

**Seventh Conference of  
Ministers of Education  
of Latin America and  
the Caribbean**

**Sixth Meeting of the Intergovernmental  
Regional Committee of the Major Project  
in the Field of Education in  
Latin America and the Caribbean**

Kingston, Jamaica, 13-17 May 1996

## ***Final Report***

## PART IV

### RECOMMENDATION OF THE CONFERENCE

*We, Ministers of Education of Latin America and the Caribbean, meeting in the city of Kingston in Jamaica, with the intention of fostering mutual knowledge among our peoples through education and progressing towards fuller integration in the cultural sphere,*

1. Reaffirm the pledges made by the governments of the region when they launched the Major Project in the Field of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean in 1979. Those pledges have made possible some progress towards overcoming illiteracy, providing universal access to basic education and improving the quality of education. We also acknowledge the contributions of the sessions of the Intergovernmental Committee, and in particular the one held in Guatemala City (1989), where it was urged that education once again adopt a suitably long-term approach through broad social pacts and the development of State policies; the Quito session (1991), where the need was established to change the organization of education systems through new styles of management; and the Santiago session (1993), which stressed the need to strengthen the role of the school and to make changes to the methods of teaching and management used in schools.

2. We note the major advances resulting from educational reform, the impetus that has been given to these processes in the countries of the region and the renewed support of international and horizontal co-operation in these processes. Nevertheless, we stress the need to maintain as priorities the promotion of literacy, which today is needed more than ever for practical purposes, higher retention rates in basic education for the population as a whole, and the achievement of greater equity in access to quality education.

3. We recognize that democracy, peace and development have become crucial factors in the evolving pattern of societies. There can be no sustainable development without peace, no peace without development, and neither peace nor development without democracy. Indeed, none of this can be fully achieved unless we can guarantee the right of all children to quality education. The dynamic interaction of these three factors provides the context in which citizens' lives unfold. Education systems must be flexible in order to respond to these new conditions in such a way as to ensure that democracy, peace and development are the foundation of the new educational methods. Those methods are based on the assumption that individuals, acting democratically, must participate and be actors in their own development; acknowledge the identity and the rights of others and show solidarity with them in their conduct; make use of the skills acquired in the education system and take part in a voluntary and responsible manner in the transformation of patterns of production and social structures that leads to development.

4. We are convinced that peace is not merely the absence of war. Peace is the consequence of justice and is the result of the active participation of all citizens in the fruits of economic growth and in policy decisions. We recognize that the school is an ideal place in which to give boys, girls and young people a grounding in the exercise their rights and duties through the kind of interactions and practices that will contribute to democracy, peace and development, on the basis of which individuals can play an active part in society. Hence the importance of sustained action by the governments of the region, with the co-operation of international organizations, in order to ensure that education is a means of fostering a culture conducive to democracy and peace.

5. We recognize that in order for the school to fulfil that role it must first be agreed that the process of social development should be founded on ethical principles and on an approach imbued with a new form of humanism obeying three rules: (i) the exercise of citizenship by all inhabitants, without exception; (ii) full mastery of the codes of modernity, by which we mean the basic linguistic abilities and skills needed to take part in public life and in production; and (iii) the development of an ethical and moral attitude of respect for oneself and for others, entailing acceptance of others as individuals with rights of their own.

*We undertake to observe the following guidelines in drawing up and implementing our national education policies.*

### **I. Education as State policy**

6. In order to guarantee continuity in national policies, it is necessary to establish consensus mechanisms designed to guarantee more effective participation by civil society, including groups such as politicians, entrepreneurs, trade unions, family organizations and other established social actors in the formulation of medium- and long-term national education strategies.

7. Meanwhile, the needs for educational development which have not yet been satisfied call for urgent measures which should be harrnonized with the medium- and long-term action.

8. Besides setting up consensus-building mechanisms which guarantee the participation of organized social actors, it is important and urgent to sensitize and mobilize public opinion with a view to giving greater political priority to educational changes.

### **II. Improvement of management capabilities: greater leadership within the local educational community and a more strategic role for central government**

9. Within the new context of decentralized education systems, the objectives of quality and impartiality will require the State to strengthen its own role, thereby taking responsibility for ensuring that the basic needs of everyone are met, that equal opportunities exist for enrolling and remaining in the education system and that it has the ability to propose and manage these changes.

10. Creating conditions for achieving an appropriate degree of autonomy in educational institutions. One of the important factors in achieving quality education is that schools must be better equipped professionally so that they can gradually take charge of their own management. That autonomy must be accompanied by increased professionalism, mechanisms for accountability and the gradual attainment of financial independence in order to preserve the idea of a system, to achieve impartiality and to avert the danger of anomie and general fragmentation.

11. Making provision for the training and continuous upgrading of the heads of educational institutions and for defining and acknowledging their responsibilities as leaders.

12. Developing measures which favour the participation of families in management and the strengthening of schools. Procedures which allow the community to participate in the manage-

ment, planning and implementation of institutional school projects and school programmes must be developed or strengthened. Other educational strategies, such as non-formal and continuing education, which are part of an innovative trend and which may facilitate the current processes of change in education, could also be considered.

13. Creating structural conditions for the development of educational projects for schools. Within the framework of curriculum reform aimed at achieving decentralization and flexibility, the educational community must be empowered to participate in developing a range of educational projects based on the needs of each institution.

14. Optimizing and wherever possible increasing the duration of the school timetable to improve learning opportunities. To improve educational standards, the school term as well as the school day must be extended, the administrative activities of teachers must be streamlined, and teaching-learning activities must be better organized to meet the various needs of pupils and exclude activities that are irrelevant to the achievement of in-school or out-of-school objectives.

### **III. Priority to all-round learning and training**

15. Learning to develop skills with a strong ethical component in a world of expanding information, change and fluidity, has become a condition of survival and of personal and social development. This presupposes: effective skills in accessing, organizing, producing, interpreting and analyzing information: oral and written proficiency in the mother tongue, the majority national language of communication, and other conventional forms of representation; access to and mastery of information technologies; proficiency in basic science and mathematics; and skills connected with social interaction and integration and emotional balance.

16. Supplementing earlier learning by developing a fundamental scientific and technological culture from the basic education stage onwards, and by establishing as transverse objectives in education, development of the capacity to know oneself, to establish relations and interactions with others based on solidarity, while at the same time showing respect for the natural and cultural environment.

### **IV. Democratization and the culture of peace in education: putting fundamental human values on the agenda of educational transformation**

17. To democratize education is to guarantee both its quality and effective access to it. For this purpose, it is necessary to define compulsory and free education as a pledge between the state and society to ensure that all people attain the necessary level of skills and acquire an acceptable degree of autonomy in learning. ;;

18. Developing a strategy conducive to a culture of peace by encouraging exemplary teaching methods and patterns of interpersonal relations in school. Directing the selection and processing of educational content towards peace in its practical implications, emphasizing, inter alia, the values of tolerance, understanding and acceptance of differences co-operation, self-respect and respect for others, and the peaceful and political settlement of conflicts.

19. Enhancing conditions and strategies that foster the development of schools capable of catering to children with special needs or learning difficulties due to a variety of causes, such as physical disability, inadequate teaching or schooling, and social exclusions. Schools that operate on the principle of integration make for equality of opportunity, provide a more personal education, encourage solidarity and co-operation among pupils, improve the quality of teaching and render the entire education system more effective.

### **Education and indigenous populations**

20. Adequate educational provision for indigenous populations should ensure that there is equity, democracy and the shaping of national identities with a firmly multi-ethnic and multicultural outlook. Governments must face up to the twofold challenge of expanding educational services efficiently, while adapting their organization to the distinctive ways of life and work of indigenous populations, and at the same time creating flexibility in the curriculum so that it includes the mother tongue and educational content that is relevant to the cultures, needs and aspirations of the indigenous peoples. Simultaneously, it will be necessary to broaden opportunities for learning the official language as a second language facilitating access to a modern science-and-technology-based culture. The national curriculum must promote the development of values which are non-discriminatory and anti-racist, and attitudes and appreciation for the past and present contributions made by ethnic and cultural diversity to national identity.

### **V. Education closer to society: links with the media, the world of work and the family**

21. Interacting with the media. For the immediate future, use of the media in education will have to go beyond their limited status as channels of information. They must become true links between institutions and persons that will enable knowledge to be built up through exchange, dialogue and discussion. Recognizing that media such as commercial television, the press, radio and cinema are cultural products of which critical use may be made in the classroom to bring in structured elements of outside reality as the possible basis for a new form of curriculum management.

22. Bringing education more fully into contact with the world of work and production. It is desirable: (i) to emphasize the role of general education as a prerequisite for vocational qualification; (ii) to bring bodies concerned with work into association with vocational training and qualification systems and with non-formal education; (iii) to view work not as a succession of tasks but as an act of broad participation in economic and social life based on a higher standard of education and vocational training for the unemployed and underemployed; (iv) to maintain the ethical dimension of work in school, out-of-school and non-formal syllabuses and curricula; (v) to accept suitable professionals in a variety of specialist fields as teachers; (vi) to recognize the role of education in the development of entrepreneurial capacity. This can be achieved through appropriate curricula and teacher-training programmes that emphasize participatory and activity-based approaches.

23. Improving the partnership between education and the family. It is particularly important to establish a closer partnership between families and educational institutions, beginning with the expansion of quality early childhood education programmes. Educational institutions and

systems need to be sensitive to, and make effective use of the cultural environment provided by the family, so as to give children and young people a proper grounding in their basic skills. For this purpose, it is also desirable to step up the renewal of education policies, with investment in continuing training and education for parents, particularly mothers, as a determining factor in the education of their children.

24. Ensuring equality of educational opportunities for men, women, boys and girls. It is important that educational planning, programming and delivery procedures be gender sensitive, allowing for equity in access and achievement. In this context, teachers should understand their role in creating a learning atmosphere which allows for positive self-identification and good relationships between the genders.

## **VI. Evaluation and measurement of the quality of education: taking responsibility for educational results**

25. Using appropriate criteria and procedures so that an evaluation can be made not only of the results but also of the processes undergone by students while in developing the various types of skills. Now that in many countries education systems are in a process of transition from quantitative to qualitative expansion, it is necessary to develop both qualitative and quantitative, evaluation indicators.

26. Carrying out national assessments to determine the level of skills attained, establishing assessment systems and improving the methods and instruments used.

27. Developing comparative assessments at different levels. Establishing machinery for regional analysis of school results in order to carry out studies of attainments and performance factors at various stages in the educational processes, in different types of schools and in a range of contexts.

28. Developing systems of indicators for the performance evaluation of schools that include not only factors such as the attainments of pupils but also others that have to do with the performance of the institution.

29. Devising ways of making better use of information. Adopting methods of communicating the results of assessments of educational quality that will enable ministries, schools, parents and educational communities to adopt and implement measures to improve results, together with better arrangements whereby society can monitor the performance of schools

## **VII. Performance-linked professional upgrading of teachers**

30. Professionalizing and broadening the outlook of educators. The professionalization of teachers involves the ability to address the specific learning needs of each pupil and assume responsibility for the results. This is a challenge that has to be faced in the difficult conditions under which most teachers in the region live and work. It consequently calls for action on the standard-setting, technical, financial and administrative fronts. It also has social and cultural implications and requires public policies, the participation of the actors of civil society and a

leading role for educators themselves. Enhancing the status of teachers will be achieved by strengthening their professional body of knowledge so that their authority is based on their ability to solve the educational problems of the population.

31. Encouraging the development of a positive social image of the teaching career. This means that efforts of organization and social communication must be backed by consistent measures to improve teachers' work situation. Bids to increase their remuneration must be directly linked to their in-service training and fundamentally related to their performance. Appropriate arrangements will be encouraged to permit relations between governments, administrators and the teachers themselves and their representative organizations, so that all parties are given a voice and a two-way communication is set up between the teacher and society.

32. Designing long-term training plans for in-service teachers. The training of individual teachers does not produce significant and sustained changes and innovations in the educational programme that schools offer. To achieve that, the training procedure intended for the school as a whole must be upgraded in the light of the needs that arise as it implements its educational project.

33. Developing better systems for the recruitment of teachers and comprehensive certification criteria which take account of the professional standards and the personal qualities that every good teacher must possess in order to meet the challenges of educational transformation.

### **VIII. Lifelong education to promote continuous learning**

34. In order to contribute to democratization, arrangements must be made to incorporate adult and continuing education in the total education system in order to enable young people and adults to cope successfully with the demands of a society in constant flux and to lead a full and healthy life.

35. Determining overall national literacy strategies to break the vicious cycle of poverty. Overcoming absolute and functional illiteracy through improved learning of reading, writing and basic arithmetic by all pupils, giving priority to the most underprivileged groups, and developing specific strategies for indigenous populations and for women in particular, including innovative programmes for teaching the official language and the mother tongue.

36. Designing specific strategies to improve educational supply for young people needing formal and continuing education. In particular, improving the present supply of evening classes and night schools, incorporating distance and part-time attendance options, self-instructional material and activities of non-formal continuing education and acquisition of skills; expanding the present availability of secondary education for these young people and fostering greater citizen participation and better job opportunities. Renewing agreements between State entities and organizations of civil society concerned with formal and non-formal education programmes, thereby creating closer partnerships between them.

37. Acknowledging the difficulties faced by those young people who are excluded and deprived of the opportunities available to those who have been able to complete their educational

career. The signatories to this recommendation undertake to spearhead activities that will guarantee their economic, social and cultural reintegration under the best possible conditions, thereby ensuring their participation in the construction of a future of peace and tolerance in our region.

38. Improving and strengthening teacher-training strategies for the education of young people and adults. Co-ordinating with training institutions for the incorporation of methods and content in popular and community education experiments and innovations.

39. Recognizing that migration from one country to another, whether for a predetermined or an indefinite period of time, gives rise to challenges and difficulties for the education of children and young people from migrating families. We reiterate our conviction that the rights of those children and young people to basic education must be fulfilled irrespective of the conditions under which their family migrated. The education of migrant children will be promoted through bilateral agreements conferring recognition on studies already completed or through support services organized by the home country.

#### **IX. Higher education: a crucial factor in the development of the region**

40. Prominent among the problems currently faced by higher education are the poor quality of many syllabuses and the inappropriate response of the various institutions to the demands of economic development and the labour market and the requirements of scientific and technological development.

41. Promoting policies which strengthen the capacity of higher education institutions to fulfil, to the highest standards of excellence, their mission as shapers of human resources, and to become focal points of scientific and technological research in close co-operation with the productive sectors.

42. Stepping up, in conjunction with other social actors, efforts to achieve an authentic reform of higher education, by exploring new forms of management and funding, with greater efficiency and equity.

43. Expedite changes instrumental in converting the universities and other higher education institutions into catalysts of improvement in the quality of the lower educational levels, with special emphasis on curricula and the initial training of teachers.

#### **X. Funding and allocation of resources**

44. Despite the fact that governments have, by and large, increased their education budgets, these remain inadequate when measured against the place education must occupy in national development. Financial resources must therefore continue to be increased to cope with changes in education, while being used more efficiently both at the school level and throughout the system.

45. It is also necessary to reiterate the commitment that places top priority on guaranteeing basic education for all, with educational subsidies being channelled to the poorest sectors.

*We recommend that regional and international bodies take account of the foregoing ten sections, and we request them to:*

- (i) Promote and facilitate international co-operation in the field of education, so as to ensure that the external funding processes which have been designed to improve it are effective.
- (ii) Continue to work with the international co-operation agencies in order to promote the pooling of information and successful experiences.
- (iii) Involve the networks of the Major Project and other networks that are active in the field of education in a set of co-operative activities aimed at improving education.
- (iv) Provide the countries of the region with the technical assistance required for drafting the background documents they will need in order to attract external funding.
- (v) Support ministries of education to provide updated national information that can assist them in the performance of their functions, and give more and better information to countries on their role in formulating programmes and projects for the improvement of education.
- (vi) Create a system for the exchange of information among international organizations, the countries of the region and their education sectors by utilising the new communication media now available, with a view to achieving more transparent and effective co-operation. Choose priorities among the various subjects of information exchange: (a) strategic experiments at national level for the improvement of educational quality and equity; (b) appropriate programmes for the training of teachers and headteachers; (c) improvement of educational statistics; (d) pooling of information on the assessment of educational quality.
- (vii) Prepare a report at the next meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Major Project on the results of the drive to improve international co-operation.
- (viii) Prepare another report on the State of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean 1980-1997 to facilitate an overall assessment of the results of the Major Project in the Field of Education until its completion in the year 2000.

46. Subregional agreements expressing regional integration, constitute valuable opportunities for incorporating those elements of culture and education whose common roots and diverse experiences are the guarantee of better understanding and solidarity for among our peoples. We shall thus be able to reinforce the move towards integration at the economic and commercial levels and to meet the challenges of the future. We therefore support the initiative of the Latin American Parliament and of UNESCO to carry forward and to co-ordinate a Plan of Action for the development and integration of Latin America and the Caribbean.

47. We propose that UNESCO and the countries of the region distribute this Recommendation widely in the region by means of publications, technical meetings and other events; we also urge the Chairperson of the Intergovernmental Committee to present this Recommendation in

his report to the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-ninth session; we consider this Recommendation to be the contribution of Latin America and the Caribbean region to the preparations for the forty-fifth session of the International Conference on Education, to be held in Geneva in October this year, whose main theme will be strengthening of the role of teachers in a changing world.

48. The Conference requests the Chairperson of the Intergovernmental Committee to make representations to Heads of State and Government and requests the latter to continue to give support and the necessary priority to education and to renew their pledge to maintain continuity in national education policies. The Conference expresses the wish that, at future meetings, Heads of State and Government may review the progress of these regional undertakings and assess their achievements at every stage.

The Conference invites the Director-General of UNESCO to establish, in consultation with the Committee, a group of experts to evaluate the Major Project in the Field of Education. The Committee would submit its findings and recommendations to the Director-General for inclusion in the agenda of PROMEDLAC VII.

The Conference further invites the Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean, countries of other regions, UN agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental specialized organizations, international and regional banks and other funding agencies to co-operate in activities relating to the Major Project in the Field of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, and calls upon the political will of the national authorities to implement this Recommendation