



Will the Region reach EFA goals at all levels by 2015?

EDUCATION POST 2015

OCTOBER
2013

Nº 1



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Santiago Office
Regional Bureau for Education in
Latin America and the Caribbean



MINISTERIO
DE ASUNTOS EXTERIORES
Y DE COOPERACIÓN



caeid



Will the Region reach EFA goals at all levels by 2015?

EDUCATION POST 2015

OCTOBER
2013

Nº 1

The World Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990) consecrated the right of all children, youth and adults to education and, through it, satisfy their basic learning needs. By 2000, the countries ratified their common commitments to ensure Education For All (EFA) through the Dakar Framework for Action (Dakar, Senegal, 2000) and established six specific goals to be attained by all the subscribers by 2015.

Recent Latin American and the Caribbean reports on education indicators reveal that some countries have made relevant progress in EFA goal attainment, particularly on quantitative terms, but these have been slower than expected. Such is the case with Universal Primary Education (UPE), Adult Literacy, Gender Parity and Quality Improvement. Available evidence indicates that Latin American countries have almost reach the goal of UPE, particularly access to schools and schooling, but quality and equity improvement continue to be unsolved problems, particularly regarding early childhood care and education, literacy programs and acquisition of basic skills for youth and adults.

This leaflet gives an overview of the regional situation, outstands progress, highlights obstacles and raises key issues for goal attainment. The leaflet is fully based on the regional report, *The State of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Towards Education for All – 2015*, a joint initiative of UNESCO, ECLAC and CIAE (UNESCO 2013).

Early Childhood Care and Education: unequal progress for disadvantaged areas

Access to preschool education has been improving slowly in the LAC region. Net enrollment ratios increased from 55% in 1990 to 66% in 2010, in average terms, a positive trend observed in 22 from 26 countries with comparable data. Nonetheless, while in some countries preschool coverage reaches approximately 90% of the population; in other it barely reaches 40%. Moreover, there are huge disparities within countries in access to this educational level being the disadvantaged children from lower income families who suffer the consequences, particularly those living under conditions of extreme poverty and in rural and indigenous areas. Although expansion is relevant in this level, major challenge is still response to learning and quality imperatives.

The region, as a whole, lacks the information to evaluate and monitor issues as relevant as this one. An additional obstacle has to do with institutional dependence. To date, 80% of early childhood care and education are privately managed and the region still lacks regulatory frameworks and norms to ensure equal opportunities to all.

Universal Primary Education: the challenge of reaching the marginalized

95% of children in school age are enrolled in primary education on timely bases. Nonetheless, progress in coverage has stood still in the past years and there are still 2.9 million children out of the education system. It is estimated that, from this grand total, 1 million will never access the system, 1.6 million will access it but not on timely

bases and the rest will be dropouts. On average, there are no **significant differences in access to primary education when compared to family income.** By 2010, the gap separating children from the richest and poorer quintiles represented only 3 percentual points. The challenge remains, to include children living in rural areas, under conditions of extreme poverty, or that belong to ethnic minorities. These are the ones who seldom access or complete universal primary education or have equal opportunities to learn and progress to secondary levels. The good news is that, in the regional average, repetition rates decreased from 6.8% in the year 2000 to 5% in 2010, while dropout decreased from 13% to 8,3%. Despite these figures, today one out of ten Latin-Americans do not complete primary education and the main challenge remains to provide better opportunities and conditions for disadvantaged children and avoid dropout at an early age.

Countries unlikely to achieve the goal of universal primary education by 2015 face two main challenges. They must significantly accelerate enrollment and improve their ability to keep children in school. Second, they must improve learning outcomes and educational attainment. Improving early childhood care and education is relevant as it establishes solid foundations of future educational attainment. Disparities in both primary and pre-primary enrollments should be tackled and completion of universal primary education promoted in those countries with high repetition and dropout rates.

Secondary and Higher Education: the need to expand and reform

Secondary education has slightly expanded and enrollments grew from 67% in 2000 to 72% in 2010 for an average of 24 countries with available data. Evidence shows, nonetheless, **a trend towards decreasing demands for completion among the younger population:** by 2010, one out of six youngsters dropped this educational level. This poses two challenges for future development: the need to enhance post primary and secondary education and the need to consolidate its expansion, with quality and equity, particularly among disadvantaged groups of the population. The secondary education growth agenda is closely related, in the region, to one of identity transformation internal processes and organizational procedures to improve equity and quality.

Work needs to be done as, on average, youngsters aged 18 to 24 years belonging to poor households, seldom access or complete secondary education. Post secondary education is still low and the achievement of lifelong education is a great challenge in the region. Although, expansion of primary and secondary education in past decades has lowered illiteracy rates the main issue remains functional literacy and, particularly tackling the digital divide among adults and youth, men and women.

Higher education has also resulted to be unequally distributed among the population: while completion of tertiary studies among the population aged 25 to 29 years accounted for 0,7% of the lowest income quintile, the richest quintile accounted for 18,3%.

A fact to stand out is that, to date, satisfaction of basic learning needs for youth and adults in most countries have been approached by means of reforming or enhancing secondary and higher education in the formal system. Household surveys, though, provides evidence on the potential of non formal strategies as a principal mean to provide education and offer learning opportunities to disadvantaged youngsters and adults. A special recommendation to reconsider this provisions at secondary and tertiary level should be considered for future development.

Adult Literacy: a complex challenge

Literacy rates for adult education are high and increasing steadily reaching a near average of 93%. Improved coverage and expanded access to primary education, rather than literacy policies has been the main channel to reduce illiteracy in the Latin American countries. Nonetheless there are still 36 million illiterate people in absolute terms. The region, thus, has not been able to meet the EFA goal of reducing illiteracy to 50% by increasing literacy rates to approximately 95% by 2015. Although the region has almost reached an approximate 97% of literacy rates, considering the younger population aged 15 to 24 years, on average, the literacy concept has gradually become more complex due to the fact that basic skills required for global citizenship and participation in productive life on competitive bases are more demanding now than in

past decades. Thus the need to connect the traditional literacy challenge with the concept of lifelong education and skills for life.

Gender Parity: achieved with children, to be achieved with youth

Gender equity in the region has been achieved, except in some few countries. There are few differences in learning outcomes because boys achieve better outcomes in math and sciences and girls perform better in reading. At secondary education some countries show a higher exclusion of boys who are, sometimes, employed in child labor activities or tend to drop school earlier than girls. Early motherhood and collaboration in domestic tasks are the two variables that mostly affect girls particularly in poor households. In tertiary education, although women have increased in number concerning access this has not changed the gender bias when it comes to career election. Last, but not least, educational disadvantage strongly affects indigenous women particularly those who live in rural areas.

Quality Learning: learning outcomes worry the Region

Educational systems in many countries suffer from relatively unequal and insufficient learning achievements. According to data provided by the Second Regional and Comparative **-Segundo Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo SERCE (UNESCO 2007) -**, one out of two students in third grade evaluated in math and one every three evaluated in reading did not achieve basic expected outcomes. On average, for nine Latin American countries participating in PISA, 58% of students in math, 45% en reading y 48% en sciences, did not achieve minimum standards.

Strategic issues for contributing to quality improvement are:

recruit and train the best candidates for the teaching profession, introduce new approaches to teaching and learning, improve learning environments and school based management, make effective use of new technologies of information and communication where access is highly conditioned by the income level of the families.

2015 AND BEYOND

The new agenda will need a shift in policies and practices in order to:

- Build strong foundations in early childhood care and education.
- Improve learning and develop quality standards for all.
- Introduce changes in the teaching profession, recruitment, training, career and development.
- Improve educational leadership and school based management.



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Santiago Office
Regional Bureau for Education in
Latin America and the Caribbean

