detriment to disciplinary training, weaknesses in the area of research, and little utilization of information and communication technologies, among others. At the same time, university training is claimed to be distant from schools, weak in providing practical training, and for its preference for disciplinary over pedagogical training.

We do not have sufficient information about the quality of the professional performance of graduates from one or the other type of institutions. University training does not appear to satisfy current education requirements – awakening nostalgia for the no longer existing normal schools. In general, there is a lack of satisfaction in government, among practicing teachers, and among trainers themselves in regard to the abilities of training institutions to respond to the needs of education systems (CPEIP, 2005).

The OECD (2005) states that the quality of teacher training is one of the critical areas of education systems. The most stringent requirements are oriented towards aspects such as greater involvement of teacher training with education reforms; responding to the needs of the system in terms of specialized personnel; improving the level of trainers; harmonizing theory and practice; developing research; preparing future teachers to work with diverse and vulnerable populations; among others (Braslavsky, 2004; Marcelo, 2006).

In the face of this situation, countries need to assure better teacher training. Recent studies mention some characteristics of programs that innovate in this area (UNESCO/ORE-ALC, 2005a):

- *Focuses based on developing competencies* as a key element for overcoming the dichotomy between discipline and pedagogy. This radically changes the roles of students and teachers by seeking greater collective construction, and training professionals able to adapt to new situations and contexts.
- *A new conceptualization of practice*, strengthening its role within the training curriculum through early incorporation of future teachers into schools, with practice in various contexts accompanied by university instructors as tutors.
- *Fostering research*, converting training institutions into knowledge generation centers where research skills are developed, stimulating the capacity for reflection of future teachers.
- *A trans-disciplinary focus* for fostering joint planning and work among teachers from different subject areas.
- *The combination of strong general training with solid final specialization*. Although there is a lack of consensus on this point, such programs choose to train professionals who have different profiles and work according to the possibilities of each context – without losing the common characteristics of the teaching profession, independent of their specialty.



- *Open offerings, based on information and communication technology* using it intensively while working with face-to-face teaching as well, with the support of university instructors.

Independently of the models chosen for training their teachers, countries should be responsible for the quality of initial training programs through implementing policies and strategies that include assessment, auditing, accreditation, and certification of competencies of graduates (Aguerrondo, 2004). It is useful to review the regulations of European countries such as the United Kingdom, with its rigorous assessment of future teachers both during and at the end of their initial training. This includes written tests for language and mathematics skills, interpretation of student achievement data, and assessment of practice. In this regard, there are valuable experiences in various countries of our region. For example, Chile recently determined that all universities offering courses in medicine and pedagogy be required to accredit them. This sends a powerful signal that the quality of professionals who work in education is as important as that of those who work in health.

Also of note are initiatives carried out by Guatemala, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia<sup>5</sup>, among others, in the training of teachers to work with bilingual populations. All of these countries have made great efforts to adapt teacher training for working with indigenous peoples.

In this sense, policies for training teachers for diverse populations and education systems, as well those aimed at solving the problem of teacher scarcity in subject areas such as the sciences, technical education, special education needs, and foreign languages are important.

### **b) Placing beginning teachers**

Marcelo (2006) argues that one cannot continue to ignore the fact that there is a clearly differentiated phase in the process of becoming a good teacher. This has to do with the individual's own characteristics and needs, functioning as a link between initial training and subsequent professional development. The way of approaching the placement period is of utmost importance in the process of transforming an individual into either a frustrated beginner, or an adaptive teacher<sup>6</sup>.

During this period, teachers should pass through an adaptation period, going from being students to professionals. Frequently, there can be a "reality shock" if they are not properly accompanied. In most cases, this period is one of intense learning based on trial and error, marked by the principle of survival and the predominance of the value of what is practical. Beginners continue to increase their knowledge and skills under the guidance of professionals with more experience. At the same time, the beginners contribute their knowledge, since they bring with them the latest research and theoretical perspectives, that are contrasted with practice and shared with more experienced teachers. The real conditions of teaching are far from this utopian model. Traditionally, one expects new teachers to survive (or abandon) work with the scant support and guidance that they receive (Marcelo 2006, citing Linda Darling-Hammond).

In contrast to what takes place in European or Asian countries, which have established programs of tutoring or monitoring in order to support beginning teachers, Latin America and the Caribbean have only recently begun to work in this direction. There are some processes taking place, although they are still not yet part of institutionalized programs for supporting beginning teachers. This is among the pending themes for assuring the quality of teaching. Programs that integrate new teachers into on-going school culture; which support them in

5 We note the international cooperation support for strengthening teacher training institutions for bilingual populations, especially indigenous people.

6 The author refers to teachers as adaptive specialists; that is, as people prepared for life-long learning.

questioning, in confronting theory with practice, to reflect, and to construct their own knowledge and define for themselves the best ways of teaching according to the needs and demands of their students, and that strengthen their professional roles with responsibilities that go beyond the classroom are needed.

Designing and putting into place work entry programs is an area that can and should generate consensus and shared responsibilities between ministries, initial training institutions, those responsible for in-service training, and schools themselves as part of an effort to strengthen a coordinated system of teacher training and development.

Administrative, financial, and legal mechanisms are needed in order to change the organization of work and time in schools that allow beginning teachers to have the time necessary for reflection regarding the learning problems of their students, accompanied by mentors prepared for this task. This concept is radically different from the traditional idea of school "supervision", which is often questioned due to its ineffective accompaniment of the learning processes of teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2001).

### c) In-service training

Within the framework of education reform, countries have invested significant resources in in-service teacher training. Nevertheless, the results have not been up to expectations<sup>7</sup>. This has to do with the focuses and methodologies used and the weak links with other components of the professional development system. In general, training, understood as the sum of events, has little or not impact on school practices or on student learning results (Cuenca, 2003).

The processes that show hopeful results in schools and in teaching practices are those that have the following characteristics: they respond to national, local, and school policies; they are incorporated into school planning and organization; they make use of the knowledge of teachers; they foster the collective construction of knowledge; and they can count on the aid and support of principals, supervisors, outstanding teachers, and other specialized professionals.

In-service training with these characteristics contributes to recognizing schools as natural venues for on-going teacher training. Changes in pedagogical processes require training opportunities, exchange of experiences, and joint work among teachers. The participation of school administrators in such processes is essential, and the strengthening of its leadership should be part of a policy aimed at improving the work of teachers and school management.

Collective professionalism and the construction of networks of schools and teachers are among the best strategies for responding to the multiple challenges of the profession and to counter what Michael Fullan (2003) calls the "Balkanization" of teaching; that is, its restructuring of isolated compartments that work against effective learning in schools. Networks strengthen the professionalism of teachers and administrators, committing them to work on their own learning, raise morale, self-esteem, and responsibility for their work.

In-service training is a factor that improves the performance of teachers if linked to processes of school and individual assessment, and accompanied by strategies for granting schools greater self-management and the ability to become learning organizations; that is, if they approach the teaching profession from a comprehensive perspective the performance of which requires concurrent change in the different factors that influence teacher performance.

## 2.2. Transparent and inspiring professional career and teaching assessment

By "teaching career" we mean the system involving the entry, exercise, stability, promo-

---

<sup>7</sup> The case of Chile is illustrative. It has been one of the countries that has sustained over time a reform process and a set of measures that are part of a national project. However, some teachers feel that, among other factors, the disappointing results are related to training that is not always appropriate for the demands of schools.

tion, development and exit of those who teach (UNESCO/OREALC, 2006a). In recent years, the teaching career has become one of the priorities of education policies due to the certainty that education systems cannot be better than the teachers within them. This means that countries face a double challenge: to attract well-qualified candidates and to foster their performance in order to achieve good learning results of students (Vaillant, 2006).

The social and economic status of the profession is vital in order to attract and retain the best professionals. Moreover, it is recommended that a teacher career system cover key themes such as entry of the best candidates with obligatory trial periods and tutorial programs; permanence and allocation of the most outstanding teachers where they are most needed (high-vulnerability schools); recognition of effort and merit, and not merely time in service; promotion, without necessarily implying leaving the classroom in order to assume managerial posts; strengthening of the ability of schools to decide on their own contracting and on the responsibilities of the teaching staff; transparent and competitive mechanisms for assigning managerial posts; conditions for departure and retirement in order to foster the change of teachers at the proper times; and linkage of the teaching career with professional development and assessment.

Various countries make significant efforts to incorporate the best professionals into teaching and school administration. In the latest reform of its Teaching Statute, Colombia established a trial period with final assessment prior to offering open-ended contracts to those wishing to enter teaching. Chile has defined fixed periods for school principals at the end of which public competitions are held to fill the posts. El Salvador has granted more power of decision to schools within its EDUCO program in order to assess and contract teachers. Other countries have incorporated families into the administration and control of schools as well as giving them responsibility for contracting.

In most countries, a pending theme in teacher career programs is the establishment of mechanisms, incentives, and support networks in order that the best teachers work in the schools with the greatest needs.

Currently, one of the subjects of greatest discussion, due to its relation with the professional development of teachers, and with their motivation, is that of career promotion. There are two types of promotion in current teacher career systems: *vertical* and *horizontal*. In *vertical promotion* teachers progress professionally by assuming managerial tasks, always with an increase in pay. *Horizontal promotion* recognizes the work of teachers through salary or classification increases without changing their classroom duties.

There are various opinions in regard to each of these. For vertical promotion, there are those who argue for the need to unlink promotion to managerial tasks with teaching merit, saying that neither is a good teacher necessarily a good manager nor a good manager a good teacher. Moreover, it is argued that managerial posts require skills acquired through specific kinds of training more than through classroom experience.

In horizontal promotion one must be aware of the need to take care that in such cases teachers may aim their efforts toward taking courses in order to obtain a promotion or a salary increase rather than to improve their performance. This has been called "credentialism"<sup>8</sup>.

There is also talk of structuring mixed systems that balance promotion, professional development, performance, fulfillment of required profiles, and the opportunity for the system to make best use of its talents, seeking to always preserve the quality of student learning.

---

8 Credentialism is a term used to identify the tendency to obtain diplomas, titles, or credentials that certify completion of a particular kind of study, independently of its relation to professional development needs, since such documents are among the aspects taken into account in evaluating personal merit and allow them to be considered for salary increases.

In any case, the most important criteria in considering promotion should always be that of transparency and professional merit.

The challenge for countries is to modify or establish professional career systems that work together with other factors that influence teacher performance in order to strengthen the teaching profession and assure the quality of teachers and school administrators.

Many teachers see assessment as a threat to their job stability. It is therefore one of the motives for much conflict in education systems. In general, assessment has a negative connotation for teachers. Among other reasons, this is because they see it more as a sanction than a source of support. Most teacher assessment proposals have come about due to criticisms regarding poor learning results of students and the lack of willingness of teachers to assume responsibility for them.

It is necessary to create a constructive image of assessment, disseminating the argument that it primarily seeks better student learning and not to sanction teachers, although in particular cases sanctions may be necessary. This would involve insisting on the need of assessment to contribute to offering the support that teachers need in order to improve their performance.

In order to contribute to the quality of education, assessment must be extended to the entire education system as a legitimate and democratic practice of accountability of society regarding a public good. In the case of teacher assessment, in order for it to be an effective strategy for improving teacher performance, it must be associated with professional development and teaching career processes. Moreover, it should arise out of dialogue and consensus with the actors involved, especially with teachers and their organizations.

Experiences, like those developed in Chile, show that when assessment is the result of discussion and participation, it is accepted by teachers<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, the discussion process itself can be used to increase awareness on the part of those involved. If this is not done; when proposals come exclusively from education ministries without the participation or commitment of teachers, they will be very difficult to implement and may even fail – as many examples in the region illustrate. Performance must be assessed with teachers, and not against them. Mechanisms such as peer assessment (PREAL, 2003) and self-assessment are also useful for fostering the participation of teachers in the process.<sup>10</sup>

It is important to relate teacher assessment with the assessment of schools as a whole. Teachers carry out their tasks within an organization. Therefore, teacher and school management assessment should take into account the school culture, its values and its context.

It is also important that assessment systems be of high quality, transparent, technically sound, with well-prepared evaluators and with mechanisms to disseminate and use the information collected so that it will have credibility and be accepted (UNESCO/OREALC, 2006a).

One of the greatest challenges is to see to it that assessment produces improvements, with information that it produces used to identify the kinds of support that teachers and schools need for students to learn and for schools to function well.

A systemic view of the teaching profession involves viewing assessment, as well as the teaching career, as integrated into the entire set of factors that contribute to good teacher performance within the framework of coordinated long-term policies and strategies.

---

9 Chile has developed an interesting participatory teacher assessment system designed by the Ministry of Education, the Association of Municipalities, and the teacher union. Before being sent to the legislature, the proposal was submitted for open consultation of teachers.

10 Peer assessment is increasingly popular. In the United States, for example, for many years it has been teacher organizations themselves who have supported this mechanism, which has a strong training component when appropriately applied.

### 2.3. Teachers' working conditions and well-being

Often, talk about the working conditions of teachers is reduced to discussing their salaries. This, although a vital component, is not the only one. "Working conditions" are the set of material, personal, and social aspects that make up the scenario in which a person works. Among the principal aspects for teachers are: the infrastructure of schools, equipment and teaching materials, the organizational climate, salaries, school surroundings, health, labor satisfaction, time spent in the school, other work affiliations, social relations with their direct interlocutors (students, families, colleagues, school administrators) and social recognition.

This perspective allows us to treat the situation and performance of teachers in school as a whole; present input for formulating policies and strategies for improving the work of teachers; and contribute to opening negotiation agendas with teacher unions. This latter point is very important. Currently, union demands revolve almost exclusively around economic issues. In most countries of the region, salary demands are the major cause of conflict in education systems.

School climate, personal satisfaction, and social recognition are factors that are still little valued in the performance of teachers and, therefore, in the learning of students. It is not enough to look only at the technical aspects for exercise of the profession; there must be progress in institutional policies and strategies that, designed and carried out with co-responsibility of teams of teachers, can convert schools into stimulating environments in which relations of trust facilitate and strengthen the comprehensive learning of all actors (Hevia, 2006).

Since 1985 when José Manuel Esteve used the expression "teacher malaise"<sup>11</sup> to refer to a state of dissatisfaction, demotivation, and disinterest of teachers in their work, studies have been carried out on the work and health of teachers – another of the essential components of working conditions. These studies have had two objectives: to study the effects of working conditions on teacher health, and to relate the health of teachers with their performance.

Although they are few and come above all from developed countries (UNESCO/OREALC, 2005b; Gutiérrez-Santander, Morá-Suñarez; Sanz-Vásquez 2005), available studies agree that the illnesses most often found in teachers are related to their mental health, including stress, neurosis, and depression. This is particularly important if we consider them along with the climate of schools and classrooms, the concentration of labor, and especially the kinds of relations teachers establish with their students.

Salary is a fundamental working condition. In the case of teachers, this is a very sensitive point with high social costs. Proof of this is the permanent conflicts generated by this issue and that directly affect student learning.

Although analyses in this regard point in various directions (Hanushek et al., 1999; Imazeki, 2005; Figlio, 1997; Tiramonti, 2001; Morduchowicz, 2002; Liang, 1999), there is a clear conviction that perceived salaries by teachers have suffered significant deterioration during recent decades. This situation is linked both to national economic crises and adjustments, as well as the way teacher issues have been negotiated by

#### MAJOR CAUSES OF CONFLICT IN EDUCATION SYSTEMS OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

THE STUDY ON CONFLICT IN EDUCATION SYSTEMS SPONSORED BY OREALC/UNESCO SANTIAGO DOCUMENTED 870 DIFFERENT KINDS OF CONFLICT (NATIONAL, PROVINCIAL, AND LOCAL) IN 18 LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES BETWEEN 1998 AND 2003. THE REPORT SHOWS THAT SALARY DEMANDS, TOGETHER WITH RETIREMENT AND CAREER ISSUES, WERE THE REASONS FOR 79% OF THESE CONFLICTS. OCCURRING LESS FREQUENTLY, WERE DEMANDS FOR INCREASING EDUCATION BUDGETS, OPPOSITION TO DECENTRALIZATION AND TEACHER ASSESSMENT, NEGOTIATIONS REGARDING EDUCATION LAWS, DEMAND FOR THE DISMISSAL OF EDUCATION AUTHORITIES, PROTESTS AGAINST THE CURRENT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL MODEL, AND OTHERS OF A POLITICAL NATURE.

Source: UNESCO/OREALC (2004). *Conflictividad educativa en América Latina cronología de la actividad sindical docente*.

#### TEACHER CONFLICTS AND STUDENT LEARNING TIME

BETWEEN 1998 AND 2003, THE AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT IN LABOR CONFLICTS IN EDUCATION IN THE 18 COUNTRIES STUDIED WAS 4,802 WORKING DAYS. CONSIDERING THAT THE PERIOD ANALYZED COVERED 1,825 DAYS, THIS MEANS THAT DURING FIVE YEARS THERE WERE IN THE REGION AN AVERAGE OF 2.6 CONFLICTS PER DAY. OF THESE PROTESTS, 54% WERE WORK STOPPAGES IN SCHOOLS. ALTHOUGH THIS INFORMATION DOES NOT INDICATE THE NATURE AND MEANING OF THE CONFLICTS, IT DOES SHOW THE MAGNITUDE OF CONFLICT AND THE IMPACT ON THE LEARNING TIME OF STUDENTS.

Source: MILTON, Luna (2004) *Conflictos docentes en América Latina 1999-2003: Sistematización de estudios e investigaciones*. (Forthcoming), p. 43.

11 The expression "teacher malaise" was used by José Manuel Esteve in 1985 for the name of a book that is still being published, with the first edition by Paidós in Barcelona.

governments and unions, with more emphasis on contracting than on salaries. In fact, between 1980 and 2003, the number of primary school teachers in the region practically doubled, while enrollments at this level grew – given coverage levels, improvements in internal efficiency, and demographic changes – by slightly less than 30%. This situation should be viewed as well within the context of the extreme precariousness of employment in which, although teacher salaries are not high, the work does differ from most currently being created within the region due to its stability, and access to pension and health service systems.

Countries need to make their salary policies more transparent in order to guarantee the application of equitable systems of remuneration. Some recurring problems are: the possibility of earning a salary increase depends largely on time in service or movement to an administrative post with the resultant abandonment of classroom work. There are no promotions within the same post; nor is there pay for different work characteristics and responsibilities. The salary differences between teachers entering the profession and those who are in the lowest categories are slight (UNESCO/IIEP, 2006).

In some countries, the basic teacher pay scale has lost weight compared to the extras and bonuses that they receive. Remuneration criteria are complex and hard to change. They have tended to be general in nature and linked to cost of living increases without considering the provision of specific treatment according to the assumption and fulfillment of distinct responsibilities. To this is added the difficulty of replacing current criteria due to the impact that teacher salary adjustments have on fiscal budgets.

Proposed alternatives refer, among others, to granting incentives to successful schools, merit-based pay, school careers and skill-based pay (Morduchowicz, 2002). Beyond the validity of these incentives, the challenge is to find financing alternatives in order to approach the problem in depth; to agree upon salary policy and to design pay systems that contribute to raising the prestige of the profession, attracting talented young people, retaining good teachers, and stimulating outstanding professionals with training and experience to work in areas of high social vulnerability.

The OECD (2005) states that if teaching is not seen as an attractive profession and does not change its fundamental character, the quality of schools will decrease, and it will be very difficult to recover from progressive deterioration.

The relation between teacher salaries and student academic achievement is also a controversial subject without an easy solution. However, it is necessary to retain as a guiding principle that teachers should receive appropriate salaries in return for good teaching performances that contribute to assuring the right of students to learn.

The professionalism of teachers is strengthened through social recognition, professional growth, and personal well-being. There is a direct relation between performance, work satisfaction, and professional commitment. In the case of teachers, low salaries have had a negative impact on their quality of life, obliging many of them to dedicate themselves to other occupations. Teachers frequently work double shifts in the same or different schools, or

**THE RECOMMENDATION REGARDING THE SITUATION OF TEACHING PERSONNEL WAS APPROVED BY THE SPECIAL INTER-GOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE ON THE SITUATION OF TEACHING PERSONNEL ORGANIZED BY THE ILO AND UNESCO IN PARIS ON OCTOBER 5, 1966. ITS BASIC CONTENT REMAINS IN FORCE AND IS A GUIDING FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRESS REGARDING THE TEACHING PROFESSION.**

REGARDING THE TEACHING PROFESSION, ITS ESSENTIAL RESPONSIBILITY, AND THE SALARY QUESTION, THE RECOMMENDATION STATES:

"TEACHING SHOULD BE SEEN AS A PROFESSION WHOSE MEMBERS PROVIDE A PUBLIC SERVICE; THIS PROFESSION DEMANDS OF EDUCATORS NOT ONLY PROFOUND KNOWLEDGE AND SPECIAL COMPETENCE ACQUIRED AND MAINTAINED THROUGH RIGOROUS STUDY, BUT ALSO A SENSE OF PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY THAT THEY ASSUME FOR THE EDUCATION AND WELL-BEING OF THEIR STUDENTS".

REGARDING REMUNERATION, THE RECOMMENDATION MENTIONS THAT "ONE CANNOT DENY THAT THE SOCIAL STATUS OF TEACHERS OR THE RECOGNITION OF THEIR FUNCTION GREATLY DEPENDS, AS WITH MANY OTHER PROFESSIONS, ON THE ECONOMIC SITUATION THAT THEY ENJOY."

IT ALSO NOTES THAT THE PAY OF TEACHERS SHOULD:

- BE RELATED TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TEACHING FUNCTION AND ITS RESPONSIBILITIES.
- COMPARE FAVORABLY WITH THE SALARIES OF OTHER PROFESSIONS OF A COMPARABLE SOCIAL VALUE GOVERNABILITY.
- ASSURE A SATISFACTORY LIFE FOR BOTH TEACHERS AND THEIR FAMILIES, AS WELL AS ALLOWING THEM TO IMPROVE THEIR PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS.
- TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THAT PARTICULAR POSTS REQUIRE MORE EXPERIENCE, BETTER QUALIFICATIONS, AND INVOLVE MORE RESPONSIBILITY.

IT RECOMMENDS THAT TEACHER SALARIES AND WORKING CONDITIONS SHOULD BE DETERMINED THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN TEACHER ORGANIZATIONS AND EMPLOYERS.

work in other jobs outside of school in order to enhance the incomes they require in order to meet basic needs.

Within the framework of government social policies, it is recommended that inter-sector programs be fostered with other ministries of the social area in order to improve the personal and family situations of teachers through offering specialized health services, support to obtain special housing for those working in isolated schools, access to cultural services. Benefits of this kind, especially if associated with their professional development and performance, provide important signals that the work of teachers is valued and that their situation is an important social concern.

### **3. Active participation and co-responsibility of teachers for assuring the right to a quality education for all**

The participation of teachers in changes in education is vital for such changes to be successful – above all if the changes involve many actors over an extended period. In order for such participation to have meaning and be productive, it is not enough that teachers acquire new knowledge about curricular content or new teaching techniques. Teachers are not mere technical learners. They are social learners as well (Hargreaves, 1999). This recognition requires paying more attention to their capacity to change and their desire to do so.

Such desire and ethical responsibility are strengthened with their participation in decisions regarding school management and their collaboration in defining education policies. There is increasingly more evidence supporting the fact that appropriate attention of teachers to questions outside the classroom significantly improves the quality of what they develop within it (Hargreaves, 1999).

Changes coming from above and from outside the school do not achieve significant improvements in student learning. The practice of instruction has slight links with the orientations of planners, but rather depends much more on the conceptions, decisions, and expectations of multiple actors within schools and their communities. Educational practice is related to school culture, the way that teachers define and assume their roles, and the reciprocal expectations of teachers, school administrators, families, and students (UNESCO/OREALC 2002).

From this perspective, what is required from teacher policies and strategies is that, besides developing classroom skills, they foster and strengthen the participation of teachers in the management of their institutions and their collaboration in formulating education policies. Thus, they can contribute to reversing the traditional focus that has seen teachers as carrying out policies adopted without their opinions or knowledge – which has also limited the possibilities of education policies being translated into effective practices in schools and classrooms (UNESCO/OREALC, 2002).

Schools that challenge their adverse conditions and achieve good learning results are those in which teachers have assumed greater participation in school decision-making and a greater commitment to student learning outcomes. Among other characteristics, these schools have teaching teams united around the achievement of common institutional goals and projects formulated within a climate of trust; they have principals who value, respect, and foster participation and who have explicitly declared their commitment to offering better conditions for the comprehensive learning of students<sup>12</sup>.

---

12 Illustrative examples can be found in assessments carried out for programs such as "Escuelas de Calidad" in México, "EDUCO" in El Salvador, "Escuelas Críticas" in Chile, among others.



The participation of teachers in broader venues of debate on education policy is a citizen right that strengthens their ethical skills and commits them to education as a common good and a public responsibility.

Collective consultation and decision-making in the area of education is not without its difficulties. One must seek true participation of those involved. The presence of union representatives is vital<sup>13</sup>, but is not a substitute for teachers, for what is needed is precisely to strengthen this area of professional and citizen responsibility among teachers, principals, supervisors, and other professionals who work within the system. It is likewise fundamental to guarantee that their efforts are focused on students being able to exercise their right to learn.

The recognition of the participation of teachers in discussions of public policies and in school management can be only a declaration of good intentions if space, time, and institutional mechanisms are not provided for them to do so (UNESCO/OREALC 2002), and can have counterproductive impacts if effective time is not guaranteed for student learning.

Interesting experiences are currently taking place which seek to incorporate families, the private sector, social movements, and citizens in general<sup>14</sup> in education policy consultations. In 2006, the government of Ecuador, within the framework of the recent electoral process, submitted the Ten-Year Education Plan to citizens – a set of national policies for developing education, and Argentina placed its new education law into public debate and fostered hundreds of national, provincial, and local meetings in order present to Congress an agreed-upon project. In this same year, the government of Uruguay called upon the entire country to discuss and construct a National Education Project in an effort to make education one of the pillars of a national project.

In many countries, children and young people continue to be without a voice in forums that discuss the education that they require. Mechanisms need to be created, strengthened, or revitalized in order to institutionalize their participation. In this sense, of great importance are the contributions offered by childhood observatories, NGOs, governmental organizations, and international cooperation agencies.

#### 4. Policies for strengthening the teaching profession

Teacher policy is one of the most complex challenges for governments, given the force of the interest groups involved, the lack of trust accumulated through years of disregard or inadequate solutions, the considerable financial implications of many proposed solutions, and because many of these alternatives have not been adequately proven in practice (Navarro, 2002).

Addressing the teacher issue in depth requires State policies formulated within a framework of social and political consensus that provides long-term solutions which stimulate a culture of co-responsibility and translate into concrete agendas and commitments. This is what the developed countries with best results in terms of student learning outcomes have done. In Finland, Norway, and Sweden, teachers are cornerstones of the success of education systems. The State guarantees them excellent working conditions while they in turn simultaneously demonstrate efficient performance.

---

13 The Delors Report, PRELAC, and various other publications that delve into the theme of participation recommend considering unions as interlocutors and allies in moving forward educational reform.

14 Citizen movements in various countries are emerging actors in discussion and construction of public educational policies. Contrato Social in Ecuador, Consejo Nacional de Educación in Peru, Observatorio Ciudadano in Mexico, Foro por la Educación in Nicaragua, Plataforma de Políticas Públicas in Colombia, Observatorio de Políticas Educativas in Chile, are some examples.



The actors involved know that in order to implement policies that improve the situation, opposed interests are involved. Institutional fragility and its resulting impact on the instability of education authorities make it difficult to adopt important long-term solutions. Negotiations between ministries, unions, and other sectors involve ceding power and decisions in order to assure conditions of governability; agreements that have not always taken into consideration the right of students to learn; nor have they resulted in real improvements in the working conditions of teachers. Union corporativism has also become an obstacle for implementing changes. One of the impacts has been that many teachers end up not assuming responsibility for the learning results of their students, nor for the quality of their schools.

Such a complex situation has not, and cannot be reversed through isolated measures such as those adopted to date. Salary adjustments, training, accountability, and teacher assessment tend to figure at the top of the list of "quick fixes" (Earl and LeMathieu, 2003). Political will and social responsibility are required by all those involved, especially governments, in order to progress in achieving policies that guarantee the quality of teaching.

In order to focus on the heart of the problems one must take a comprehensive approach; that is, address the multiple factors herein noted that influence the quality of the teaching task. This does not mean that all problems can be resolved simultaneously. But it is important to have a view of the whole in order to decide on the sequence of changes. In PRELAC, the Education Ministers of the region recognize the inexistence of comprehensive policies for the teaching profession and the need to develop such policies in order to assure the development of the cognitive and emotional competencies of teachers (UNESCO/OREALC, 2002).

Another aspect mentioned in PRELAC is the systemic focus that teacher policies require. One cannot change teacher policies without changing school policies as well. These are reciprocal in nature, since changes in the roles of teachers assume changes in management policies, curricular design, and system administration as well as labor and social security policies (UNESCO/OREALC, 2002). This also means supporting the strengthening of local and institutional conditions so that national strategies have impacts on schools and classrooms. Dialogue must be fostered between different levels of the system (national, state, provincial, local, and institutional), establishing responsibilities and carrying out concrete plans for them, while avoiding the overwhelming multiplicity of disconnected and fragmented changes often proposed to improve the quality of teaching, and which tend to be converted, according to Fullan (2003), into barriers to changing the profession.

Finally, an inter-sectoral approach to teacher policy is needed to increase the impacts of changes, generating responsibility shared between various sectors in order to guarantee the conditions that teachers require to fulfill their tasks. Traditionally, the teacher issue has been discussed within a closed circle of education ministries and teacher organizations. But the situation of teachers and the question of their performance have to do with aspects that go beyond these two groups to include the ministries of housing, labor, and health, as well as other social institutions such as legislatures, the media, and citizen movements. The inter-sectoral character of public policies take the concrete form of alliances between the different sectors involved in improving the working conditions of teachers and the inclusion of support strategies for improving the condition of teachers within the agendas of each sector involved.

The task of improving the social prestige and value of the teaching profession commits both the community and teachers themselves. Society must provide clear signals that teachers count, are valued, and that they are vital for fulfilling the right to education. At the same time, teachers need to demonstrate that they possess the professionalism and ethical strength to carry out their tasks, going beyond the need for social recognition

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FINANCING OF QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL: FOUR CRITICAL THEMES<sup>1</sup>

The financing of education – how much and in what way a society invests in its own education – is one of the key factors of educational policy, as it contributes to defining what is possible and operationalizes views and conceptions regarding what are to be priorities and what is to be left aside.

Guaranteeing the right to a quality education for the entire population involves determining where and how public resources will be invested. The provision of educational services, as well as attention to other needs that condition the right to education have costs that, for the services to be offered free of charge, need to be publicly funded.

Adopting a rights-based focus has important implications for educational financing policies. Although education can have an important impact on the economic situation of individuals, their families, and local and national communities, decisions regarding the financing of education are not exclusively or even primarily based on criteria of “profitability” or an analysis of economic return. Rather, and principally they are based on determining the level of needs that must be satisfied for full exercise of the right to education. The State’s primary responsibility is to guarantee rights. As such, its actions in the field of education should be ruled by this mandate.

This primordial responsibility of society, by means of State action implies that economic resources of public origin must be aimed at guaranteeing that all persons will receive, without limitations of any kind, the education which is their right. The public financing of education has as its guiding principle and rational making education services available and accessible (see Ch. II).

Issues such as the distribution of educational programs throughout a given territory, economic barriers to access, or aspects related to the pertinence of offered education, have costs that must be assumed by public financing policies.

Furthermore, public financing of education is a complex subject that includes a variety of considerations and issues, the analysis of which has been the subject of numerous studies during recent decades. This chapter does not seek to summarize that discussion. The intention here is rather to highlight some critical points that connect financing policies with the exercise of the right to education in order to shed light upon this fundamental relation. Issues that will be covered are at the heart of the current debate, and define the extent to which one can or cannot provide a quality education for all.

Accordingly, this chapter considers themes related to:

- (i) The availability of resources – *how much does a quality education for all cost, and how can it be financed?*;
- (ii) Efficiency in public resource management – *an imperative of public action*;
- (iii) Allocation mechanisms and principles of resource (re)distribution – *who invests, and in whom?*;

---

<sup>1</sup> Joint efforts between UNESCO and ECLAC (especially ECLAC/UNESCO 1992 and 2005) as well as regular exchanges between UNESCO and the Social Development Division of ECLAC are considered in this chapter. UNESCO’s International Institute of Educational Planning–IIEP (Buenos Aires) also contributed to the preparation of this chapter by means of UNESCO/IIEP, 2006.

- (iv) The relationship between structures or schemes of management and financing  
– *who decides upon what aspects of financing?*

## 1. The availability of resources

When speaking of the inalienable rights of individuals, it is not acceptable to deny these rights based on an absence of economic resources. In other words, the lack of economic resources is not a legitimate justification for the exclusion of people from full exercise of their rights.

It is clear that the countries of the region both face economic restrictions and do not exhibit economic development levels that equal the aspirations of their people. However, this does not justify the deprivation of rights<sup>2</sup>, rather it shows that achievement of particular levels of well-being for the entire population, through economic growth and fair distribution of its benefits is not only a legitimate aspiration, but an imperative for public management. Thus, the first principle of public management of education consists of **the need to assure, through fiscal mechanisms, the availability of resources necessary for guaranteeing all the full exercise of their right to education.**

This first principle must confront a difficult question: what is the magnitude of resources required to achieve this aim?

Along with viewing education as a right, public policies need to assure free provision of educational services. The principle of free schooling is linked to the conception of rights; however, this way of viewing the situation is insufficient due to the fact that it does not respond to the following: (i) In order that free schooling to exist, is it sufficient that no tuition be charged? (ii) What is the "basket" of goods and services that the State finances? A physical space and a teacher? All that which is possible, based on a determined allocation of national wealth?

It is necessary to transcend simplified views that speak of a universal minimum of public effort – a given percentage of GDP – without considering variables such as the size of the economy,<sup>3</sup> the relative size of the population served,<sup>4</sup> and the essential diversity of needs,<sup>5</sup> or principles such as the need to assure that social spending obeys a logic contrary to economic cycles. The former is true because determining investment based on the size of the GDP would reduce absolute investment during recessions, which are precisely when they are most required.

A more appropriate calculation can be arrived at by determining unitary costs. In this regard, one can refer to the findings of the Programme for International Student Assessment – PISA, which show that per-student investment levels accumulated over time are related to student performance in terms of reading ability (UNESCO/OECD 2003).

Findings on the countries of the region that participated in this study show that current investment levels are insufficient for assuring that at least those who are in the educational

2 Upon doing so, it would be inadmissible to think that a way of increasing wealth per inhabitant of countries involves the privation of a segment of the population, and its right to life. Therefore the question is "how is it possible to deny other fundamental rights such as the right to education?"

3 Holding the effect of other factors constant, the greater the size of the product, the smaller the proportion of it required.

4 Holding the effect of other factors constant, the greater the size of the population to be served, the greater the amount of investment required.

5 Holding the effect of other above-mentioned factors constant, countries with a greater proportion of their population living in rural, scattered areas will require a larger amount of investment.

system<sup>6</sup> achieve acceptable levels of learning. That is, there is evidence in favor of an increase in absolute resources dedicated to education<sup>7</sup>.

Moreover, as argued in Chapter II, a quality education for all involves the notion of inclusion, recognizing the diversity of individuals. This makes offering a single reply impossible. *There is no single amount of unitary investment that corresponds to the diversity of situations that must be met.*

Therefore, it is imperative that besides estimating investment needs, that using reference values can be carried out at the aggregate level and systematically show the need to invest more in education, each country make efforts to determine what are the absolute minimum unitary costs (per student) required by diverse contexts and student needs. From this it is possible to estimate with much greater precision, robustness, and consistency with the principles of inclusive education national public investment needs in education.

THE PER-STUDENT SUBSIDIARY SYSTEM ADOPTED IN CHILE MAKES VISIBLE THESE KINDS OF PROBLEMS, AND HAS THEREFORE APPEARED CONSTANTLY IN PUBLIC DISCUSSION. FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE CASE OF EDUCATION FOR DISABLED CHILDREN, THE ALLOCATIONS ARE GREATER THAN THE GENERAL ONES, AND A SUBSIDY DIFFERENTIATION PROCESS ACCORDING TO THE SPECIFIC KINDS OF DISABILITY HAS BEEN STARTED.

On the other hand, measurements of public effort show that in 2004, countries of the region dedicated an average of 5% of their Gross Domestic Product to education, while during the 1980s the average was 4.3% and in the 1990s 4.1%.

Although this greater relative effort occurred under conditions of economic recovery, total resources allocated to education grew in absolute terms (UNESCO, 2007). However, it can also be seen that this increase in absolute resources for education has been accompanied by stagnation in the relative importance of education for public spending. That is, the increases in volume have been the result of economic growth and tax increases *more so than for a greater priority assigned to education* (op. cit.).

What is the impact that this increase in resources has had on assuring a quality education for all? Although we do not have comparable information that is conclusive on this matter, there is a general feeling of unease and, if well-founded information were to exist, it would indicate a difficulty in negotiating a larger volume of resources.

At the same time, there is evidence regarding current levels of progress in the achievement of some education goals that operationalize the right to education<sup>8</sup>. This demonstrates that there are still gaps in fundamental areas such as access to and conclusion of primary education. Moreover, these are concentrated in countries with lower levels of relative wealth, and in groups within them belonging to low-income sectors, rural areas, or ethnic minorities.

**Achieving the most basic needs that assure the right to a quality education for all requires an increase in absolute resources allocated to education.** A referential exercise developed by ECLAC/UNESCO (2005) shows that, on the average, the region would require an annual 16% resource increase until 2015 in order to achieve universal attendance in pre-school and primary education, a 75% access to secondary education, and the full eradication of adult illiteracy. A large part of such an increase would come from economic growth – retaining

6 Note that the PISA tests are given to 15 year-olds enrolled in a grade levels at or above 6th. This results in the non-participation of an important segment of the population that, in various participating Latin American countries, is in less-favorable conditions. (For more details on the population represented, see UNESCO/OECD 2003, or a brief analysis of the results in UNESCO 2007)

7 However, this same information also shows that at a particular threshold – not achieved by countries in the region – the accumulated investment per student would not have significant impacts on reading skills. It would be appropriate to ask, for example in countries such as the United States, "should the per-student levels of investment be reduced to the levels of the Czech Republic which achieved similar averages with less investment? This question demonstrates that standardized tests only focus on some key aspects that, important as they are, cannot provide us with everything identified with quality education. (See related discussion in Ch. II).

8 For more current information on the situation regarding goals, see UNESCO (2007).

the proportion of GDP allocated to education – and an additional part would come from an increase in the priority given to education in public spending plans.

Independent of values, there is sufficient evidence to argue that guaranteeing basic aspects of the right to education require absolute public investment be larger than it currently is. An improved cost-adjustment estimate, as has been said, requires national efforts to determine the differentiated costs related to diversity.

With this in mind, a fundamental question remains, “how can we raise the volume of public resources devoted to education?”

### 1.1 Toward a new *fiscal pact* that provides conditions for full exercise of rights

The State is not a source of resources. Rather, it is an institution that channels the contributions that society itself makes in order to have a given social order. These contributions are captured through a tax system (including tax structure and administration) and channeled through spending mechanisms. The role of the State is exercised through both basic fiscal policy instruments that have impacts on the living conditions of citizens.

Public action is sustained by financial support from the people themselves, and is at the base of a profound interplay between tax systems and the condition of people as citizens.<sup>9</sup>

The main source of the resources that sustain public activities is, and must be, citizen support through tax systems. For this reason, the extent to which this support is sufficient for the tasks carried out through public action must be reviewed.

As ECLAC (1998) has stated, the debt crisis of the 1980s led to a series of development model adjustments and re-orientations within the region, which had implications on the role assigned to State and fiscal policies. Thus, the region went from a situation in which fiscal policies tended to cause problems and crises, to one of significant progress.

For most countries, [public finances] are no longer causes of imbalance, and in fact, even contribute to strengthening macroeconomic stability. The magnitude of fiscal adjustment carried out in the region and the short time within which it was accomplished, is remarkable. These adjustments are a major cause of the current macroeconomic stability, unknown of for decades, and the positive relative performance of the region (op.cit., 8).

However, this situation is not without difficulties – and exhibits those that are connected with assuring the robust nature of public finances through a clear agreement, or “fiscal pact” that legitimates the role of the State, and therefore allows for obtaining consensus on:

- (...) the quantity of resources that the State should manage, where they should come from, and what the rules should be regarding their allocation and utilization.
- (...) an explicit or implicit political agreement among different social sectors regarding what the State should do, help legitimize the level, composition, and direction of public spending, and the tax load necessary for its financing. (op.cit.9).

One of the key elements in the debate about development models, that definitively establishes the framework within which fiscal policy is defined, has to do with the fact that development is not synonymous with economic growth. Such growth also involves equity in the full exercise of individuals’ inalienable rights and the fact that fostering such equity is a preeminently public task.

- (...) fiscal pacts are incomplete and unsatisfactory if this role is omitted, not attended to with care, or insufficiently fulfilled. Here, tasks involved in promoting

---

9 “No taxation without representation” was a key slogan in the American Revolution. In 1927, former U.S. Supreme Court Justice, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. said, “Taxes are the price we pay for a civilized society” when making reference to fiscal activities.

equal opportunity, for example, in the areas of education, health, and employment, and those of protecting vulnerable populations are important. The equity of resource-collection employed by fiscal authorities for these and other means cannot be disregarded (op.cit. 11).

At the same time, a comparison between the size of the region's fiscal funds and those of the rest of the world shows that the former are "clearly less than the OECD and of the Asian countries" (op.cit.14). While State activities are essentially financed from tax contributions varying from approximately 15% of GDP in Latin America to 27% in the Caribbean, this value is 29% for the OECD countries (in both cases excluding social contributions). "These comparisons also show the great potential for increasing collections in many countries, especially in Latin America, without affecting their competitiveness" (loc.cit.).

It should also be noted that tax collections in the region are principally based on indirect taxes. Although this regressive potential may not be effective<sup>10</sup>, the progressive impact of greater direct taxes is unquestionable and necessary.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, strategies exclusively based on economic growth have shown themselves to be insufficient in reducing poverty. Because of this, social policies must foster development of more effective redistributive policies that will, for example, reduce extreme poverty not only in times of economic growth (ECLAC/IPEA/UNDP; 2003, p. 50). Evidently this should not be understood as suggesting the substitution of one idea for another because in so doing it might lead to exposing all progress achieved by the region in terms of stability and growth to risk. Rather, we must question the dogmatic assumption that modifying current fiscal schemes is impossible while at the same time arguing in favor of thoughtful reflection on citizens' needs. All of this is made even more paramount with the persistence of exclusion and inequality that hinder the viability of democracy and development in Latin American and Caribbean societies (see Ch. I).

It is important that any proposal for increasing taxes in order to assure that States fulfill their roles as guarantors of the right to education be developed within the framework of the basic principles that have made possible the current stability of public finances. Targeted tax collections and those derived from a limited number of economic activities, which can create undesirable distortions, have negative consequences for all unless they have a very limited purpose and period of application. Taxing educational services through charging tuition threatens the principle of free schooling – entering into conflict with existing constitutional provisions – and because of this, is not a viable option. Policy proposals need to emphasize tax increases via current tax mechanisms having margins – resulting from evasion or because rates can be revised –<sup>12</sup> and greater relative participation of the education sector within government budgets.

## 1.2 The contribution of the private sector

Because guaranteeing the right to education – as in the case of any other fundamental human right - is a subject of public interest, the role that non-governmental actors can play in this sphere regarding financial resource provision is important to consider.

A first area of private contributions to education is the direct contribution of families. This is a widespread and little-studied phenomenon in the region. Current public financing only pays for very basic and usually insufficient aspects of the services provided. Families,

---

10 Considering the significant amount of exonerations of mass consumer goods, as well as the way aggregate value is distributed.

11 Its net impact on investment should also be considered (since an increase in the population's income can positively impact this) in addition to administration and implementation cost difficulties involved in more complex taxes that can negatively impact total collection levels.

12 As is the case of higher marginal rates on personal or corporate income.

although not legally obligated to pay tuition fees for public schools, are burdened with other costs that make the concept of free education an unfulfilled ideal and also have undesirable impacts on equity.

Although not the case in some particular situations, current budgetary limitations mean that public support for education barely covers the provision of teachers and physical space; therefore families, through monetary support or labor contributions, face a combination of the school's operational costs as well as others associated with their children's attendance. Paying for services and materials, and the construction or repair of school furnishings are areas that have unfortunately become the responsibility of parents. The same is the case for the provision of specialized teachers (second languages, computer classes, etc.) and for their needed equipment. These contributions may or may not be subject to regulation; thus bringing their legitimacy into question and creating the potential existence of unregulated situations.

These contributions, at times exacerbated by decentralization policies that, while relegating schools to abandonment, have led them to seek resources within the community, and introduce an unacceptable bias in public provisions for education: the services provided end up being proportional to the economic capacities of the families that the school serves. This means that institutions can count either on more or fewer resources and thus, inequality is both reproduced and increased and the very nature of education as a right is denied.

Although we know that the contribution of families to education is of considerable magnitude in the region, especially in higher education, there is no comparable set of estimates regarding their influence in the current financing of public schools, nor of the potential impacts these contributions have on equity.

A second private contribution option consists of increasing private tuition paid by families. It is argued that this would free public resources that now are used to provide educational services to families who can pay for them. However, the current income structure in the region suggests that the margins for this increase would be very limited. More importantly, this would lead to a weakening of the free schooling principle which is an inherent right (at least for compulsory education) and would foment the social segmentation of education, thus further limiting the possibility for public schools to serve as meeting places between different social sectors.

A third channel of private support is derived from actions related to what has come to be known as Corporate Social Responsibility ("CSR"). Considering that the business sector benefits directly from the effects education has on improving labor preparation and productivity, and consolidating democratic stability, it is not surprising that many companies promote activities of this type. Together with their financial statements they also produce social reports as a way of assuming accountability before their owners for the company performance in this area as well. This is an area of opportunity that needs to be encouraged in order to foster civic health and social cohesion. However, two limitations should be recognized.

The first has to do with the volume and nature of the resources that can be mobilized in this area. Given the size and magnitude of the tasks faced by public action in education, the direct private support of companies is unlikely to represent significant proportions of total spending – keeping in mind that such support varies depending on the dynamics of the economy and its direct effects on specific contributions. These resources cannot be seen as a possible long-term solution to current failures in the support that the national community makes through the tax system. Rather, they are a complement that can have very significant impacts on occasional actions for closing gaps of accumulated educational deficits (for example, mass adult-education campaigns), or as a lever for generating changes assuming that most public action financed through taxes is consistent with this effort.

A second restriction is linked to the way that support comes about. Direct support to schools is a prime opportunity in this area. However, this can have undesirable effects on educational equity. Schools located in areas with high concentrations of economic activity can have access to greater business support than those located in poor areas or those with highly dispersed populations where private sector actions are diminished. A central role of the State lies in assuring that public schools provide differentiated services that are proportional to the needs of people rather than to their economic capacities. It is vital that the channeling of business resources into education involve compensatory measures in order to avoid that in the end, the schools that serve families of better conditions have more resources, thus worsening inequalities and widening education gaps.

It should be considered that private support is very important for reinforcing and safeguarding the right to education. This is a subject of public interest that concerns everyone. However, such support should be accompanied by control and compensatory mechanisms that prevent undesirable effects on equity.

### 1.3 External sources: indebtedness, debt swaps, and cooperation

External resources are important sources that have received the attention of many national education reform efforts, especially some donations and resources from debt operations with multilateral lending institutions. However, most of these resources in the region represent between 2% and 3% of total educational spending, and the probability of significant increases is very limited given the low relative priority that the region has for world-wide development agendas (ECLAC/UNESCO; 2005, p. 62).

In this field, it is necessary to explore the margins that the indebtedness capacity of each country allows on a case-by-case basis, since frequent use of this source, which in the end is also paid by taxpayers, may have limited such margins.

Alternatively, the region is exploring debt re-conversion or debt for education swap mechanisms. Their principal importance lies in the relative weight that external debt service has on public budgets and, consequently, as one of the most important restrictions on increasing public financing of education through increases in the priority this has on such budgets. In general, service payments on the foreign debt are higher than the allocation made each year to education in public budgets. Therefore, reductions in the former can have important impacts on the latter over time. In addition, swaps as such can provide additional resources that can be used for specific purposes during specific periods.

The cooperation of the international donor community is another possible source of funds, although this is increasingly aimed towards other geographical areas. Moreover, as the UNDP notes, donors tend to include important restrictions and demands that not all countries are able to satisfy and/or that can reduce or limit the sense of national pertinence, reinforcing asymmetrical power relations, in the agreements that they establish (UNDP, 2005, p. 111). Flows of external aid are not stable over time – making it difficult for governments to include them in the development of regular financial income and management systems or as linked to medium and long-term projects (loc. cit.).

For these reasons, what has been said about private contributions applies in the sense of their not being seen as sustained solutions due to the limitations of public financing. Rather, they are a complement that can have important impacts in specific activities for closing gaps, accumulated educational deficits, or as levers to foster change.

However, as in the case of private contributions, it is necessary to assure harmonization between activities so financed and the large majority of public action. It is necessary that public financing of education work harmoniously with the same ends and purposes. Otherwise, efforts that can be made with these resources may not be used to best advantage.



Typical examples of difficulties in this area are linked, for example, to the use of public debt resources for curricular reforms that permit access to prescriptive frameworks of a very high level, but the application of which in the classroom cannot be assured through actions usually associated with specific “projects”. This is particularly so when such projects concentrate on curricular production with external specialists who do not build capacities within ministerial teams, and when teacher policy (including both regulatory frameworks as well as initial and in-service training) may go in other directions.

One must assume that the problems of education have to be faced with 100% of the resources available, and not just with small margins that, although they may lend flexibility and visibility to administrations in the short term, will only be effective if they can assure harmonization between these efforts and the primary substance of public efforts.

#### 1.4. The efficiency imperative

Current problems in the efficiency of educational systems are a double impediment in the task of counting on the resources necessary for assuring the right to education. They represent significant portions of the resources wasted each year, with perverse effects on student trajectories (UNESCO, 2007) while making claims in favor of greater resource allocation illegitimate.

Efficiency in the management of public resources is not a mere haggles among economists; rather, it is an imperative demanded by the nature of public actions and the condition of people as citizens. Public management should respect the resources that the national collective has assigned with sacrifice. Due to this topic’s magnitude, complexity, and importance, the following section is dedicated to its further discussion.

## 2. Efficiency in resource management

### 2.1. How much is wasted due to grade repetition?

The subject of efficiency in education takes us immediately to the internal efficiency of educational systems. In financial terms, grade repetition means, for both the State and for families, re-incurring an expense that has already been undertaken due to the fact that the system was unable to guarantee the regular movement of students through grades.

Grade repetition, traditionally seen as a way of offering a “second chance” to students who “fail”, is an argument replete with weaknesses.<sup>13</sup> Usually, repetition does not mean that the system will treat the student in a differentiated manner. On the contrary, it creates or aggravates situations of delay through the system that conspire against continuation and completion of studies. For this reason, repetition is increasingly seen as a pedagogical mechanism that, by creating or aggravating situations of delay in progress, generates additional problems without solving any (UNESCO, 2007).

According to recent UNESCO estimates in aggregate terms for the region (op. cit.), grade repetition represents an annual waste of resources equivalent to 11.1 billion USD<sup>14</sup> distributed almost equally between primary and secondary education.<sup>15</sup> These values represent nearly 10% of total investment in mentioned educational levels – a considerable magnitude.

Direct and determined measures aimed at making repetition an exceptional event, that is to say, assuring that educational systems take direct responsibility for guaranteeing

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed discussion of the problem, see Crahay (2006).

<sup>14</sup> Corrected according to purchasing power parity (PPP) and constant values for the year 2000.

<sup>15</sup> Although the percentage of grade repetition within total enrollment represents a greater fraction in primary education which has greater enrollment numbers, these factors are compensated for by the fact that unitary costs in secondary education are higher. Therefore, the values for primary and secondary education end up being similar.

student learning, are not only vital from a pedagogical standpoint and their direct relation with the exercise of the right to education. They are also vital due to their potential impact on reducing inefficiency and the consequent bad use of resources that citizens supply for the task of education.

Making grade repetition an exceptional phenomenon is imperative not only due to the necessity of paying adequate attention to learning needs, but also for its potentially positive impacts in terms of having the resource availability to carry out other actions aimed at providing a quality education for all, and for legitimizing the educational system in the eyes of citizens. Investing better is an imperative that, for its part, will make it possible to invest more.

## 2.2. How much is wasted due to management inefficiency?

Educational system inefficiencies stem from inappropriate pedagogical practices and aspects linked to management about which, unfortunately, there is little evidence available in order to quantify their impact.

As such, problems stemming from the rigidity or interference of interests outside the public interest in the policies of teacher allocation result not only in having students without teachers in some areas and large groups of students in others, but also have implications on the inefficient allocation of resources. For example, the expansion of urban centers has resulted in a new spatial distribution of the population in cities, and therefore in school distribution. In a system oriented exclusively to guaranteeing the right to education, this would be accompanied by a re-allocation of teaching posts according to the distribution of enrollments. However, this is not always the case. Systems restrict the mobility of teachers; thus resulting in increasing the contracting of new teachers in a proportion above the growth of enrollment.<sup>16</sup>

Other clear situations of inefficiency are related to problems of function duplication, parallel organizational structures (the traditional ones of ministries and those created by specific projects), task-related salary allocations that remain with individuals even after changes in function, new contracts decided on the basis of criteria other than professional merit or the needs of students, etc.

Not all situations have been typified and documented, nor have their impacts been quantified. Therefore, it is impossible to respond to the question formulated at the beginning of this section. However, it is vital that countries develop efforts to rationalize spending and are able to identify different sources of management inefficiency and to apply corrective measures. Independently of the financial values in question, this is an inescapable imperative of the public function and an ethical commitment.

## 2.3. How much is wasted due to inappropriate policies?

This is an area lacking in financial estimates and in a systematic review of the kinds of mistakes that have resulted in costs to society, for which responsibility has not yet been assumed.

Isolated actions and programs, projects small and large, or flagship programs of a single government administration that lack continuity or institutional support to make them effective are only instances of financial commitments that negatively influence resource availability. They are far from the central purpose of public action in education, and tend to create undesirable effects which represent additional costs.

---

16 Between 1980 and 2003, the number of primary school teachers doubled in the region, while enrollment at this level increased by approximately 30% (according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics-UIS database information, corrected for the impact of international classification changes, as in the case of Brazil). Note that this is another useful element for explaining the deterioration of teacher salaries.

Policies of general salary increases seeking to satisfy union pressures, or to anticipate them, do not tend to be accompanied by measures that permit this increase of investment to have an impact on the conditions of exercise of the right to education. Moreover, they tend to represent important volumes of investment that, in cases where labor rules are rigid, result in additional financial limitations for subsequent educational policies.

#### 2.4. Conditions for efficiency

With exception of a quantification of the resource waste associated with grade repetition, considerations that illustrate that efficiency problems of educational systems also include other questions that need to be addressed have been presented.

Substantive progress in management efficiency involves changes in the culture and pedagogical practices associated with grade repetition and the creation of institutional conditions that prevent other inefficient practices in areas such as those mentioned. This, in the final analysis, is associated with the need to create educational management that at all levels of public action is characterized by consistency, transparency, accountability, and unlimited commitment to the right to education as a central purpose of public action in this field.

Creating these institutional conditions necessarily requires consensus generation and the creation of levels of citizen participation that allow the voices of the subjects of this right to be the major voices in the decision-making processes involved in the allocation and use of public resources.

This explains the importance of the recent trend toward the organization of social movements in favor of education. In many cases, these have been inspired by the EFA goals and seek to contribute to the design of educational policies that respond to the needs of a population that is increasingly affirming its rights within a region moving forward in its processes of democratization.

### 3. Allocation mechanisms for equitable redistribution

Just as it is necessary to determine the resources that are necessary for the State to be able to fulfill its role as guarantor of the right to education and assure the availability of these resources, it is also vital to consider other aspects of the institutional dynamic that allocate and distribute available resources.

First, it is extremely important to initiate changes in mentality to be able to then go beyond financial resource allocation based on the rigidity and inertia of the system to one based on the search for meeting the learning needs of people.

This means initiating a process of identifying the diversity of needs to which financing must respond so that each has a guaranteed allocation in order to have at least the bare minimum amount that makes one's educational experience both possible and successful. These *absolute minimums* are diverse, as are the contexts and characteristics of individuals, and their provision is the only guarantee of the free nature of the services involved in the exercise of the right.

Three principles should guide public education financing policies:

- (i) The educational needs of individuals are not equal. Therefore, they cannot be met fairly by a single package of services. *Education should be differentiated if it is to recognize the individuality of people. Therefore, financing should be sensitive to these differences.*
- (ii) Exercise of the right to education is mediated by social conditions that, in many cases, limit or simply prevent a person from exercising this right. Recognizing the

different direct and indirect opportunity costs faced by different groups of people is key to assuring the right to education. *The educational effort should be within the framework of social policies that address these questions. Therefore, financing of the right to education also involves complementary differentiated non-educational spending.*

- (iii) There is no social engineering scheme that makes it possible for central authorities, whether on the national or sub-national levels, to foresee all the diversity of situations. Therefore, *decentralized management schemes with active citizen participation are vital for serving the needs of diversity.*

This means that **the costs of a quality education are different, according to the different needs and characteristics of students and contexts. From this point of view, current resource allocation schemes are profoundly inequitable and it is therefore necessary to move toward their substantive modification.**

Given the nature of the task of education, the interaction of people is a fundamental element. Education is labor-intensive. This is reflected in the high proportion that salaries represent in education budgets. Therefore, revising current allocation schemes involves first a revision of policies and regulations regarding teacher salaries. This process must be carried out within the framework of comprehensive and integrated teacher policies, as argued in the preceding chapter.

If the needs of students are diverse, the skills and competencies required of teachers are so as well, and these must have differentiated costs. For example, guaranteeing that indigenous students, speaking their native language and residing in scattered rural areas, have the teachers to which they have a right may involve working conditions – for example provision of housing – outside of urban areas. Similarly, knowledge of the native language is an additional skill not required in other contexts and that, consequently, may result in differentiated pay.

These kinds of considerations are not in accordance with current regulations that define teacher salaries and careers in ways that are not necessarily compatible with the public interest. For example, in some cases it is required that the beginning of the teaching career should begin in rural schools. This results in the least experienced teachers being the ones who serve this particular population. This is not necessarily in error; but it is not based on an adequate provision. Rather, it penalizes rural populations, sending a signal that teachers should aspire to work in another area, and that their time at a rural school responds only to an obligation for beginning their career. If we add to this the fact that there are regulations that grant larger salaries to teachers who work in schools with large enrollments (independent of the size of each class or group) the punishment of small schools is further increased, making it more attractive for teachers to work in larger schools that are usually located in urban areas.

**All of the above clearly illustrates that educational financing policies are essentially redistributive, and that resource allocation systems, insensitive to differences, subvert the right to education because they are inequitable.**

Additionally, it should be considered that the definition of financial allocations to education involves a set of negotiations between actors within and outside the educational system. Consideration of these aspects is of utmost importance in approaching this subject.

### 3.1. Allocation of priorities between sectors

The first area of negotiation is linked to the relative priority assigned to each state sector and commitment in public budgets.

In this area, fiscal and debt crises – which characterized the 1980s and have been at the basis of adjustment and stabilization policies and of current development models themselves

– have resulted in the establishment of a basic agenda in public finance that begins with settling a reduced number of basic public accounts. These are mainly linked to closing foreign deficits and commitments– in order to then distribute the **balance** among different sectors.

Although this procedure has permitted significant levels of surplus in public finances, it is equally true that a hierarchy has been established among different public investments in which the role of the State seems to have been reduced. Similarly, it should be remembered that in many countries, the public debt includes significant amounts of private debt backed by the State – which could be a powerful argument in favor of the new fiscal pact here proposed.

Given the surplus, allocations between sectors appear to show a marked conservatism that allocates according to two basic criteria: non-modifiable financial commitments (such as salaries), and previous participation in the budget. Thus, the parts of budgets assigned to education have stagnated in percentages varying between countries from 15% to 20% of total public spending without there being registered any dramatic changing of priorities (a drastic reduction of “defense” spending, for example) in favor of education.

This, for its part, is closely linked to the social value assigned to different tasks carried out by the public sector. There have not been, except in exceptional cases of civil forums or agreements in favor of education, currents of opinion favoring an increase in the priority given to the sector, which has been hindered by the efficiency problems for which it is known.

Gaining priority in the allocation of public spending requires the generation of broad national consensus and reliable proof of the capacity of the sector to improve its current performance.

### 3.2. Inter-sectoral allocations between educational levels and modalities

A second sphere of negotiations relates to the relative importance assigned to different educational levels and modalities through which the sector operates. In this area, of note is the fact that institutions of higher education receive proportions of the total education budget that vary from 17% to 19%. The autonomy that these institutions appear to enjoy makes it very difficult to negotiate. Alternative financing mechanisms for tertiary education, such as credits backed by the State, could permit the re-allocation of resources to other levels.

Primary and secondary education tend to receive around 60% of these budgets. This can be explained primarily by their absolute volumes of students, since their per-student costs tend to be much below those of higher education.

With small differences between countries, the pre-school sector receives around 5% of the total of the education budget, with the exception of Cuba where it receives 10%.

In addition, non-systematic evidence suggests that modalities devoted to adult education, those with special needs, or other groups have lower or marginal allocations that do not guarantee that they can successfully face challenges which have different costs and have a significant presence in various countries.<sup>17</sup>

It is important to reflect on the current limited levels of flexibility in resource re-allocation between levels and modalities of education. This rigidity corresponds to the “inertial” weight of that which exists as well as to regulatory restrictions and allocation mechanisms – linked primarily to teacher-related issues– that, for example, mean that in spite of efforts made to increase pre-school education, this has not resulted in a greater budgetary priority being assigned to this level.

---

17 Based on information taken from the international database of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).

### 3.3. Teacher salaries and contracts

The item of greatest absolute and relative weight in financing education is in contracting and paying teachers. This, moreover, is an area of conflict (see specific treatment of this issue in the preceding chapter) and of the commitment of institutional capacities of the educational sector.

These themes have been approached within contexts of profound institutional weakness of the State, with the consequent risk of not duly safeguarding the public interest. Thus, governments and unions, operating as “buyers” and “sellers”, have reached decisions based on their own strengths and weaknesses, abilities and wills to negotiate and pressure, and external limitations. Considerations like the fiscal restrictions placed on the sector or the possibility for unlimited contracts in positions that offer low pay but high job security -in general contexts of precarious work- seem to be the principal determining factors of the results of these negotiations.

Thus results such as the above-mentioned growth in contracting primary education teachers at a pace much above that of enrollments are produced, along with the resulting deterioration of salaries and related restrictions in the possibilities of allocating resources to other educational levels or programs; or the trend to grant teachers priority access to the entire civil service sector involved in educational management in spite of the importance of having other kinds of professionals in these positions.

At the same time, the logic of unified negotiation tends to emphasize criteria such as salary uniformity or greater benefits in more “desirable” contexts (which are made even more attractive given these benefits) and that, in the end, punish the very individuals most in need of education.

Principles related to guaranteeing the right of appropriate attention to equity should guide these negotiations in order to seek a quality education for all, and which would in time result in other mechanisms, venues, and levels of negotiation with more (or at least some) participation of the subjects of the right.

The lack of flexibility in labor law, together with the volume of contracts, also means that the management of public financing ends up having little room for maneuver. This reinforces the temptation to assure that policies rest on marginal parts of the budget rather than to insist that its largest parts, including those which go toward paying salaries, be aligned with national objectives and public interest.

Two more elements need to be taken into consideration in order to address the complexity of the critical elements involved in resource allocation and distribution. The first concerns what is financed, and the second deals with historical matters of particular importance for the region as an opportunity for successfully facing current challenges in education.

### 3.4. Financing of supply and demand

The usual way of financing education has consisted of what in current discussions is called “supply financing”. That is, resources are provided and paid for by authorities in terms of physical, organizational, and/or administrative parameters that define the personnel needs in each school.

This procedure presents two difficulties:

- (i) It may promote an emphasis on the one-time provision of technological packages and regulations that, moreover, are not always fulfilled (such as the norms regarding minimum and maximum class sizes which are disregarded at both extremes);

- (ii) Efficiency and rationality in making the best use of resources should be a central issue. But in a sector in which most resources are devoted to the salaries of personnel, this usually a taboo subject.

There is a strong trend that argues for the need to modify assignment schemes, minimizing the educational offerings provided directly by the State in favor of one that is state-subsidized but managed by private parties in order to supposedly offer greater efficiency.

Granted that public action does not have to be exclusively identified with that of the State, and that non-governmental actors can, and in fact do play important roles in providing educational services, offering demand-based subsidies through non-governmental actors should be accompanied by mechanisms of regulation, supervision, and control in order to assure that private interests do not become barriers to or distortions of the right to education. Thus, for example, when subsidies are accompanied by “quality” assessment mechanisms (measurements of academic achievement), private administrators may be led to exclude or “select” those seeking admission in order to only have students that will assure the school better results in these assessments. Given that such results are strongly related to the socio-economic levels of families, the direction and discriminatory content of this potential bias is clear.<sup>18</sup>

### 3.5. The demographic dynamic as a window of opportunity

Educational systems have expanded to their current levels in reaction to different kinds of demographic changes. During decades of great population growth, primary education in particular experienced large increases in its school-aged population. This resulted in national efforts of a colossal magnitude in both the public and private sectors.

The situation is now quite different and provides an important window of opportunity for facing challenges. In countries that have achieved nearly universal levels of access to and completion of primary education, and in those that have also solved long-standing problems related to grade repetition, enrollment at the primary level has become stable and has even begun to fall.

This situation creates an important opportunity. Decreases in primary school enrollment can be translated into freeing up resources in order to: improve services at this level through supplying the support needed for developing inclusive education, and expand educational services to other levels for people of other ages— such as pre-school, secondary, or young people and adults.

However, decreases in enrollments may not be a feasible advantage if bureaucratic, legal, and organizational culture restrictions are not overcome. For example, various informational systems have attempted to identify over-reporting of enrollments aimed at “protecting” teaching posts. At the same time, the rigidity of existing regulations will not necessarily permit teachers who work in primary education to become part of support teams for teachers in other levels or modalities.

## 4. Management levels

A fourth critical element linked to financing policies is related to the structures of educational management. Attention to diversity based on guaranteeing the right to education assumes a high level of flexibility and decision-making capacity in those administrative levels closest to the contexts in which teaching and learning processes take place. In this sense,

---

<sup>18</sup> Given this correlation, the potential harmful impact of exaggerating the results of supreme “quality” indicators can be determined. The tables that rank schools tend to order them according to the socio-economic levels of their students. Thus, the “best” schools are potentially those that discriminate most against populations that might have access to them.

centralized management schemes that do not allow for flexibility are condemned to operate with serious limitations. At the same time, they may impede efforts that local actors could develop if their capacities and initiatives enjoyed an institutional framework that would both stimulate and require their action.

Current management schemes that retain at the central or sub-national levels most of the decisions that directly affect the operations of schools need to undergo critical review. Thus, progress establishing rules for adapting curricula (UNESCO, 2007) has not always been accompanied by provision of support mechanisms and faculties that permit local actors to work effectively.

The delegation of powers to schools (which in fact should be called *returning powers* to citizens operating in local contexts) tends to be restricted to minor matters. When these are substantive, local actors often face restrictions of other kinds. The result is a negative effect on the credibility of empowerment processes of schools and reinforcement of trends toward re-centralization.

Tensions between what are seen as appropriate tasks for central and intermediate levels and for schools themselves demand balanced solutions that respect democratic principles and reserve all tasks that strengthen initiative and creativity at the local level for central and intermediate levels. Like all human systems, educational systems are complex and able to create their own spontaneous arrangements through actions based on a myriad of actors all with their own legitimate interests, views, experiences, and needs. The tendency to see them as mere mechanisms that require a single intelligence to order and categorize them for their best operation is in conflict with the very nature of human processes. Such a view results in various unforeseen or perverse consequences that make the situations one wishes to face even more problematic.

A key aspect of education finance policies involves the search for a better balance between powers at different levels. Those located closest to where teaching and learning actually take place will be able to make key decisions for effectively adjusting resources allocated to diversity. Those further away have the responsibility to design their actions in harmony with local conditions and with safeguarding the public interest.

### Three key points and three opportunities: Moving toward consensus in order to assure Financing and Resource Management appropriate to needs.

As a final reflection, it is possible to identify three action areas that can make it possible to move forward toward public financing of education that is in accordance with people's needs. That is, three areas that require decided public will for the intervention and generation of agreements that can remove existing barriers and create conditions which make possible the full exercise of the right to a quality education throughout the region.

**The first area is that linked to the availability of public resources.** As we have noted, a new fiscal pact that perfects the agreements that have led to balancing public financial accounts can no longer be delayed. Depriving people of their fundamental human rights has created a social debt of a magnitude even greater than that of the debt obligations that the region has been able to fulfill during recent decades, while the social debt has not been honored in the same manner.

The privation and violation of fundamental rights such as education is unacceptable. Public action that owes its existence to its obligation of safeguarding the public interest must know how to face the current challenges to education. Assuring the provision of public



financing sufficient for this end can no longer be delayed. This requires employing various efforts identified in this chapter. Among these, two elements stand out: the need to strengthen redistributive aspects of fiscal policies, both on the side of income and of spending, and to assure high levels of efficiency in budgetary execution in the education sector. Spending more and better is imperative now and in the future.

The redistributive role of fiscal policy cannot continue to be ignored due to fears and dogmas that immobilize political action. This, however, should be faced recognizing the need to carefully safeguard the attained fiscal health. This will only be possible through the generation of national consensus for education that legitimates proposals both for increasing taxes as well as for making greater absolute and relative allocations to the sector.

Inefficiencies are not only an element that conspires against the exercise of the right to education by negatively affecting the progress of students; they also, and with reason remove the legitimacy of efforts to increase the relative participation of the education sector within government budgets.

This involves the need for educational authorities to make systematic efforts to determine the effective costs to guarantee the right to a quality education in a great variety of situations. The availability of solid information in this area is essential in order to negotiate additional resources and create agreements that legitimize them. This way, the logic of allocations based on past behavior or on "vegetative growth", and on uniform allocations that have damaging consequences for equity may be left behind.

**The second area is connected with teacher policies aimed at guaranteeing the right to education.** The weak or inexistent presence of public interest in the negotiation of various aspects that define teacher policy needs to be remedied. This can be accomplished through the creation of a national consensus for education, fostering the revision of teacher policies and regulations so they may be re-defined within a framework of concern for the right to education as well as for proper treatment of teachers.

Flexibility in re-assignment of teaching posts, differential pay, strict merit-based standards in contracting and promotion, accountability for results, regular assessments of performance that produce inputs for training and support, as well as decisions on promotion and retirement are some of the elements to be considered in a comprehensive policy. The financial implications of teacher issues in a sector that is profoundly labor intensive should also be noted. Respectable salaries and working and career conditions for adequate professional performance that effectively guarantee peoples' right to a quality education are the kinds of considerations that should be foremost in the formulation and execution of policies related to teachers. Mere corporative interest that results in rigidity, constraint, and advantage has no place in an area dedicated to the public interest. Avoiding such a situation is only possible through citizen participation and the generation of social agreements that most certainly will be supported by highly professional teachers.

**The third area deals with the integration and harmonization of the efforts of the sectors and subjects involved in public action in the field of education.** This commits public action in general in order to make it effective. The action of various sectors of the State, especially those responsible for social policy, must be brought together in order to maximize the impact of resources and to guarantee consistent focuses that provide the population with clear proof that public interest is being properly served. Nutrition, health, and welfare policies require greater efforts for their integration into the area of education.

Similarly, the participation of private parties in the public sphere in regards to education requires government efforts in order to assure that it is compatible with national policies and to avoid possible undesirable effects of such participation.

In both cases, civic participation in local settings is of primary importance, along with supervision, regulation, and support that correspond to levels of central authority.

Achieving substantive progress in these three areas will make possible important progress in the area of financing of education, providing better conditions so that public action honors its obligations, which are central to life, dignity, and the possibility for the comprehensive development of the entire region.

## CHAPTER V

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Basic attributes of educational policies designed to guarantee the right to quality education for all

This chapter presents policy orientations in accordance with the reflections contained in the previous chapters and with challenges identified in the follow-up report that accompanies this volume (UNESCO, 2007a), which focus on some crucial aspects that States should consider in order to properly assume their responsibilities as guarantors of the right to education for all of the population.

These recommendations seek to assure consistency between the principles and strategic focuses of PRELAC, agreed upon by the education ministers of the region and the conceptual focuses presented. They address elements that cut across the different planes and levels of educational systems, including general aspects of national policy, as well as those related to required institutional changes, and paying particular attention to the dynamic of schools.

The recommendations are grounded in the conviction that policies are in the end human practices, and therefore the understanding of social phenomena as structures created and modified through the actions of subjects is a primary assumption. *People do not limit themselves to playing pre-established roles; rather they create or modify them through their acts* based on the knowledge that they have of reality, rules, and resources at their disposal and on their power to influence their environment. For this reason, much of the effort seeking to modify "inputs" or "structures" has proven to be insufficient for changing teaching practices and achieving more and better learning.

In addition to the above, educational policies, in order to be effective in guaranteeing the right to a quality education for all, should bring together attributes, the lack of which has in many cases limited the effectiveness of much of the efforts developed by countries in recent years.

- (i) First, in order to be effective, education policies must be **socially agreed-upon State policies arrived at through processes of full participation**. This first attribute is linked to the institutional fragility that characterizes many countries and limits continuity of effort, the result of which is disorientation, contradictory messages, and inefficiency. Effective educational policies must be sustained over time by an institutional apparatus that is not dependent upon changes in personnel who happen to be in charge at any given time. Most certainly, the solidity of institutions cannot be decreed; rather, it can only be constructed through informed, committed, and sustained agreements among people acting in their capacity as citizens. Institutional solidity is based on the development of citizenship and is a prime challenge in the region. Here, education should not only benefit, but also play an important role.

Training people in the values of democratic living, in being free and therefore responsible subjects with a set of common rights and responsibilities, is a primary task of education. To acquire this formation it is not enough to consider it only within the curriculum, it is also necessary to develop dialogue processes, citizen participation, and to build national consensus in favor of education.

- (ii) A second element relates to the scope and consistency of policies. These must be **comprehensive and integrated**. It is necessary to develop sectoral and inter-

sectoral policies that address, in a comprehensive and integrated manner, the educational phenomena, developing actions oriented towards eliminating internal and external factors from educational systems that limit the exercise of the right to a quality education with equal conditions for all.

Moreover, the multiple and complex factors that effect education, generating exclusion and inequity include aspects that are both internal and external to that which is strictly educational. This makes it imperative that inter-sectoral policies be well-coordinated and integrated.

These elements demand much effort, given the multiplicity of subjects and interests involved. Only the kind of national consensus that makes State policies possible can produce a solid national agenda shared by all in their various fields of activity.

- (iii) Finally, the above-listed two points urgently require the adoption of policies with a **rights-based focus** that consistently links each policy to the rights of all persons to a quality education. Guaranteeing this right is not in *addition* to others that make up the public agenda on education. Rather, it is the central theme must guide all others. The *raison de être* of public action in education is based upon the fact that education is a right. Therefore, the rights-based focus is a *cornerstone* of all educational policy.

A consistently sustained rights-based focus makes it possible to clarify if, for example, particular management or financial schemes point toward guaranteeing this right or whether they transgress or limit it creating situations of inequity or exclusion. Furthermore, the concern for equity is not merely one more concern to be added. Rather, it is an essential part of the rights-based focus and inspires questions regarding the extent to which the issue of equity is addressed not only through targeted policies, but also through general policies.

With this in mind, below are presented eleven areas of educational policy that must be worked on in the mid and long-terms in order for the region to make positive, sustained, and sustainable steps toward achieving the goals of Education for All.

## 1. Assuring the role of the State as guarantor and regulator of the universal right to a quality education

Although States have affirmed the indivisibility of human, economic, social, and cultural rights (those of *equality*), these have not enjoyed the same degree of legal protection as civil and political rights (those of *freedom*). In this regard, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights has established the obligation of States to adopt measures to progressively make these rights effective, making maximum use of available resources, and with the existence of minimum obligations and legal resources. *Governments that deny human rights as a policy probably do not assume their responsibility for education* (Tomasevsky, 2006).

This committee has established four parameters that States must assure in order to make the right to education effective: the availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability of teaching to the educational needs of all students. These four parameters correspond to the dimensions of equity, relevance, and pertinence developed in Chapter II for defining a quality education for all.

Guaranteeing a quality education requires moving from policies that consider education as only an economic good, to those that view it as a public good and a fundamental right of persons. It also requires going from those focused on compensatory treatment of particularly

vulnerable populations to educational policies that treat all as subjects of rights without discrimination of any type. This obliges States to fully assume and irreversibly take responsibility for providing the best educational services for all based solely on their conditions as citizens.

The fact that education is a collective commitment of society in general does not mean that States are released from their responsibilities, weakening their role as prime guarantors of assuring the right to a quality education for all.

States, as guarantors of this right, have functions such as:

- (i) **Providing** accessible educational services for all of the population, guaranteeing that financing systems permit access to and continuity of studies, especially for vulnerable populations.
- (ii) **Assuring** a plurality of educational offerings – state, private, and mixed – that permit parents to exercise the right to choose the education they desire for their children, without sacrificing the right of others to education. States must assure that the different options are coherent with the purposes of education established in the instruments of national and international public law.<sup>1</sup>
- (iii) **Defining** basic quality criteria for all schools, whether public or private. Assure the provision of adequate conditions for schools to satisfy learning needs. Meet, with a view toward equity, different educational situations and contexts that are to be expressed in different resource allocations. Concentrate on guaranteeing particular levels of homogeneity in results, whatever the starting points of students and characteristics of schools.
- (iv) **Strengthening** public schools and improving their quality. Public schools have historically played an important role in reducing inequalities and fostering the coming together of different social groups. For this reason, it is vital to adopt measures for these institutions to exhibit excellence, overcoming the situation of many countries in which public schools have been relegated to serve only “poor children”.
- (v) **Establishing** regulations that prevent different forms of discrimination in order to make the right to education legally demandable, improving guarantory systems that monitor the fulfillment of such regulations and sanctioning of their violation. State guarantees should address not only the provision of services, but also the effective control of their results, impacts, and use of public funds as a means to provide feedback for and adjust educational services. This requires providing information systems to aid in decision-making and in policy control and execution, by the State and civil society as well.
- (vi) **Guaranteeing** the existence of cooperative mechanisms between government and civil society in order to address the causes that generate inequality outside the educational system, and provide the resources needed by particular students in order that they might take advantage of educational opportunities under equal conditions.

## 2. Guaranteeing the right of persons to life-long learning

Incorporating a “life-long” time horizon aids countries in re-thinking educational systems traditionally viewed as closed structures, organized by grades and ages. This requires a

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

more global view, the borderlines of which are interwoven with other non-formal modalities. It also requires the creation of mechanisms and trajectories that point toward a system that, while common for all, does not lose sight of the diversity and social dynamics of learning. The right to a quality education cannot be restricted by age, grade, or level. Such education must be broad, covering different levels and modalities with the State assuming responsibility for guaranteeing a quality education for all of the population

Primary education has historically been the level most served. For this reason – and without forgetting that here too there are pending tasks – some policy lines for early childhood, secondary, and adult education are outlined below. Other modalities should continue to be assessed and organized; but we highlight these three due to the importance these levels have acquired in the region in order to make effective the right to a life-long, quality education for all.

### 2.1. Early childhood education for all

It has been proven that participation in early childhood education and care programs positively influences in the development of people, the reduction of inequalities, the prevention of development disorders, subsequent academic achievement, opportunities for employment, and greater productivity. The early development of each child is related to that of society itself. Therefore, investing in early childhood care and education is the natural beginning of human development policies and programs. On the world level, investment in this phase of education represents only 14% of the value assigned to primary education, in spite of the fact that the return from early childhood care and education is greater than that of primary in personal and social development, and economic terms.

The latest Education for All Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2007b) shows that Latin America is the developing region with the greatest advances in early childhood education and care. However, it does not reach most of those who would most benefit from it. The challenge, therefore, is to invest more in quality early childhood care and education programs, granting priority to children living in situations of vulnerability from an inclusive perspective, and coordinating early childhood policies with national development strategies such as those aimed at overcoming poverty.

Mere access to any service does not solve the problem of inequality. Programs targeted towards early childhood must pay attention to the quality of different programs and modalities – especially those called “non-conventional”, since they latter tend to serve the most vulnerable children. At this phase, it is necessary to pay attention to some issues that are of special relevance for offering a quality education to the youngest children:

- (i) **Inter-sectoral coordination strategies** in order to offer comprehensive attention to development, learning, care, and protection needs. A single program or service is not likely to be able to satisfy the demands of comprehensive development. Therefore, it is vital to establish inter-sectoral coordination strategies between health, welfare, labor, and justice.
- (ii) **Development of pedagogical and curricular frameworks that guide comprehensive attention to children, considering their identities.** This is an essential aspect for moving toward greater quality because many such programs are more directed towards care and assistance than education. One must be careful, however, that a greater emphasis on the educational component is not interpreted as a mere preparation for primary education while disregarding the other needs earlier-mentioned.
- (iii) **Actions directed at raising the educational level of parents, especially those with fewer resources, given their responsibility in the development of their**

**children.** These actions must be aimed at strengthening their roles as the first educators of their children so that they can demand their rights, assume their responsibilities and participate in making decisions that affect their children and in the educative activities of the programs in which their children are involved. Additionally, focus should be placed on increasing their levels of schooling. Because of this, it is important to offer primary and secondary educational programs for adults, within which content related to parental roles in their children's' growth and education can be included. Using the mass media can be an effective strategy for increasing the coverage of parent training.

- (iv) **Special attention to professional development of all those working in this phase.** This is important, since in general, people working in early childhood care and education have lower levels of training than those working at other educational levels (UNESCO 2007b). The variety of actors and professionals who intervene at these ages make a broad and diversified training base necessary in order to assure the acquisition of some types of basic knowledge and strategies common to all, and others that are differentiated in terms of roles, functions, and the kind of attention provided. It is important to pay special attention to the training of mothers or community volunteers who develop non-formal programs, developing and providing them with simple and pertinent materials that aid them in their efforts.

## 2.2. Secondary Education for All

The Framework of Action of the Education for All conference held in the region (UNESCO, 2000) proposed that countries advance according to their possibilities, but in a decisive manner, toward broadening the coverage of secondary education. It should be noted that in 34 of the 41 countries in the region, lower secondary education is obligatory, while 21 countries have also made upper secondary education obligatory – obligatory for 11 countries, and partially obligatory for 10 (UNESCO, 2007a). Given the progress made in terms of making secondary schooling obligatory, the challenge now is to increase completion rates in order to strengthen the kind of citizen education that assures greater democratic stability in the region and to accelerate development. Secondary education should be recognized as a phase of training able to guarantee adolescents and young adults the management of knowledge and skills that allow them to successfully continue their studies at a higher level or to enter the workplace while participating with full responsibility in their lives as citizens. Consequently, the major objectives of secondary education should be aimed at making it possible for young people to live autonomously, to fully take ownership of fundamental aspects of culture, assume their civic responsibilities, and be able to demand their rights.

However, the characteristics of the student population at this level have changed. Increased coverage of secondary education is causing repetition of the problems that resulted from increasing the coverage of primary education. Of the numbers of students now entering secondary education, most come from socially and economically vulnerable sectors. Moreover, many of them have had a low-quality primary education and come from families in which the parents have not completed secondary education. This means that non-completion of these students is high, and concentrated in the low-income sectors. School dropout is increased due to the strong clash between established school and juvenile culture and to the uncertainty that many young people of this age feel regarding their employment future. This means that the opportunity cost for the poor is higher. In the case of females, there is also the problem of early pregnancy.

- (i) In this context, secondary educational policies should strengthen the meaning of this level. In order to do so, new structures need to be created that avoid

falling into the anachronism of training students – as has often happened – for obsolete social, economic, and employment scenarios. From this point of view, the major challenges confronting secondary education in the region are to **assure retention** of students in the system as well as to **provide a diversified and quality offering**.

- (ii) In order to respond to the different interests, expectations, and needs of students, secondary education requires **open and flexible curricular structures so that students can move from one modality to another**. These modalities must go beyond the traditional scientific/humanistic and technical-vocational differentiation. In addition, within each of these modalities, one must identify diversification mechanisms for upper secondary, avoiding undue emphasis on subject matter and excessive compartmentalization of knowledge. The challenge is how; based on some desirable minimums, to design new curricular structures without losing the comprehensiveness and integration of disciplines. These curricula should identify new sectors of learning and integrate skills – especially in the vocational area, in order to avoid the atomization of specialization.
- (iii) Consider as options **non-conventional modalities in the provision of educational services** in order to facilitate the access of dispersed, rural populations and, in general, of those who due to past discrimination, have neither been able to enter nor complete this level of education. Services, such as telesecondary school courses, and more recently open secondary courses for young people and adults using on-line learning should be evaluated and supported in order for these offerings to reach the highest standards of quality. They are valuable alternatives for achieving universal access to this level.

### 2.3. A new appreciation for education programs for young people and adults

Traditionally, adult education has developed in the region as a system parallel and marginal to regular education. Nevertheless, a life-long educational perspective requires that policies for the education of young people and adults develop new strategies and reformulate their meaning.

In this regard, the Regional Framework for Action of Education for Young People and Adults (EPJA) for Latin America and the Caribbean (2000 – 2010) proposes including the following areas: literacy training, education and employment, education and citizenship, education with indigenous persons and rural workers, education and youth, education and gender, and education and local sustainable development. The previous chapters have made reference to some of these areas. This section will offer considerations of a more general character. Due to its importance, the need to strengthen adult literacy training will be emphasized.

- (i) For decades, the region has developed valuable experiences in non-formal or popular education modalities of adult education – particularly those sponsored by civil society organizations which have been offered as protest alternatives during authoritarian regimes. With the arrival of democratic governments, these programs were subsumed by government programs and others, and lost their continuity and currency. In order to benefit from these experiences, it is necessary to carry out efforts of **systematization, assessment, and** in some cases **reformulation** in order to make them convergent with the current responses that the new needs of adult education demand. Developing this synthesis and projecting new experiences demand political dialogue and the creation of cooperation between the different existing modalities and based upon the recognition and certification of competencies that guarantee high standards of quality.



- (ii) It is of vital importance to **increase and improve educational options for completing primary and secondary studies**. This means improving curricula, making programs more flexible, offering stimuli in order to compensate for opportunity costs, linking them to employment demands and alternatives, and providing State-backed assurance that programs will be truly free of all financial costs for students.
- (iii) It is important to design **links and points of contact between the different modalities of adult education**. In this regard, it is also important to be able to establish competency certification systems through which people can officially validate the capacities they've learned in the performance of different tasks to educational institutions or in the employment market. As well as officially recognizing the knowledge that adults acquire during their work experience, this would help to classify, integrate, and articulate certain areas of employment skills that are currently dispersed, and thus facilitate personal training trajectories needed by adults in order to better incorporate themselves into the labor market.
- (iv) The Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V), the United Nations Literacy Decade, and the UNESCO Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE), have urged that **literacy training** efforts be increased in order to achieve the Millennium Goals. The principal effort should be placed on preventative action in order to significantly improve inclusion in and the quality of formal education in order not to generate delays in progress and dropout. However, both preventive and remedial efforts taken up to this time have been insufficient in significantly reducing the magnitude of the problem in the region.
- (v) Countries must make a renewed commitment to **increase resources** in order to guarantee the fulfillment of this service to those most in need, for it is they who have been the most forsaken by the regular training channels. Conditions and materials must be provided in order to improve the competencies acquired to achieve higher levels of training. Links must be forged with the rest of the educational system in order to lend continuity to, amplify, and deepen training, and to thus generate conditions favorable for all to exercise the right to education, regardless of age or previous condition.

### 3. Progress from homogeneous and standardized focuses toward comprehensive educational policies that contemplate diversity along with social cohesion

Most educational systems have viewed education according to homogeneity. This perspective is expressed in curricula, assessment, teaching materials, management models, and resource allocation, among other aspects. The logic usually followed is to plan based on a supposed "average" student and context and then define programs or strategies targeted towards those for whom answers are not found within standardized policies. These programs are often peripheral, not coordinated among themselves or with policies of a general character and consequently increase discrimination against the students who are part of them

Equity policies are conditioned by the concept that one has of "differences". If these are considered as something that deviates from that which is the "norm" or "frequent", defined programs or strategies are oriented to compensate for what certain groups or individuals (the poor or indigenous peoples) "lack", and providing them "extra help" in order that they may arrive at a comparable level to those who do not suffer from this "deficit". Given the

magnitude of the inequalities in the region and its great diversity, this perspective has given way to targeted strategies or compensatory programs, and even to segregated services that do not guarantee equity.

A different conception involves considering that differences are inherent to human nature; that is, they are “normal” and therefore must be considered from the beginning in the design of general policies. This *modus operandi* not only will reduce the need to develop targeted programs, but will also allow strategies for meeting very specific needs to be coordinated within a general framework for attending diversity.

Therefore, offering a quality education without distinction of any kind involves going from a homogenizing focus in which the same things are offered to all, and the aspirations of dominant cultures and sectors tend to be reflected, toward one that considers the diversity of identities, needs, and skills of people, and values differences as something that enrich teaching and learning processes. One of the principles adopted by PRELAC in order to achieve significant changes in education is precisely that of going from a homogenizing focus to one based on diversity.

In this process it is important not to exacerbate cultural or other differences because doing so can lead to intolerance, exclusion, violence, or justifying inequalities as consequences of differences – situations that would intensify the current social and cultural fragmentation that characterizes the societies and schools of the region.

The question is how to achieve a common education that respects the principle of equity and values differences without falling into excluding options or offering unequal quality. Educational systems must provide a balanced response to this dual challenge, assuring some common end-goals and learning for all that guarantee equality of opportunity, while at the same time providing a differentiated response in order to balance results. National learning assessments carried out in the region are useful for identifying the extent to which the school population is achieving the common learning goals established within the school curriculum, identifying possible gaps that must be addressed as priorities in order to assure equal opportunities. However, these assessments do not take diversity into account, as will be seen in the following recommendation regarding assessment.

Attention to diversity and equity require measures of a general character for all, such as: diversification of educational offerings, with different modalities and learning trajectories equivalent in quality; curricular adaptations; diversity of texts that are pertinent to different cultures and that do not contain stereotypes of any kind; intercultural education for all; certification of studies; extension of the school day and flexible school calendars according to geographic zones and needs; teachers prepared to work in different contexts and with different groups; incentives for teachers working in difficult contexts; and redistribution of investments in education.

In spite of taking diversity into account when developing general policies, it is necessary to consider some specific elements in order to assure the right to a quality education under equal conditions for particular groups:

- (i) **Cultural diversity and linguistic diversity.** Although there has been growing recognition of these differences in recent years, greater efforts must be made in order to assure bilingual education and in-depth knowledge of their own culture to indigenous populations at different levels of education, as well as to foster intercultural education for all. Learning in the native language must be guaranteed so that students can develop skills in local and global citizenship as well as to construct their own identities. This requires training teachers who speak the native language of their students and understand the local world view, developing

teaching materials that are pertinent from the cultural standpoint, and broadening access to ICTs.

- (ii) **Area of residence.** The outlying areas of cities increasingly include highly vulnerable populations, while providing precarious services. This obliges States to provide greater financial and material resources in order to reverse this situation, organizing various services that can aid schools in providing comprehensive responses to the needs of students and their families. The development of school projects that empower communities and the mobilization of qualified human resources, teachers, and others, are essential factors. The development of specific projects by NGOs can be a very positive strategy as long as these activities are at the service of local school projects, and not the reverse.

In rural areas, in which native populations and higher poverty rates are concentrated, there are many extremely isolated multi-grade schools with considerable heterogeneity. In many countries, the rural area is where most teachers begin their careers. Such isolation prevents them from acquiring greater experience because, in contrast to those who work in urban areas, they don't have opportunities to share with colleagues or update their skills (Weinschelbaum, S. et al., 1999).

Assuring a quality education requires the development of initial and in-service teacher training policies that prepare teachers to work in these contexts, as well as making it possible for teachers with more experience to work in rural areas, developing teacher support systems through pedagogical assistance, access to the Internet, meetings, and internships.

Curricular proposals in these contexts should make use of local knowledge while at the same time developing skills for global citizenship, aiding the economic situation of the locale. In rural areas, schools are important community centers. Therefore, their engagement in other activities that contribute to raising the educational level of the population and developing the local culture must be fostered. Finally, teaching materials must be produced that are based on the realities of rural schools and on what it means to work in classrooms with students of different ages and learning levels.

- (iii) **Gender.** Educational policies must include a gender focus at all levels of schooling, considering it in the design of objectives, the curriculum, strategies, and teaching materials. Countries must develop follow-up mechanisms in order to continuously assess the introduction of the gender focus into education – developing indicators that make it possible to identify progress and problems, and to revise adopted strategies. Depending on the context, the follow-up mechanisms can take various forms, at the school, ministerial, or inter-sectoral levels.
- (iv) **Individual differences.** All people have different capacities, motivations, interests, and rhythms of learning that make this process unique and unrepeatable in each case. Attention to these differences, which are present within any group, involves personalizing common learning experiences, adapting the curriculum and teaching to the needs of each person, while using a variety of teaching and assessment strategies and a diversity of materials. It is vital to prepare teachers to work with diverse groups in order to avoid transmission-type teaching, which is one of the causes that generate learning and participation difficulties in students.
- (v) **Special education needs.** Given that they are the most excluded group, it is urgent to achieve the full access of these individuals and to strengthen their integration into regular schools, creating conditions that permit these schools to meet their

developmental and learning needs by providing resources and teachers' aides to collaborate with teachers in this task. The gradual transformation of special education centers into resource centers for regular schools can contribute to this objective. Similarly, it is essential to possess relevant information to aid in educational policy decision-making in regard to this group, both in terms of access to and continuity in studies, as well as in regard to their learning achievement – given that they are not usually included in standardized assessments on the quality of education.

#### 4. Emphasize policies aimed at guaranteeing inclusion

The most important problem that the region faces is not so much access, but rather that of permanence in the educational system. The previous chapter noted that the loss of financial resources caused by grade repetition is approximately 11.1 billion dollars annually (UNESCO, 2007a) of the total resources spent for public education in the region. This waste of resources is unacceptable, considering that there is no consistent evidence supporting that grade repetition improves learning. On the contrary; the evidence shows that it contributes to school drop-out.

There are experiences in which there is no grade repetition because children progress according to their own pace. Similarly, in some countries repetition has been eliminated, at least in the initial grades, although this is not a solution since often, students are advanced in grade without their having acquired the most basic skills that would allow them to continue to learn.

Grade repetition and school drop-out tend to be the consequences of not meeting individual learning needs that duly become difficulties due to inadequate teaching. The lack of pertinence of educational experiences for students coming from cultures different from the school culture, or for those who have special educational needs excludes many from educational opportunities.

Changing this situation requires carrying out a set of actions that go beyond the educational sector, given the fact that students arrive at school with very unequal situations. Education and schools must reduce or eliminate the conditions that impede equal access to learning. But at the same time, it is necessary to develop economic and social policies that address the causes that generate inequality in the origin of students, such as strategies aimed at improving the life conditions of students – programs of health, nutrition, employment, and micro-credit.

Among the actions in the area of education that should be developed are the following:

- (i) **Grant priority of access to early childhood care and education programs to children in positions of vulnerability** in order to compensate as early as possible for their unequal situation. The different equity policies being carried out in the region are not having the desired impact in achieving better learning results because children reach school age under very unequal conditions.

Together with providing additional resources to schools and programs that most need them, it is vital to consider other areas of public action aimed at preventing exclusion. In this sense, the policies mentioned above for rural and indigenous populations, besides being ends in and of themselves in terms of rights, also have a positive preventive role in terms of exclusion.

- (ii) **Create schools with diversified classes**, in which teachers are able to manage learning situations adapted to the specific needs of small groups and individual

students, respecting their learning rhythms. It is also necessary to have professional teams acting along with the same group, and a better technical division of labor within classrooms with teachers, assistants, support personnel, or teachers in training. The problems involved in generalizing such models are various: the technical inability of teachers to work in diversified classrooms; large class sizes that inhibit working with individual and groups of students; lack of materials that impede their being used by various groups simultaneously.

- (iii) **Support systems for identifying and giving due attention to learning difficulties.** Another preventive measure is the development of support systems that can aid schools and programs to identify and give early attention to student learning difficulties that tend to be the result of poor teaching. Most countries have, to a greater or lesser extent, professionals who can develop this function: interdisciplinary groups, psychologists, special education teachers, speech therapists, social workers, and guidance counselors. Some of these are permanently incorporated into schools. Others work in a variety of schools, and others work from a sectoral perspective.

An effective support system is one that combines the existence of sectoral support centers with fixed support in schools in which students have greater needs, and which also involves the participation of areas such as health and welfare. As the population pyramid transforms, a particular number of teachers can become support professionals in order to work in the schools most in need. In other cases, it will be necessary to count on the participation of specialized professionals who can collaborate with teachers and families so that they may become increasingly able to respond to the needs of their students and children.

- (iv) **A laptop per student as an educational resource for learning and equity.** A new window of opportunity is opening in terms of the use of information technologies for public education in the countries of the region. This has to do with the appearance of low-cost computers, known as OLPC or "One Laptop per Child", together with the commercial dissemination of microwave and cable communication systems for cell phones, television, and the Internet<sup>2</sup>. Public educational policies should have the mid-term goal of achieving a *computer for every student* in order to improve the quality of learning, give priority to schools located in rural and less-developed urban areas, with the objective of contributing closing the digital divide. To this end, the necessary investments should be made, both for the acquisition of the equipment as well as for the installation of communication systems appropriate to such areas.

## 5. Equitable distribution of resources for free, quality public schooling for all

Current financing and public resource management systems for education show serious limitations that need to be faced in order to assure the right of all persons to a quality education. This involves taking action in the following areas:

- (i) First, **assure the necessary resources** in order to guarantee this right. This assumes developing research in order to determine unitary costs that correspond

---

2 Increases in the offerings of telecommunications companies have made it possible to reduce costs and reach distant rural areas. The next step, which is indispensable in order for education to take advantage of investments made in telecommunications, is to install local wi-fi "hot-spots" for the connection of computers to local networks and to the Internet.

to the diversity of current situations in order to have reliable estimates and thus be able to no longer use allocation schemes based almost exclusively on past behavior. Thus, it is necessary to mobilize different sources of available resources while preventing the potential adverse impacts that this can have on equity while increasing the priority assigned to education in public budgets.

It should be remembered that public spending comprises the largest part of financing. This makes it imperative to treat it as a critical element. Moreover, policies in favor of education cannot rest on specific, short-term projects or programs which have relatively marginal weight in the sector's budget, are developed through organizational structures parallel to normal ones, and negatively impact necessary institutional strengthening. Rather, it is necessary to mobilize all public financing so that States can fulfill their role as guarantors of the right to education. This has implications for current territorially based allocation schemes as well as for current labor regulation. These issues must be faced with the conviction that *equitable redistribution of public resources in terms of student needs and contexts is vital in order to respond to diversity* and to thus guarantee the existence of free public schooling that provides a quality education for all. Redistribution with equity is not a theme that can be added to financing policies: rather, it should be at the center of their definitions.

- (ii) In regard to the above, the question of **free public schooling** needs to be seriously considered. The concept that relates free schooling only to the absence of tuition is clearly insufficient and has negative effects on equity. It is necessary to identify and analyze the various needs of people and the differentiated costs of a quality education. Direct, indirect, and opportunity costs must be adequately weighed when defining what truly free schooling means in each case. This, moreover, this is an area in which government regulation and supervision is imperative in order to prevent arbitrariness.

To assure necessary levels of allocations is it also necessary to improve the efficiency of current spending. The current situation has *negative impacts on the volume of available resources*, educational trajectories, and finally, on the legitimacy of demanding more resources. Substantive improvements in efficiency are an imperative that cannot continue to be postponed.

- (iii) A third field of activity consists in creating a wide-ranging **national pact in favor of education** that makes it possible to increase the resources dedicated to the sector, both through allocations as well as through increasing public resources –by means of a *fiscal agreement* (ECLAC, 1998)- and through fostering necessary transformations in the normative and regulatory aspects that introduce rigidity and inefficiency and seriously limit the offering of educational services.

The above consideration involves precisely defining the way that financing policies must be conducted in face of the management transformations mentioned in the above point. What are the specific roles that State management plays in the allocation and subsequent execution of the spending of public resources?

Particular attention should be paid to adjusting the distribution of public investment among the various educational levels. The opportunity provided by the demographic situation, along with the progress achieved in primary education should be strongly taken advantage of. At the same time, greater development of student loans in higher education could facilitate increasing the public resources necessary for lower levels, especially for those that are obligatory and for early childhood education, due to their immense importance in terms of equity.

## 6. Improve the balance in the allocation of tasks and responsibilities between different areas of management, strengthening the active involvement of local actors

Educational systems have been constructed and usually operate based on centralized management schemes in which national and/or state and provincial levels make decisions on substantive aspects of system operation, while intermediate and local levels (including schools and educational communities themselves) play passive roles focused on the *implementation* of decisions made at the upper levels of the system.

These schemes have not been able to assure that the various actors accept *outside* decisions in the manner expected. This is not an operational problem. Rather, it is one that reveals the very complex nature of human issues – especially when involving scales like those present in educational systems, having a large number of schools with innumerable people involved in each local area in which student learning and development take place.

*Each school is a world of diversity*, and educational systems are composed of an immense number of multiple and diverse worlds. This makes it impossible for those at the central level to manage the system in a singular manner down to the most minimal details, confiding in impossible schemes of social engineering. The major cost of these policies is precisely in terms of implementation, because local actors notice that they don't fit with specific realities.

The solution to these kinds of problems lies in *freeing and stimulating the capacities of those involved and not by limiting them bureaucratically*. States regulate the venues in which individuals, in full exercise of their freedom and responsibility, develop their actions. In the face of a system as complex as that of education, one must be able to liberate vital existing forces and trust in people in order to contribute to their formation as citizens.

It is necessary to move from an emphasis on national or sub-national educational policies that are meant to be *implemented* at the local level to one which also enables local actors so that they can make the decisions that affect schools using their own knowledge and grounded in the realities of those whom schools serve. In short, it is necessary to combine top-down strategies from with bottom-up strategies.

In recent years efforts have been made to grant schools more autonomy. However, difficulties have appeared that reinforce the need to think about a better balance in the allocation of responsibilities and resources between different levels of educational management.

The following are among the key difficulties:

- Autonomy is given to schools without providing them the material and technical resources necessary for their management. This results in abandoning schools to their own devices which, in the end, must depend on resources raised at the local level. Thus, pre-existing local social inequalities tend to be reproduced.
- Autonomy is given to schools without also delegating decision-making power. This leads to greater frustrations due to the fact that schools or local authorities cannot influence key areas or encounter barriers to their own initiatives, and/or places the focus of local management on minor issues of no real relevance or impact. Moreover, authorizing schools to generate "their own funds" introduces problems related to equity due to the fact that, in the end, the ability to generate funds is proportional to the wealth of the community. Thus, those which most need resources are those having the least possibility of obtaining them.
- Autonomy is given to schools without providing the necessary mechanisms of regulation and democratic transparency in local management processes. This at times results in arbitrary or irregular exercise of delegated responsibilities. Financial

resource management and contracting must be accompanied by the real capacity to control the management of these resources which are, after all, public. These arguments do not make the necessary empowerment of local management obsolete. The best decisions are those made by those most directly involved. However, arguments do show that it is necessary to establish a proper balance of functions and responsibilities among different levels of the educational system – combining elements of management “from below” with those that necessarily should be established “from above”.

Proper enabling of the local level must be accompanied by conservation at the central level (national or sub-national) of tasks only realizable at that level. For example:

- (i) The establishment of national educational objectives that make it possible to offer a quality education for all, independently of who manages educational services.
- (ii) Regulation (in order to eliminate opportunities for arbitrariness).
- (iii) Resource allocation that is proportional to needs (in order to prevent the reproduction of inequalities).
- (iv) Technical and administrative support in order to guarantee that along with empowerment exist the capacity and resources to exercise it.
- (v) Supervision and monitoring that make it possible to identify whether or not the country as a whole is moving toward guaranteeing the right to education and if there are areas where more decided action is needed (which, moreover, might require additional follow-up efforts by central authorities).
- (vi) The cooperation of different programs or actions that seek to intervene at the local level in order to guarantee convergence, rather than the duplication of efforts.

## 7. Comprehensive policies for strengthening the teaching profession

There can be no full exercise of the right to education without first making substantive changes in teacher policies that result in modification of professional roles and careers in order to orient them towards effective teaching that generates conditions for students to be able to exercise their right to learn. These modifications will be viable to the extent that school culture and curricula are changed as well.

For various reasons, the teaching career currently faces a loss of prestige that makes it scarcely attractive to talented young people with a vocation for public service. Many teacher unions are criticized due to excessive corporativism, because they tend to focus their demands on improving salaries and to reject teaching performance assessments, do not appear to be seriously committed to improving student learning, and do not take responsibility for low school achievement. The indisposition of teachers has also been transformed into indisposition *toward* teachers.

Much of this situation is due to teacher policies that have not been sufficiently effective, integrated and articulated, and lack a vision directed towards preparing teachers with high ethical and professional standards necessary for taking responsibility for student learning results and being held accountable to the community and the country for their professional work.

Teacher policies, as has been noted, should be State policies that are comprehensive, systematic, and interdisciplinary. More concrete aspects of general policies will herein be presented, especially those referring to transforming schools, since the teacher issue is also addressed in other recommendations.



- (i) **Create and strengthen coordinated systems of initial training, placement, and professional enhancement of teachers.** It is necessary to coordinate focuses, processes, strategies, and responsibilities of institutions responsible for the initial and in-service training of teachers, both in the public and private sectors in order to assure the following:
- That all of those graduating from initial training courses acquire a solid base of knowledge and professional ethics committed to the right to quality education. Special attention should be paid to developing skills for meeting the challenge of diversity in the classroom, for working in teams, doing research, and reflecting on practice. Teacher training institutions should be participatory, inter-cultural venues that are open to diversity while preparing professionals who are able to teach within different contexts and realities.
  - Meet the demands of the system in order to provide teachers in the specializations in which there is scarcity: science, technical education, education of young people and adults, and foreign languages, among others.
  - In-service training should be coordinated with initial training and programs for placing young teachers within the profession. Their focuses, levels, areas of development, and methodologies should be coherent with national orientations, the demands of educational reform, and the needs of teachers and schools.
  - Establish processes and mechanisms for guaranteeing the quality of training and the professional growth of teachers. Governments must assure transparent systems, processes and mechanisms of assessment and certification of teacher training institutions, programs, and the skills of their graduates. These processes should be the responsibility of institutions with public credibility, and their reports should be used for permanent improvements in the quality of teaching.
  - Design and carry out tutoring programs to support beginning teachers in facing their work in schools, improve their performance, and strengthen schools as centers for professional development. The success of such programs will depend on the possibility of having a team of mentors or tutors prepared for these tasks, and on the participation of high level academic institutions.
- (ii) **Strengthen the role of schools as centers for teacher training, professional development, and assessment.** Schools are natural initial and in-service training venues. Orientations and mechanisms must be established so that initial training institutions strengthen alliances with school teaching teams and principals and are incorporated into the training of new teachers. Strategies of this kind stimulate the work of schools, foster research and reflection on teaching practices, and convert schools into generators of pedagogical knowledge. Similarly, this could provide an opportunity for teacher training institutions to have access to different kinds of schools (rural, one teacher, multiple teachers, etc) that would facilitate development of the skills of future professionals for their successful incorporation into diverse contexts and vulnerable areas.
- (iii) **Strengthen teacher career systems, interrelated with assessment, professional development, and pay.** Attracting and retaining the best professionals for teaching is a basic requisite for assuring quality education. A well-articulated system of teacher career development, assessment, and pay will make it possible to offer the work conditions that teachers need for good job performance. The creation of support and stimulus mechanisms so that the best professionals work in the

schools with the greatest needs deserves special emphasis. Assessment should extend to education as a whole and be associated with democratic practice of accountability to society regarding a public good and as one of the mechanisms for assuring that ministry employees, school supervisors, principals, and teachers fulfill their responsibilities toward student learning.

- (iv) **Establish and strengthen payment and incentive policies associated with professional development and career advancement.** Governments should guarantee a proper salary for teachers within the framework of transparent and equitable salary systems. It is important to move toward consensual processes that are sustained over time in order to establish effective pay and incentive systems. Such systems should stimulate professional improvement, and lead the best teachers to work in the schools of greatest need, recognize the achievements of outstanding schools and teachers, and contribute to making teaching a more attractive career.
- (v) **Develop sectoral and inter-sectoral programs that contribute to creating proper working conditions and fostering the well-being of teachers.** Personal and professional satisfaction is a factor that stimulates good performance. It is necessary to promote actions such as access to specialized health service, systems of preferential credit, cultural activities, or providing housing for teachers working in rural areas or others having special difficulty. These initiatives should be made in alliance with the public and private sectors involved, as comprehensive and agreed upon actions for strengthening the teaching profession and for improving teachers' quality of life.
- (vi) **Create and strengthen policy-making and technical skills in countries for the formulation of comprehensive and inter-sectoral teaching policies.** Basic changes must be made in the nature of teacher policies as well as in their design and development. This challenge requires creating policy-making and technical capacities within countries, training leaders that contribute to placing the teacher issue onto the policy agendas of different sectors, and fostering dialogue and joint action. National and international alliances and networks must be strengthened in order to take advantage of current achievements and experiences and to determine the best paths forward in each country.

## 8. Design and development of relevant and pertinent curricula for all students

The educational reforms carried out in the region during the past two decades have viewed one of the basic issues to be the design of new curricular proposals that have incorporated new focuses and learning content. However, national and international assessments show that these reforms have not been translated into significant improvements in student learning levels or the equity of such results. This fact confirms that a solution does not depend only on designing new curricula. Rather, new conditions must be created that make possible the effective application of curricula in schools and the transformation of educational practices in order to generate more and better learning.

The logic that tends to be followed in countries, especially after changes of government, is to elaborate new curricula, even when the former ones have neither been absorbed by teachers nor fully implemented. These designs usually add new learning content without eliminating others to the same degree. This becomes an obstacle to having quality education and for moving toward inclusive schools.

Reversing this kind of logic requires paying greater attention to **curricular development processes in different levels of the system** and considering curricular designs as open and dynamic structures that need to be permanently updated, assessing what has been done thus far rather than carrying out radical changes with each new government administration. A long-term view must prevail, with mechanisms that make the review and updating of curricula possible, promoting the participation of teachers and other social actors in this process in order to reach agreement on what learning objectives common to all should be and to determine the spaces for differentiation. Curricular design and development are two closely related topics. On one hand, any proposal should consider the conditions for its development, which will have quite different impacts in each situation. On the other, curricular development should be a basic source of information for redefining curricular design.

The selection of essential elements of learning, especially those that are to be part of the compulsory school experience, is an urgent, priority task in view of the overburdened nature of the majority of curricula in the region. One cannot teach everything that needs to be taught in school alone; neither all that we would want students to learn. The decision on what comprises basic learning should be made by analyzing in what manner different types of learning can contribute to achieving the end-goals of education, and by seeking a balance between social demands, local and world demands, and those required for personal development. It is important to consider learning that assures the development of all capacities and multiple kinds of intelligence. This is important because the tendency is to emphasize cognitive more than emotional or social skills, even though the latter are essential for comprehensive development and entry into society.

In the revision and up-dating of curricula, special attention should be paid to competencies essential to: the exercise of citizenship; entry into the current knowledge society – which is characterized by the rapid progress of science and technology; developing a life project and the construction of personal and social ethics based on understanding of, and subscription to the principles of human rights; and those involved in creating respect for oneself and others. Competencies related to *learning to be* and *learning to do* should also be given special attention because they are the least developed in the curricula of the region.

Curricula should also be pertinent for all, and not only for those who come from dominant classes and cultures. This means that the following aspects should be considered in the process of curricular development:

- (i) **Inter-cultural education for all and learning between cultures:** Incorporation of learning that fosters respect for and appreciation of differences, understanding of others, harmonious relations, and peaceful conflict resolution, among others.
- (ii) **Open and flexible designs** that can be enriched and adapted to the needs and characteristics of people within the contexts in which they develop. This process requires providing for time outside the classroom for teaching teams to reflect and make decisions appropriate to their realities. It requires the development of norms and guidelines that help teachers to carry out these processes.
- (iii) Development of **educational materials** that make putting new focuses on learning into practice possible.
- (iv) **Training processes sustained over time** so that teachers and other professionals can develop competencies that include curricular design and development.
- (v) **Assistance systems** in order to support teachers in adapting and enriching the curriculum.

Curricular policies demand a new school model in order to have impact and make possible renewed educational practices that result in improved student learning. The transformation of school culture and practices is a slow process, and generally does not coincide with the policy timetables of curricular reforms. This results in a sensation of permanent frustration. Perhaps it would be convenient, as Dussel (2006) suggests, to carry out more detailed and mid-term analyses in order to understand the transformations that have taken place, in which sectors, and with what results, and how all of this can aid in the construction of different and viable scenarios for the implementation of the educational policies of the region.

## 9. Policies that focus on changing schools so that they are more inclusive and achieve more and better learning

Activities aimed at guaranteeing the right of a quality education for all, strengthening the role of States, broadening participation, considering diversity, or re-distributing resources are necessary, but not sufficient conditions for exercising the right to education. The true guarantee of this right is made concrete in each school and educational program – including those that train teachers. Each institution needs to transform itself, to change its perspectives, interpretations, and daily practices.

Offering a quality education containing the dimensions described in Chapter II involves **creating a new school model** and developing policies that put this model into practice. The experiences that have produced the greatest achievements in the region have been those that have adopted the principal of transforming the school as a whole. This is so because additional resources alone are of little help in producing changes in culture, organization, and practice. Any innovation must impact the school as a whole in order to be significant, have continuity, and produce more and better student learning.

There is evidence regarding the value added by schools, in the sense that they can alter in more or less important ways the social variables associated to learning results through their own proposals and the performance of their members. According to a study carried out by UNESCO/OREALC (2002), the schools that make a difference are characterized by their ability to integrate plans, visions, resources, and proper interaction among involved actors in an organized and harmonious manner.

What are the major identifying factors of a new school able to achieve what has been expressed throughout this document?

- (i) **Inclusive culture.** Making schools true venues for integration that do not reproduce social segmentation means developing policies aimed at creating conditions so that all schools, and not only some of them, receive all children of the community, eliminating all forms of selection and discrimination. Only thus can one reverse the current situation in which those schools that are more open to diversity concentrate populations with education needs that are more difficult to serve. In this regard, it is also necessary to revise current incentive systems for schools with better results because competing for better test scores leads in many cases to excluding those students who “lower” averages. Moreover, this mechanism strengthens schools that do better and not those that need more support in order to achieve learning for all.
- (ii) **Participatory culture.** Participation is a fundamental right that must be exercised in schools. Assuring this right involves assuring that schools offer multiple opportunities so that all can participate to the greatest extent possible in the school curriculum and activities, as well as establishing channels of democratic school

governance in order that the entire school community be involved in decisions, while defining the rights and responsibilities of each.

- (iii) **Communities of learning and collaboration.** Schools should be learning venues – not only for students, but for teachers and families as well. Within a learning community, each person shares a vision and commits to change and the educational project of the institution. A learning community is concerned about obtaining information and about analyzing it collectively for decision-making, as well as generating knowledge through processes of assessment, reflection, and research. The construction of learning communities requires generating an environment of trust that strengthens self-esteem and has high expectations for the learning of everyone.

Cooperation among the different actors is vital for creating communities of learning and participation. Improving educational practices requires collaborative efforts which address problems from different perspectives with the contribution of various actors, and that establish relations of equality which are complemented by, and differentiated in terms of support, professional experience, and training of all those involved.

- (iv) **Pedagogical and organizational flexibility.** Offering a variety of equivalent options in terms of quality in order that education be pertinent to the needs of different individuals and contexts necessarily involves having schools: with greater organizational flexibility and more autonomy in making curricular decisions, offering different teaching modalities and methods, class hours, teacher staffing, acquisition of material resources, and assessment and accreditation procedures.
- (v) **Sufficient and equitable human and material resources in order to meet the demands of different student learning needs.** Teaching teams require support in order to face the challenges of offering quality education to the diversity of students in the classroom. Educational systems must assure an equitable distribution of material and human resources so that all students may learn – paying special attention to those with greater needs.
- (vi) **Teaching teams committed to student learning and their own professional development.** Teachers individually cannot satisfy the diversity of learning needs of all students. Committed teamwork by all teachers and school authorities is vital, using innovative processes that result in better student learning. Educational policies must facilitate the creation of time and space for teacher teams to reflect on their practices and to exchange experiences. It is also desirable to strengthen school-based training processes. This strategy has proven to be extremely valuable for transforming teaching practices and in organizing teachers within a shared educational project that assures coherence and continuity in student learning processes. Undoubtedly, this modality involves a greater time commitment in order to involve all professionals. But in the end it is the most effective for producing significant changes in schools.
- (vii) **Shared Leadership.** The ability of school administrators to mobilize teachers, generate a good climate, facilitate organizational and curricular processes, and foster and sustain change are some of the elements that mark the difference between schools. However, leadership cannot be the unique responsibility of school principals. Schools that achieve good results are characterized by decision-making models that involve the largest possible number of school community actors and by more complementary and equal relations between principals and

teachers. Educational policies must assure that school administrators develop the skills necessary for giving meaning and cohesion to the pedagogical activities of teaching staff, facilitate processes of educational management and change, and achieve a harmonious school climate.

(viii) **Schools open to the community and to networking.** Schools must open their doors to the community, offering their infrastructures and services in order to carry out recreational, cultural, and social activities. In the same sense, schools should participate in their surroundings and take part in decisions that affect the community, creating networks between schools in order to exchange experiences and generate knowledge on educational practice. The relation with the community is essential in order to take maximum advantage of all the resources of the locale that can contribute to the full development and learning of all students. Within the local environment coordination among inter-sectoral policies that can contribute to reducing inequalities in the origin of students takes place.

(ix) **Autonomous schools with the skills and resources necessary for its exercise.** School autonomy is not a new theme to the educational policies of the region. A certain consensus exists in regard to the need to transfer the competencies for their better management to schools. However, such transfers are not always accompanied by the resources and skill development necessary for schools to develop the new competencies and responsibilities that they are assigned. This is a fundamental change, because currently these decisions are much determined by central educational administrations. In the following section the conditions that must be assured in order to achieve greater school autonomy with efficiency and equity are laid out in detail.

## 10. Coordinated educational assessment policies aimed at the progressive improvement of the quality of education and of the functioning of educational systems

Moving toward quality education for all demands establishing coordinated assessment policies that provide information that contributes to more informed decision-making. In this sense, the assessment approach must be coherent with an assumed concept of educational quality; that is, education understood as a fundamental right of all persons and having as essential qualities the respect for rights, equity, relevance and pertinence, together with efficacy and efficiency as operational elements.

In recent years, the region has taken important steps to establish national and sub-national assessment systems that focus principally on student achievement, given that valuable experience already exists in this sense. This reflects a real concern for implementing systematic mechanisms of review, monitoring, and follow-up of the functioning of educational systems. However, these are still at times insufficient in terms of offering effective input for guiding the development of educational policies in order to improve the quality of education, because assessment results are often not properly taken advantage of.

Similarly, many countries of the region are making efforts to carry out teacher performance assessments. Additionally, there is an increasing concern for assessing schools.

However, there are still significant challenges to be faced. Within the framework of assessment policies the following should be noted:

- (i) **Developing integrated assessment policies** that relate to and coordinate the assessment activities of different components (students, teachers and other professionals, schools, programs and education administrations) as well as education systems as a whole, while being coherent with the principle of life-long learning. In addition, the need to clearly define different educational assessment objectives and their contents must always be kept in mind, fostering differentiated methodological and conceptual developments for each.
- (ii) **Strengthening and optimizing** student assessment systems, while at the same time:
- Continuing to work toward expanding student assessment not only in basic instrumental areas, but also in all areas considered relevant for comprehensive personality development.
  - Considering social, cultural, and individual differences of students in assessment processes. This involves developing instruments free of social, cultural, and gender biases, making them available in different languages, and proportioning help so that individuals with disabilities can be assessed.
  - Fomenting the use of diversified student assessment strategies that offer a comprehensive vision of the learning process.
  - Fostering linkages between curricular developments, expected learning goals, and assessment systems in order that the curriculum provide a basis for the assessment of student achievement. At the same time, assessment is used to provide useful information for curriculum improvement.
  - Developing studies of factors associated with learning that address not only the current situation, but also supply information that aids in making decisions for its improvement.
  - Optimizing dissemination strategies and the use made of assessment results so that, along with other sets of information related to the exercise of the right to education and the enrichment of public discussion on this subject, an impact can be made on improving education.
- (iii) **Developing and improving external teacher assessment systems** related to professional development and linked to school assessment, as well as developing and improving teacher **auto-evaluation systems** that will incite improvement in the quality of their work.
- (iv) **Fostering school assessment processes** through focuses that combine external assessment with auto-evaluation, and that are directed toward putting school development processes in place.
- (v) Opening discussion on the need to carry out **processes for assessing educational administrations** as being co-responsible for the national quality of education.
- (vi) **Linking educational assessment processes** with **information systems** in such a way that both, working together, focus on improving the quality of education and the functioning of educational systems at their different levels.

This regards creating a culture of assessment and incorporating it into the educational process with the objective of providing information that contributes to the reflection of different members of the educational community, and is viewed by them as something to help improve their performance, rather than being merely seen as an occasional, punitive, and uncontextualized external intervention.

## 11. Constructing integrated educational information systems that nourish decision-making processes and public debate on education

An essential component for assuring the right to a quality education for all is monitoring processes necessary for accompanying and assessing progress toward the objectives of Education for All. The availability of timely and reliable information relevant to the needs of education agendas in the region is vital for decision-making.

However, educational information systems do not currently exhibit high levels of integration. Therefore, their ability to inform decision-making processes and public debate is limited by different factors. The sudden appearance of national student achievement assessment systems, usually associated with projects and units outside the regular structure is only one illustration of this non-integration which leads to various problems related to integrity, consistency, credibility, and duplication of effort.

Similarly, other informational sub-systems (such as those related to resource management) acquire an autonomous dynamic without real possibilities of being linked to traditional educational statistics systems that, with serious material and professional limitations, produce information that rarely matches educational needs and that in the end become information sources of reference or routine use.

There have been efforts to address these limitations through processes that, in the face of institutional, conceptual, and methodological maladjustments, have trusted in integration systems run off of software platforms that are not sufficient for dealing with these kinds of issues.

This is not meant to underestimate the immense efforts made in order to offer information that until recently was unavailable – including the existence of historical series on even the most basic items needed. Rather, it is important to recognize these efforts and to move toward their integration through using an analytic and conceptual framework which, by making the question of the right to education the central concern, makes it possible to identify current gaps, improve continuous statistics, and organize information in a relevant manner – allowing a greater capacity to inform the processes of decision-making and public debates on education.

To this end, there is a need for **revising the analytical models** that are at the basis of different informational sub-systems so that they may be adjusted to reflect the vision that education is, in essence, a human right. Furthermore, these systems need to be **integrated**, both in their sectoral character as well as within the framework of national informational systems that are part of the public function. At the same time, this integration requires a broad view that makes it possible to integrate that which is produced through specific efforts of research normally developed outside the purview of government entities, into accumulated evidence.

Strengthening informational systems not only is indispensable for improving the management of educational systems; they are also important tools for permitting citizens to exercise their rights of vigilance and control of public affairs, which has evident impacts on the transparency of institutions and the strengthening of the democracies of the region.

In summary, the eleven educational policy proposals outlined herein have, as their only objective, aiding States in their responsibilities to guarantee that the people of the region can make demandable their right to a quality education. It is through education that people are able to “increase their effective freedom to carry forward that which they value” and through which countries are able to advance toward sustainable human development, and thus fulfill their commitment to attain the Millennium Goals before 2015. The suggestions made in this



document can provide a useful frame of reference for following the progress the region is making in bringing a rights-based focus into the classroom, and can serve as a future agenda for cooperation in education among the countries of the region.

## REFERENCES

### Chapter I

- Bárcena, A. (2005). **Ciudadanía y desarrollo: Metas del Milenio**. Lecture presented in a conference held at the Economic Commission for Latin America-ECLAC. Santiago. Chile.
- Bourguignon, F. (1999). **Crime, Violence and Inequitable Development**. World Bank. Washington D.C.
- ECLAC (2005). **Social Panorama of Latin America**. ECLAC. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.eclac.org](http://www.eclac.org)
- ECLAC (2006). **Social Panorama of Latin America**. ECLAC. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.eclac.org](http://www.eclac.org)
- Franco, R. (2002). "The Social Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean and its Influence on the Development of Education." In **PRELAC, a Path Toward Education for All. Social-Educational Panorama: five suggestive views on Latin America and the Caribbean**. **PRELAC Journal** N° 0. August 2004, pp. 13-23. OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Available at: [www.unesco.cl/revistaprelac/ing](http://www.unesco.cl/revistaprelac/ing)
- Ganuzo, E. (2002). **Tendencias del desarrollo en América Latina y el Caribe en la última década**. Regional Division for Latin America and the Caribbean. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- ILO (1989). **Convention N° 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples**. United Nations. Geneva. Available at: [www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C169](http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C169)
- ILO (2005). **Global Employment Trends 2005**. ILO. Geneva.
- Ocampo, J. A. (2005). "Mercado, cohesión social y democracia." In **Revista Focus Eurolatino** N° 6, December 2005. Corporación Justicia y Democracia. Santiago. Chile.
- PAHO (2005). **Health Situation in the Americas: Basic Indicators**. Pan-American Health Organization. Regional Bureau, World Health Organization. Washington D.C. Available at: [www.paho.org/english/dd/ais/coredata.htm](http://www.paho.org/english/dd/ais/coredata.htm)
- Transparency International (2006). **Barómetro Global de la Corrupción**. Transparency International. Spain. Available at: [www.transparencia.org.es](http://www.transparencia.org.es)
- UN (1948). **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**. United Nations. New York. Available at: [www.un.org/Overview/rights.htm](http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.htm)
- UN (2001). **Millennium Declaration**. United Nations. New York. Available at: [www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm](http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm)
- UN (2006). **Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**. United Nations. New York.
- UNESCO (1996a). **Learning: the Treasure Within**. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, chaired by Jacques Delors. UNESCO Publishing. Paris.
- UNESCO (1996b). **Our Creative Diversity**. Report to UNESCO of the World Commission for Culture and Development. Coordinated by Javier Pérez de Cuéllar. UNESCO Publishing. Paris.
- WHO (2003). **World Report on Violence and Health**. World Health Organization, Washington D.C. Available at: [www.who.int/whr/en/](http://www.who.int/whr/en/)

## Chapter II

- Bellei, C. (2006). **Derecho a la educación y equidad educativa**. Document presented to the Presidential Advisory Council on the Quality of Education in Chile, held between June 7 and December 12, 2006. Santiago. Chile. The final report is available at: [www.consejoeducacion.cl](http://www.consejoeducacion.cl)
- Blanco, Rosa (2005). **Innovación educativa y calidad de la educación**. Module I of the Workshop on Investigation and Systematization of Educational Innovations, 2005-2006. OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.unesco.cl/innovemos](http://www.unesco.cl/innovemos)
- Blanco, Rosa (2006). "La equidad y la inclusión social: uno de los desafíos de la educación y la escuela hoy." In **Revista electrónica Iberoamericana sobre Calidad y Cambio en Educación**. vol 4. N° 3.
- Braslavsky, Cecilia (2001). "Educación secundaria en Europa y en Latinoamérica: síntesis de un diálogo compartido." In **La Educación Secundaria ¿Cambio o inmutabilidad? Análisis y debate de procesos europeos y latinoamericanos contemporáneos**. UNESCO/IIEP. Buenos Aires. Argentina.
- Brovetto, J. (1999). "La educación superior en Iberoamérica: crisis, debates, realidades y transformaciones en la última década del siglo XX." In **Universidad Siglo XXI, Revista Iberoamericana de Educación**, N° 21, pp. 1-12. September / December 1999.
- Coll, Cesar; Martín, Elena (2006). "The Prevalence of the Curriculum Debate." In **The Curriculum in the Spotlight, PRELAC Journal** N° 3. December 2006, pp. 6-28. OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Chile.
- De Ketele, Jean Marie (2004). "El fundamento de las políticas educativas: Una Educación de Calidad para Todos." In **Políticas educativas y equidad**. Reflection of the international seminar organized by Alberto Hurtado University, Ford Foundation, UNESCO, UNICEF, pp. 81-86. UNICEF, October 2004. Santiago. Chile.
- ECLAC (1998). **Social Panorama of Latin America**. ECLAC. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.eclac.org](http://www.eclac.org)
- Ferreiro, Emilia (1998). **Qué y cómo aprender** (Comment to). Coordinated by Rosa María Torres. Biblioteca de Actualización del Maestro. Secretaría de Educación Pública. Mexico.
- ILO (1973). **Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment**. United Nations. Geneva. Available at: [www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/convdisp2.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/convdisp2.htm)
- Lasch, C. (1996). **La rebelión de las elites**. Paidós. Barcelona. Spain.
- Marchesi, A.; Martín, M. (1998). **Calidad de la enseñanza en tiempos de cambio**. Alianza. Madrid. Spain.
- Martín, Elena (2006). "Curriculum and Attention to Diversity." In **The Curriculum in the Spotlight, PRELAC Journal** N° 3. December 2006, pp. 112-120. OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Chile.
- McEwan, P.J.; Carnoy, M. (1998). **Choice Between Private and Public Schools in a Voucher System: Evidence from Chile** (unpublished manuscript). Stanford University. Stanford C. A.
- Muñoz, Vernor (2004). **The Right to Education. Report submitted by the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education**. United Nations Human Rights Commission. United Nations. New York.

- Reimers, Fernando (2002). "La lucha por la igualdad de oportunidades en América Latina como proceso político." In **Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios Educativos**. vol. XXXII, N°1, pp. 9-70. Mexico.
- Rojas, Alfredo (2006). "La cara oculta de la luna. Liderazgo y crítica al racionalismo en la formulación e implementación de políticas educacionales." In **REICE**, vol. 4 (monograph). Madrid. Spain.
- Sacristán, Gimeno (2000). **La Educación obligatoria: su sentido educativo y social**. Morata. Madrid. Spain.
- Savater, Fernando (2006). "On Fashioning Humanity." In **The Meanings of Education. PRELAC Journal** N° 2. July 2005, pp. 26-30. OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.unesco.cl/revistaprelac/ing](http://www.unesco.cl/revistaprelac/ing)
- Smelkes, Silvia (2004). "La educación intercultural en México." In **Políticas educativas y equidad**. Reflection of the international seminar organized by Alberto Hurtado University, Ford Foundation, UNESCO, UNICEF. pp. 185-188. UNICEF. October 2004. Santiago. Chile.
- Tedesco, Juan Carlos (2004). "Igualdad de oportunidades y política educativa." En **Políticas educativas y equidad**. Reflection of the international seminar organized by Alberto Hurtado University, Ford Foundation, UNESCO, UNICEF. pp. 59-68. UNICEF. October 2004. Santiago. Chile.
- Tomasevski, Katarina (2006). **The State of the Right to Education Worldwide. Free or Fee: 2006 Global Report**. Copenhagen. Available at: [www.katarinatomasevski.com/images/Global\\_Report.pdf](http://www.katarinatomasevski.com/images/Global_Report.pdf)
- Torres, Rosa-María (1998). **Qué y cómo aprender**. Biblioteca de Actualización del Maestro. Secretaría de Educación Pública. Mexico.
- UN (1948). **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**. United Nations. New York. Available at: [www.un.org/Overview/rights.html](http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html)
- UN (1979). **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**. United Nations. New York. Available at: [www.ohchr.org/english/law/cedaw.htm](http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/cedaw.htm)
- UN/ECOSOC (1966). **International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights**. United Nations. New York. Available at: [www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a\\_ceschr.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ceschr.htm)
- UN/ECOSOC/UNESCO (2003). **Right to Education. Scope and Implementation. General Comment 13 on the right to education** (Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). United Nations. Paris. Available at: [www.unesco.org/education/en](http://www.unesco.org/education/en)
- UNESCO (1960). **Convention against Discrimination in Education**. United Nations. Paris. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001145/114583e.pdf#page=118>
- UNESCO (1996). **Learning: the Treasure Within**. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, chaired by Jacques Delors. UNESCO Publishing. Paris.
- UNESCO (2000). **Dakar Framework for Action. Education for All: Meeting our collective commitments**. UNESCO Publishing. Paris.
- UNESCO (2005a). **Education for All: The Quality Imperative**. Global Monitoring Report of Education for All. UNESCO Publishing. Paris. Available at: [www.unesco.org/education](http://www.unesco.org/education)

- UNESCO (2005b). **Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Acces to Education for All**. UNESCO Publishing. Paris. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001402/140224e.pdf>
- UNESCO (2007). **The State of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Guaranteeing Quality Education for All**. A regional report, reviewing and assessing the progress of Latin America and the Caribbean toward Education for All within the framework of the Regional Education Project (EFA/PRELAC). Preliminary version. OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Chile.
- UNESCO/OREALC (2001). **First International Comparative Study of Language, Mathematics, and Associated Factors for Third and Fourth Grade Primary School Students**. Technical Report. Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE). OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.unesco.cl/llece](http://www.unesco.cl/llece)
- UNESCO/OREALC (2002). **Regional Education Project for Latin American and the Caribbean (PRELAC)**. Regional Education Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean. OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.unesco.cl](http://www.unesco.cl)
- UNICEF (1989). **Convention on the Rights of the Child**. United Nations. New York. Available at: [www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm)

### Chapter III

- Aguerrondo, Inés (2004). **Mecanismos de control de calidad de la formación de profesores. Sistemas de acreditación de la formación docente**. PREAL. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.preal.org](http://www.preal.org)
- Braslavsky, Cecilia (2004). "Diez factores para una Educación de Calidad para Todos en el siglo XXI". Document presented at La Semana Monográfica Santillana, November, 2004. Madrid. Spain. Available in a special issue of the **Revista Electrónica Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación**, 4(2e). Available at: [www.rinace.net/arts/vol4num2e/art5.htm](http://www.rinace.net/arts/vol4num2e/art5.htm)
- Calvo, Guillermo; Jarque, Carlos (2002). **¿Quiénes son los maestros? Carreras e incentivos docentes en América Latina**. Preface. Published by Juan Carlos Navarro. Inter-American Development Bank. Washington D.C.
- CPEIP (2005). **Formación continua docente: un camino para compartir 2000 – 2005**. Centro de Perfeccionamiento, Experimentación e Investigaciones Pedagógicas (CPEIP). Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.mineduc.cl](http://www.mineduc.cl)
- Cuenca, Ricardo (2003). **El compromiso de la sociedad civil con la educación. Sistematización del Plan Nacional de Capacitación Docente (PLANCAD)**. GTZ, KFW. Ministerio de Educación. Lima. Peru. Available at: [www.proeduca.org.pe](http://www.proeduca.org.pe)
- Darling-Hammond, Linda (2001). **El derecho a aprender, crear buenas escuelas para todos**. Ariel. Barcelona. Spain.
- Earl, Lerna, M. ; Lemathieu, Paul, G. (2003). "Replantear la evaluación y la rendición de cuentas." In **Replantear el cambio educativo**. Andy Hargreaves, coord. Amorrortu. Buenos Aires. Argentina.
- Figlio, D. N. (1997). "Teacher Salaries and Teacher Quality." In **Economic Letters**, 55. pp. 267-271.
- Fullan, Michael (2003). "Emoción y esperanza: conceptos constructivos para tiempos complejos." In **Repensar el cambio educativo**. pp. 296-317. Andy Hargreaves, coord. Amorrortu. Buenos Aires. Argentina.

- Gutiérrez-Santander, Pablo; Morá-Suñarez, Santiago; Sanz-Vásquez, Inmaculada (2005). **Estrés docente: elaboración de la escala ed-6 para su evaluación**. REICE virtual library. Available at: [www.rinace.net](http://www.rinace.net)
- Hanushek, E; Kain, J; Rivkin, S.G. (1999). **Do Higher Salaries Buy Better Teachers?** National Bureau of Economic Research. NBER Working Paper Series 7082. Cambridge MA.
- Hargreaves, Andy (1999). **Profesorado, cultura y post-modernidad**. Morata. Madrid. Spain.
- Hevia, Ricardo (2006). **Propuestas para la transformación de la formación docente: paradigmas, modelos, procesos**. Presented at the IV Meeting of the KIPUS Network, October, 2006. Venezuela.
- Imazeki, J. (2005). "Teacher Salaries and Teacher Attrition." In **Economics of Education Review** N° 24. pp. 431-449.
- Liang, X. (1999). **Teacher Pay in 12 Latin American Countries: How Does Teacher Pay Compare to Other Professions, what Determines Teacher Pay, and who are the Teachers?** LCSHD Paper Series N° 49. World Bank, Human Development Department. Washington D.C.
- Lieberman, Ann y Grolnick, Mauren (2003). "Las redes, la reforma y el desarrollo profesional de los docentes." In **Repensar el cambio educativo**. Andy Hargreaves, coord. Amorrortu. Buenos Aires. Argentina.
- Luna, Milton (2004). **Conflictos docentes en América Latina 1999-2003: sistematización de estudios e investigaciones**. (To be published).
- Marcelo, Carlos (2002). "La formación inicial y permanente de los educadores." In **Los educadores en la sociedad del siglo XXI**. Consejo Escolar del Estado. Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte. Madrid. Spain.
- Marcelo García, Carlos (2006). **Políticas de inserción a la docencia: del eslabón perdido al puente para el desarrollo profesional docente**. Presented at an international seminar organized by PREAL. Bogota. Colombia.
- Marchesi, Alvaro (2006). "The Value of Education for Everyone in a Diverse and Unequal World." In **The Meanings of Education**. PRELAC Journal. N° 2, February 2006, pp. 54-69. OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.unesco.cl/revista\\_prelac/ing](http://www.unesco.cl/revista_prelac/ing)
- Morduchowicz, Alejandro (2002). **Carreras, incentivos y estructuras salariales docentes**. Documento de trabajo N° 23. Prepared by FLACSO-PREAL. Buenos Aires. Argentina.
- Namo De Mello, Guiomar (2005). "Teachers for Quality Education in Latin America." In **Teacher Involvement in Educational Change**. PRELAC Journal N° 1. July 2005, pp. 25-37. OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.unesco.cl/revista\\_prelac/ing](http://www.unesco.cl/revista_prelac/ing)
- Navarro, Juan Carlos (2002). **¿Quiénes son los docentes?** Inter-American Development Bank. Washington DC.
- OECD (2005). **Teachers Matter: Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers**. OECD. Paris.
- PREAL (2003). **Boletín**. Year 5 / No. 15. October, 2003. Available at [www.preal.org](http://www.preal.org)
- Rizo, Héctor (2005). **Working document on the professional development of teachers**. Prepared for OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Chile.
- Tedesco, Juan Carlos; Tenti, Emilio (2002). **Nuevos tiempos y nuevos docentes**. UNESCO/IIEP. Buenos Aires. Argentina.
- Tiramonti, G. (2001). **Sindicalismo docente y reforma educativa en América Latina de los 90'**. Working document N° 19. PREAL. Santiago. Chile.

- UNESCO/IIEP (2006). **El financiamiento y la asignación de recursos**. Study prepared by Alejandro Morduchowicz for OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Chile.
- UNESCO/OREALC (2001). **First International Comparative Study of Language, Mathematics, and Associated Factors for Third and Fourth Grade Primary School Students**. Technical Report. Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE). OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.unesco.cl/llece](http://www.unesco.cl/llece)
- UNESCO/OREALC (2002). **Regional Education Project for Latin American and the Caribbean (PRELAC)**. Regional Education Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean. OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.unesco.cl](http://www.unesco.cl)
- UNESCO/OREALC (2004). **Conflictividad educativa en América Latina, cronología de la actividad sindical docente**. OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.unesco.cl](http://www.unesco.cl)
- UNESCO/OREALC (2005a). **Estudio de casos de modelos innovadores en la formación docente en América Latina y Europa**. F. Javier Murillo, coord. OREALC/UNESCO Santiago. Chile. Available at [www.unesco.cl](http://www.unesco.cl)
- UNESCO/OREALC (2005b). **Revisión bibliográfica sobre salud de los docentes**. Prepared by Manuel Parra for OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.unesco.cl](http://www.unesco.cl)
- UNESCO/OREALC (2006a). **Evaluación del desempeño y carrera profesional docente: un estudio comparado entre 50 países de América y Europa**. F. Javier Murillo, coord. OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.unesco.cl](http://www.unesco.cl)
- UNESCO/OREALC (2006b). **Modelos Innovadores en la Formación Inicial**. F. Javier Murillo, coord. OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.unesco.cl](http://www.unesco.cl)
- Vaillant, Denise (2006). **SOS: Profesión docente al rescate del currículum escolar**. IBE-UNESCO, International Bureau of Education. Geneva.

## Chapter IV

- Crahay, Marcel (2006). "É possível tirar conclusões sobre os efeitos da repetência?" In **Cadernos de Pesquisa**. vol. 36, N° 127. pp. 223-246. Available at: [www.scielo.br](http://www.scielo.br)
- ECLAC (1998). **The Fiscal Covenant. Strengths, Weaknesses, Challenges**. ECLAC. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.eclac.org](http://www.eclac.org)
- ECLAC/IPEA/UNDP (2003). **Meeting the Millennium Poverty Reduction Targets in Latin America and the Caribbean**. ECLAC. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.eclac.org](http://www.eclac.org)
- ECLAC/UNESCO (1992). **Education and Knowledge: Basic Pillars of Changing Production Patterns with Social Equity**. ECLAC. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.eclac.org](http://www.eclac.org)
- ECLAC/UNESCO (2005). **Investing Better in Order to Invest More. Finance and Management of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean**. OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.unesco.cl/esp/biblio/](http://www.unesco.cl/esp/biblio/)
- UNDP (2005). **Human Development Report 2005. International Cooperation at a Crossroads: Aid, Trade and Security in an Unequal World**. United Nations. New York.
- UNESCO (2007). **The State of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Guaranteeing Quality Education for All**. A regional report, reviewing and assessing the progress of Latin America and the Caribbean toward Education for All within the framework of the Regional Education Project (EFA/PRELAC). Preliminary version. OREALC/UNESCO Santiago. Chile.

- UNESCO/IIEP (2006). **El financiamiento y la asignación de recursos**. Study prepared by Alejandro Morduchowicz for OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Chile.
- UNESCO/OECD (2003). **Literacy Skills for the World of Tomorrow – Further Results from PISA 2000**. OECD. Paris.

## Chapter V

- Blanco, Rosa (2005). **La Educación de Calidad para Todos empieza en la Primera Infancia**. *Revista de Enfoques Educativos*. vol. 7 N° 1. pp. 11-34. Department of Education. Faculty of Social Science. University of Chile. Santiago. Chile.
- Dussel, Inés (2006). **Informe final sobre Reformas Curriculares en América Latina y el Caribe: Balance y Perspectivas**. Presented at the II Intergovernmental Meeting of PRELAC: The Curriculum in the Spotlight, organized by OREALC/UNESCO in Santiago. Chile. May 11-13 2006.
- ECLAC (1998). **The Fiscal Covenant. Strengths, Weaknesses, Challenges**. ECLAC. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.eclac.org](http://www.eclac.org)
- Tomasevski, Katarina (2006). **The State of the Right to Education Worldwide. Free or Fee: 2006 Global Report**. Copenhagen. Available at: [www.katarinatomasevski.com/images/Global\\_Report.pdf](http://www.katarinatomasevski.com/images/Global_Report.pdf)
- UN (1948). **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**. United Nations. New York. Available at: [www.un.org/Overview/rights.html](http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html)
- UN/ECOSOC (1966). **International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights**. United Nations. New York. Available at: [www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a\\_cescr.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_cescr.htm)
- UNESCO (2000). "Education for All in the Americas. Regional Framework of Action". In **The Dakar Framework for Action. Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments**. pp. 35-42. UNESCO Publishing. Paris.
- UNESCO (2007). **The State of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Guaranteeing Quality Education for All**. A regional report, reviewing and assessing the progress of Latin America and the Caribbean toward Education for All within the framework of the Regional Education Project (EFA/PRELAC). Preliminary version. OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Chile.
- UNESCO (2007b). **Strong Foundations. 2007 Education for All Global Monitoring**. UNESCO Publishing. Paris. Available at: [www.unesco.org/education](http://www.unesco.org/education)
- UNESCO/OREALC (2002). **Qualitative Study of schools with outstanding results in seven Latin American countries**. Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE). OREALC/UNESCO. Santiago. Chile. Available at: [www.unesco.cl](http://www.unesco.cl)
- UNICEF (1989). **Convention on the Rights of the Child**. United Nations. New York. Available at: [www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm)
- Weinschelbaum, S. et al (1999). **Carrera de Especialización de la Enseñanza en Contextos de Diversidad - Focalizada en la Ruralidad**. Fundación Bunge y Burn. Buenos Aires. Argentina.



This document is intended to offer some reflections and educational policy recommendations in contribution to the deliberations of the Second Intergovernmental Meeting of the Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean (PRELAC), held in March of 2007 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The central theme is a quality education for all, with education being understood as a public good and fundamental human right which States have the obligation to respect, foster, and protect in order to assure the equal opportunity to access knowledge.

It is necessary to address these recommendations in the mid and long-terms in order to fulfill the objectives of a quality education for all within the framework of the five strategic focuses of PRELAC. These recommendations involve general policy measures as well as making transformations at the different levels of educational systems - especially in schools. The general policies upon which they are based must become integrated, rights-based, and State-led national policies arrived at through agreements made with society.



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