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Canada's Spotlight on the Americas

Canadian Foundation for the Americas | Fondation canadienne
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www.focal.ca

June 2010, Volume 9, No. 5, ISSN 1703-7964

FOCUS ON EDUCATION

Latin America's education challenges call for concrete action

Tamara Ortega Goodspeed

Schools in Latin America are in dire need of an overhaul to boost performance and quality.

Latin America's education systems suffer from low levels of learning, limited opportunities for the poor, bureaucratic paralysis and chronic conflicts with teachers' unions. The solutions are neither magical nor beyond human capability: taking action to establish standards of performance and quality, improving the teaching profession and increasing spending for the neediest are key to ameliorating education in the region.

Schools in Latin America clearly need a serious overhaul. Although enrolments at every level are increasing, most children receive poor quality education. On recent international tests of mathematics and science, roughly half of Latin American students scored at or below the lowest proficiency levels, indicating that they had difficulty applying basic concepts to real life situations. By contrast, only 10 per cent of students in Finland and an average 20 per cent of children in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries scored at this level (see Figure 1).

Education is also highly unequal. Despite growing access to primary school, poor children in Latin America are roughly half as likely to enrol in pre-school and two to 10 times less likely to graduate from upper secondary as their richer peers. Students from poorer families also score



Photo: Michael Lisman, PREAL, Inter-American Dialogue.

Youth in the classroom of a rural multi-grade primary school in Zambrano, Honduras, November 2007.

lower on tests, between one to two proficiency levels lower on the OECD's 2006 Programme in International Student Achievement (PISA) science exam than those from higher income families. Indigenous and Afro-Latino children also remain at a disadvantage.

Poor management makes the problem worse. The structure of the teaching profession—from recruitment to training to management—does not foster excellence. Students

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FOCAL Views: Regional challenges in education

Access to education isn't enough to address the education problems of Latin America.

In Latin America, great progress has been made in education over the past 15 years. In general, major education policy reforms have substantially increased enrolment, narrowed gender gaps and improved completion rates. However, many children are still left out. To efficiently address this problem, mere access to school is not enough; the quality of education must be improved. Otherwise, the huge investments that governments and households make in education will not pay off.

Education is key to overcoming poverty and the huge income inequalities facing the region. It provides people with the tools to gain access to knowledge and employment, and to participate in social, economic and political life. This is why Latin American governments worked to get more children into primary school. Their aim was to reach universal primary access to ensure children enter school at an appropriate age, making their way through the education system and completing the full cycle. But despite remarkable improvements, many children still enter school late, drop out too early and never complete the full cycle.

Attending primary and secondary school is not an end in itself; it is a means to equip youth with the skills they will need later in life. It is alarming that many students do not acquire the skills they will need to enter the workforce and become informed citizens.


While gaps in access are narrowing, inequalities linked to the quality of education are persisting. Evidence from learning achievement tests suggests that within many countries of the region and particularly in rural areas, average students are performing close to or below minimum competency levels. Hence, attention needs to be paid to the children who complete primary school each year without having acquired basic literacy and numeracy skills. Unable to formulate or read a simple sentence, these children are poorly equipped to make a successful transition to secondary school. These problems are replicated in secondary schools, where many children do not reach even a minimal level of competence.

It is of capital importance that children in early grades master the basic skills necessary for further learning. Unfortunately, many countries of Latin America are failing this task, which means that returns on the huge investments that governments and households make in education are sub-optimal.

It is well recognized that children do not start their schooling on an equal footing. Circumstances beyond children's control, such as the income and education of their parents, the language they speak or living situation often impact their school achievements. Thus, Latin American countries need to move beyond the issue of access to guarantee quality education for all so that all pupils, regardless of their

background, achieve basic levels of learning.

This would go a long way to equalize opportunity. Giving children the chance to receive a quality education not only increases their chances of having a better life, but also enhances the likelihood that they will become drivers of economic growth and poverty reduction.

Education systems can play a central role in overcoming marginalization by giving disadvantaged children access to good quality learning environments, including properly-financed schools, motivated and well-trained teachers, and instruction in their language. But strategies in education must be backed by wider interventions, including investment in social protection, legal provisions to counteract discrimination and wider empowerment measures. The challenge is to ensure that education policies and broader anti-marginalization policies operate within a coherent framework. 

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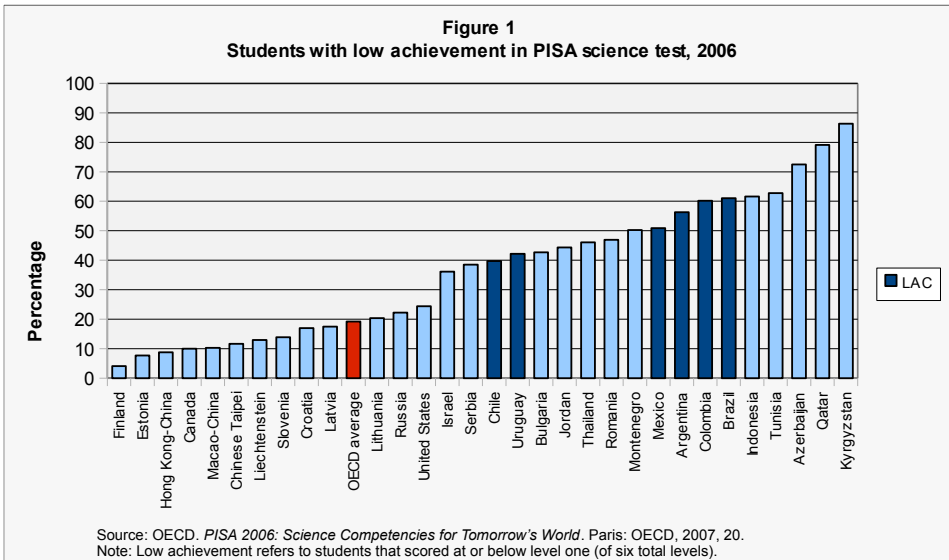
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Latin America's education challenges call for concrete action

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entering teacher training are seldom among the best of their classes, courses are often deficient and the best teachers are too rarely assigned to poor students who need them most. Moreover, it is nearly impossible to remove ineffective teachers from the classroom. Frequent clashes between teachers' unions and governments that result in strikes, such as those in Honduras and Nicaragua, continue to cost students precious days of instruction.

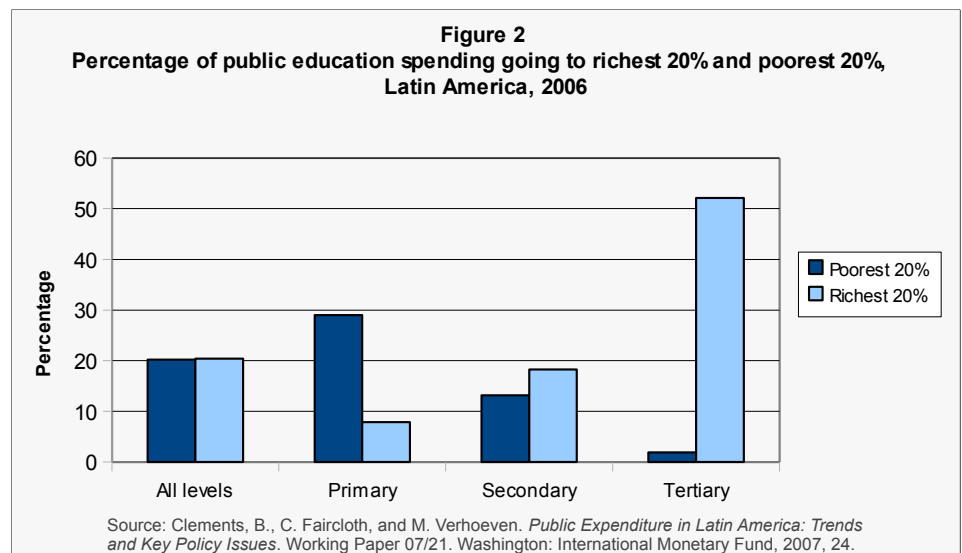
By focusing on three priority areas, Latin American governments and their citizens could go a long way toward providing quality education for all children. First, countries need to mind their P's and Q's: performance and quality. That means they need to decide what students should learn, how well they should be able to use what they learn and what resources are needed to ensure quality outcomes. In other words, countries need a widely accepted system of content, performance and resource standards. They also need to monitor progress toward meeting those standards regularly and respond appropriately when they fail to meet goals.

Countries should pay particular attention to services at the pre-school and secondary level. Although it is common knowledge that early childhood developmental experiences are critical in setting the stage for future learning, roughly one in three children of pre-school age in Latin America is out of school. Poor children who have less early learning opportunities at home have even greater need for quality pre-school. As for secondary education, in many Latin American countries less than 50 per cent of students graduate from high school. Moreover, most

students leave school without the skills they will need in the workplace, especially in science, mathematics, technology, English and critical thinking.

Second, countries need to target teaching in order to bring together a league of extraordinary educators: men and women who are passionate about their profession and have a strong understanding of their subjects as well as the skills and tools needed to teach it. But building that corps requires more than training. As a recent report by the management consulting firm McKinsey & Company notes, it requires an administration that selects the best and brightest to teach and lead schools, that develops and recognizes good teaching, evaluates performance, supports continuous professional growth and improvement, and removes ineffective teachers from the classroom. In short, teaching needs to become a high-status occupation that demands and rewards good performance.

Lastly, Latin American countries need to spend more on education for the poor. The region is notorious for its high levels of income inequality. This situation both contributes to and is ex-



acerbated by inequalities in education. Governments will need to invest more in education for the poor if they want to contribute to individual well-being and national economic growth, equity and social stability. This means spending more on services that address the needs of disadvantaged children (e.g. school feeding and health programs, conditional cash transfers or accelerated degree programs that recognize poor children's early entry in the labour market, and extra support for struggling pupils). It also means ensuring that a larger share of existing resources reaches the poor. Because most middle- and upper-class families send their children to private primary and secondary schools, government spending at these levels goes primarily to the poor. But high levels of public spending on university education essentially benefit the rich, since the majority of lower-class students never reach the tertiary level. Indeed, recent estimates suggest that more than half of public spending on higher education in Latin America goes to the richest 20 per cent of the population, while less than two per cent goes to the poorest 20 per cent (see Figure 2).

Advances in these three priority areas will undoubtedly require leadership and sustained effort by governments, educators and civil society alike. However, while they will not remedy all social ills, concrete actions such as those proposed will certainly go a long way toward improving Latin American schools. 🌐

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Maestro: agente central en el sistema educativo

Cesar Guadalupe

(English translation follows)

Buenos maestros tienen el poder de mejorar considerablemente la educación en Latinoamérica.

El maestro es probablemente el agente más importante en el proceso educativo en tanto es el que organiza de modo directo la experiencia de aprendizaje de los estudiantes. Sin embargo, las políticas educativas en general no se encuentran informadas por un cuerpo sólido de evidencia sobre los maestros y el impacto de sus prácticas profesionales sobre la experiencia educativa. La importancia de desarrollar esta agenda de investigación es indudable a fin de mejorar la calidad de la educación en América Latina.

A pesar de la tendencia en políticas públicas a representar la educación como si fuera un sistema de producción mecánica donde insumos generan resultados, una reflexión sencilla permite notar que la experiencia educativa es, más bien, un proceso de interacción social entre estudiantes y docentes donde la acción de estos últimos es de capital importancia. Un buen docente puede hacer que la experiencia educativa de sus estudiantes sea exitosa incluso en situaciones adversas. Un buen docente, puede conducir a sus estudiantes hacia el logro de aprendizajes fundamentales incluso con un mal currículo, o con una dotación limitada de recursos materiales ya que, a fin de cuentas, es su labor diaria la que marca la experiencia de los estudiantes. Del mismo modo, excelentes currículos, acompañados

de maravillosos libros de texto, incluso en aulas bien equipadas pueden ser completamente inútiles si el docente no hace uso de esos recursos.

Así, la acción de los docentes es de capital importancia y, sin embargo, es poca la evidencia sistemática que se tiene al respecto. Mejor información sobre los docentes y la docencia permitiría contar con una base clave de evidencia que favorecería la formulación de políticas en tanto consideren los atributos centrales de los actores y su práctica, así como el propio diálogo entre las políticas y los maestros. Observaciones sistemáticas como las publicadas en 2007 por Martin Carnoy y un equipo de investigación mediante las cuales se analiza porqué los estudiantes cubanos rinden mejor en el colegio que sus pares latinoamericanos, muestran que el desempeño docente es un factor clave para explicar que Cuba, a pesar de su pobreza, logra resultados académicos nada desdeñables. Sin embargo, investigaciones como ésta son en gran medida excepcionales ya que, en general, se realizan observaciones muy puntuales en casos aislados, o simplemente no se realizan.

Entender el desempeño de los maestros pasa por entender varios aspectos claves. En primer lugar, ¿quiénes son los maestros? Sería importante conocer la composición social del magisterio a efectos

de comprender quiénes aspiran a ser docentes, por qué, cómo perciben su profesión, cuáles son sus expectativas, anhelos y frustraciones, cuáles son los recursos materiales y simbólicos que pueden movilizar en su tarea. A fin de cuenta, todo esto es lo que el maestro lleva consigo a la sala de clase.


En segundo lugar, ¿qué hacen los maestros? Sería necesario saber qué pueden y qué no pueden hacer, conocer los límites y posibilidades de su competencia profesional a efectos de determinar en qué aspectos se puede confiar en su saber especializado y en qué áreas es necesario proveer de mecanismos de refuerzo o, en los casos que sea necesario, buscar una forma de reemplazarlos para que los estudiantes puedan contar con el servicio educativo al que tienen derecho.

En tercer lugar, ¿cuál es el arreglo institucional en el que el maestro se desempeña? Sería importante entender el tejido de relaciones sociales que le sugiere al maestro qué es lo legítimo y qué no (e.g. ¿cómo se percibe la corrupción?, ¿cuáles son los lugares de servicio “deseables”?), qué aspiraciones son más realistas que otras (e.g. la estabilidad laboral independiente del desempeño), cuáles son las cosas por las que deben rendir cuentas (e.g. por el número de libros de texto que recibieron y que llegan a fin de año en buen estado, o por el aprendizaje de sus alumnos), o cuáles son los recursos institucionales en los que puede contar para su tarea o para otros fines.

A fin de cuentas, es la conjunción de estos tres elementos lo que explica lo que el docente hace en las aulas y que, finalmente, configura la experiencia educativa de los estudiantes.

Sin embargo, la información sobre estos aspectos es muy limitada y asistemática. Por esta razón, ejercicios de evaluación de conocimientos o pruebas de suficiencia que carecen de un claro entronque con reflexiones y políticas mayores son de muy poca utilidad si lo que preocupa son los aprendizajes.

Los discursos políticos sobre el magisterio que subrayan su carácter de víctimas o de victimarios tienen, ambos, niveles de verdad y, sin embargo, son incapaces de producir una comprensión seria de la dinámica de la docencia y cómo ésta refuerza o debilita las experiencias educativas.

La formulación de políticas requiere superar estos estereotipos y elaborar, con evidencia sistemática, discursos robustos sobre el tema que quizás sea el más central de todos los que ocupan a la educación. Si la política educativa no entiende al docente y a la docencia, no podrá ser una herramienta para asegurar que los estudiantes puedan contar con los desempeños docentes a los que tienen derecho. 

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Elections

Colombian election candidate stresses education in platform

Colombian Green Party presidential candidate Antanas Mockus wants to bring education reform as a key item of his campaign. With the election runoff slated for June 20, he has told his supporters that “the history of Colombia will be written with pens, and not with blood” and promised a 15 per cent investment in education from the income of Colombian petroleum company Ecopetrol.

He has said that Colombia has allocated enormous amounts of resources to war, and so for once it is going to allocate an extraordinary amount of resources to peace.

“And not just peace in general,” he added, “but for education.”

The presidential hopeful is in a runoff with Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos, President Álvaro Uribe’s designated successor. In the first voting round, Santos received 47 per cent of the vote while Mockus pulled in 22 per cent.

Pollsters had initially expected Mockus to take in more of the vote. Although he said that his party didn’t do well compared to what the polls expected, he added that just making the runoff is a huge victory.

Mockus, a former head of the Universidad Nacional and former math professor, was previously elected twice as mayor of Bogotá. He has said that his administrations were “enlightened by academic concepts.” This is the second time he is running for president, after an unsuccessful attempt in 1998.

Teachers as primary agents of educational systems

Cesar Guadalupe

Good teachers hold the power to vastly improve education in Latin America.

Teachers are probably the most important agents in the educational process because they directly organize students' learning experiences. However, in general, education policies are not informed by a solid body of evidence on teachers and on the impact of their professional practices on the learning experience of students. Without a doubt, it is important to develop that investigative agenda in order to improve the quality of education in Latin America.

Despite the tendency in public policy to represent education as if it were a mechanical production system in which inputs generate results, simple reflection makes clear that the educational experience is rather a process of social interactions between students and teachers in which teachers' actions hold crucial importance. Good teachers can make their students' educational experiences successful, including under adverse conditions. Good teachers can help their students acquire fundamental learning even with poor curriculum and limited teaching materials because, after all, it is teachers' daily work that puts its mark on students' experiences. Likewise, excellent curricula accompanied by great textbooks and well-equipped classrooms can be completely useless if teachers do not make use of those resources.

Therefore, teachers' actions are extremely important, but there is little systematic evidence on the subject.

Gathering more information about teachers and the teaching profession would be key to formulate policies that take into account the main actors' attributes and practices as well as foster a much needed dialogue between policy-makers and teachers. The systematic observations of Martin Carnoy and an investigative team published in 2007 analyzing why Cuban students perform better in school than their Latin American peers demonstrated that teacher performance is a key factor in explaining why Cuba, despite its poverty, achieves significant academic results. However, investigations such as this one are exceptions. In general, observations are conducted very infrequently, in isolated cases, or are simply not done at all.

Teachers shape students' educational experiences.

Understanding teacher performance requires studying various key aspects. First, who are the people doing the teaching? It is important to know the social composition of the teaching profession to identify individuals that want to become teachers, understand their perception of their profession, determine their expectations, wishes and frustrations, and highlight the material

and symbolic resources that may motivate them in their work. After all, teachers arrive with this baggage when they start in the classroom.


Second, what makes them teachers? It is necessary to know who can and who cannot teach, to know the limits and possibilities of their professional skills to determine what aspects can be entrusted to their specialized knowledge and in what areas it is necessary to provide reinforcement mechanisms or, when necessary, to seek a way of replacing them so that students can count on the educational service to which they are entitled.

Third, what is the institutional framework in which teachers perform? It is important to understand the fabric of social relationships that suggests to teachers what is legitimate and what is not (e.g. how they perceive corruption, what "desirable" service locations are), which aspirations are more realistic than others (e.g. the independent employment stability of teaching), for what things they should be accountable (e.g. for the number of textbooks they receive and then return at the end of the year in good condition, or for their students' learning) and on what institutional resources they can rely for their work or for other purposes.

After all, it is the combination of these three things that explains what teachers do in their classrooms and that ultimately shapes students' educational experiences.

However, information on these aspects is very limited and unsystematic. For this reason, knowledge assessment exercises or aptitude tests that lack a definite connection with serious reflection and broader policies are not of much use with regard to learning.

Political discourses on the teaching profession that emphasize a victim or victimizer characterization both contain some truth, but they fail to generate serious understanding of the teaching dynamic and how it strengthens or weakens the educational experience.

Policy formulation requires that we move beyond those stereotypes and develop, with systematic evidence, a healthy discourse on the theme that could be the most important of all those concerning education. If education policy does not understand teachers and teaching, it will not ensure that students are offered the teacher performance level they are entitled to. 

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Bolivia: Descentralización y calidad de la educación

María Cristina Mejía

(English translation follows)

Las ambigüedades y superposición de competencias entre niveles de gobierno tienen efectos negativos para la educación.

La descentralización política que se inició en 1994 en Bolivia transfirió competencias en materia de educación al nivel municipal y contribuyó, juntamente con la reforma educativa, al desarrollo del sector. Los indicadores cuantitativos mejoraron notablemente, así Bolivia alcanzó una cobertura neta en el nivel primario del 97 por ciento y del 60 por ciento en el nivel secundario. Sin embargo, no se puede decir lo mismo respecto al avance en la calidad de la educación boliviana. Entre otros factores, las ambigüedades y superposición de competencias entre los diferentes niveles de gobierno siguen afectando día a día la calidad de la educación de manera dramática.

A pesar del proceso de reforma educativa que renovó los materiales educativos para los dos primeros ciclos de educación primaria y asignó personal técnico a cada municipio, la brecha entre la calidad de la educación pública y privada, y entre la urbana y rural, no ha cambiado substancialmente. La población pobre tanto urbana como rural asiste a las escuelas públicas, que en áreas rurales alejadas son particularmente débiles porque, además de las limitaciones estructurales, pocos maestros graduados aceptan trabajar en ellas y la provisión de insumos educativos es deficiente.

Además, las mejoras en el nivel primario han quedado truncas debido a

que la reforma del nivel secundario permanece a nivel de proyecto. Como resultado de este sistema, el bachiller que desee ingresar en la universidad debe tomar un curso pre-universitario que le ayude a mejorar su nivel de conocimientos. De los estudiantes que logran ingresar a las universidades, sólo alrededor del 20 por ciento se gradúan, lo cual muestra un 80 por ciento de fracaso académico al nivel universitario.

En estos días de cambio en Bolivia, en que las leyes, los decretos, las leyes cortas, las medidas y las resoluciones gubernamentales son procesados con inusual celeridad, la Ley de Autonomías constituye una esperanza, pero también un riesgo, para la educación de las próximas generaciones. La Ley de Autonomías podría ser la oportunidad para brindar una educación de calidad, si permite una gestión educativa a cargo de instituciones menos lejanas que el nivel central y da autoridad y poder de decisión a las autoridades locales y departamentales. Para garantizar a las futuras generaciones una educación de calidad, se requiere autoridades locales y departamentales que administren los sistemas de supervisión, información, formación inicial de maestros, seguimiento y evaluación, con adecuación a la realidad local y departamental, a su pluralidad, a su idiosincrasia y a sus planes de desarrollo, en el marco de las políticas y normas nacionales.

Cuadro 1
Competencias en educación según el proyecto de Ley Marco de Autonomías

Competencias para el Nivel Central del Estado (entre otras)	Competencias Nivel Departamental (todas)	Competencias para el Nivel Municipal (todas)	Competencias para las Autonomías Indígenas (todas)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diseñar las políticas del Sistema Educativo; • Elaborar normas para la gestión del Sistema Educativo; • Diseñar y aprobar el Currículo Base; • Ejercer tuición sobre los SEDUCAs; • Ejercer tuición sobre las universidades; • Controlar y regular el funcionamiento de las Escuelas de Formación de Maestros y de los Institutos Técnicos Tecnológicos y administrar sus recursos humanos; • Administrar y supervisar los recursos humanos y el presupuesto de servicios personales de educación en coordinación con los SEDUCAs; • Otorgar títulos profesionales universitarios y diplomas de bachiller así como homologar los títulos obtenidos en el exterior; • Regular y administrar el Programa Plurinacional de Becas; • Definir los lineamientos básicos para la elaboración de los materiales educativos; • Diseñar y definir políticas de seguimiento, medición, evaluación y acreditación de la calidad educativa del Sistema Educativo Plurinacional. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construir, renovar y mantener la infraestructura física y los servicios básicos destinados a las Escuelas Superiores de Formación de Maestros, SEDUCAs, Direcciones Distritales, Institutos Técnicos fiscales y otros; • Dotar, mantener y reponer el equipamiento, mobiliario, material e insumos para las anteriores; • Elaborar e implementar programas y proyectos para la niñez y adolescencia en temas educativos; • Garantizar la dotación de alimentación complementaria escolar. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construir, administrar y mantener la infraestructura física y los servicios básicos de las unidades educativas fiscales; • Dotar, mantener y reponer el equipamiento, mobiliario, materiales e insumos para las unidades educativas fiscales de su jurisdicción; • Dotar de alimentación complementaria incluyendo el desayuno escolar a los estudiantes de las unidades educativas fiscales de su jurisdicción; • Elaborar e implementar programas y proyectos para la niñez y adolescencia de su jurisdicción en temas educativos. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construir, administrar, mantener y renovar la infraestructura física y los servicios básicos de las unidades educativas fiscales, de su jurisdicción; • Dotar, mantener y reponer el equipamiento, mobiliario, materiales e insumos para las unidades educativas fiscales de su jurisdicción; • Dotar de alimentación complementaria incluyendo el desayuno escolar a los estudiantes de su jurisdicción; • Elaborar e implementar programas y proyectos para la niñez y adolescencia de su jurisdicción en temas educativos.

Fuente: Proyecto de Ley Marco de Autonomías. Sección I. Competencias en Educación.

Hasta ahora, el Ministerio de Educación ejerce su autoridad mediante nueve unidades desconcentradas que corresponden a los departamentos, los Servicios Departamentales de Educación (SEDUCAs). Los SEDUCAs tienen una serie de responsabilidades cotidianas en la administración escolar, sobre todo en cuanto al personal y a la información educativa departamental que es transmitida al nivel central para su tratamiento y difusión. Los maestros son pagados por el Ministerio de Educación y los niveles departamental y municipal no tienen mayor autoridad sobre ellos.

La participación de los Gobiernos Departamentales (antiguas Prefecturas) ha sido, hasta ahora, poco relevante debido a que la descentralización iniciada en 1994 incentivó principalmente la relación entre el nivel nacional y el municipal. Aunque la reforma educativa de 1994 transfirió varias competencias a las Prefecturas como la selección y nombramiento

del personal a nivel departamental y municipal, pero de hecho el Ministerio de Educación aún convoca y selecciona a todo el personal. Esto se debió, inicialmente, a la debilidad técnica de los Gobiernos Departamentales, pero también a la falta de decisión del Ministerio para delegar las competencias establecidas por ley. También, hay que mencionarlo, durante varios años las Prefecturas no hicieron esfuerzo por asumir las competencias que les estaban asignadas.

Las ambigüedades y superposición de competencias entre los niveles central, departamental y municipal están afectando día a día la eficiencia en la gestión local de la educación. Por ejemplo, a nivel municipal el director distrital, responsable de administrar las escuelas de su distrito, depende del Ministerio de Educación, y el Alcalde, responsable de suministrar la infraestructura y los insumos, es una autoridad electa por voto popular. Esta situación suele generar una falta

de coordinación debido a que ni el Gobierno Departamental ni el Alcalde tienen autoridad sobre el director distrital o cualquier otro funcionario del sector educación, lo cual puede reducir la provisión de insumos educativos a las escuelas, o su retraso, o resultar en un débil apoyo al ejercicio de funciones del director distrital, entre otros perjuicios que afectan la calidad de la educación. A nivel departamental también hay problemas, al punto de que actualmente en Santa Cruz existen dos Direcciones Departamentales de Educación, una que depende del Ministerio de Educación y la otra del Gobierno Departamental.

La Ley de Autonomías se convierte hoy en día en una esperanza para mejorar la calidad de la educación en Bolivia. Por el momento, el proyecto de Ley Marco de Autonomías, que se encuentra en proceso de revisión, propone para el nivel central del Estado prácticamente todas las competencias ejercidas hasta ahora. Pero seguramente la revisión de la misma a la luz de la necesidad urgente de mejorar el servicio educativo permitirá depurar la asignación de competencias transfiriendo, sobre todo, las que corresponden a la gestión educativa, a los niveles subnacionales. Estos últimos, hasta ahora, son simples proveedores de infraestructura e insumos. Millones de niños y niñas tendrán un mejor futuro si en este proceso se prioriza la calidad de la educación por encima del interés político. 🌐

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Bolivia: Decentralization and quality of education

María Cristina Mejía

Government ambiguity and overlap of responsibilities have a negative effect on education.

The process of political decentralization that started in Bolivia in 1994 transferred jurisdiction over education to the municipal level. This process, together with education reform, contributed to the development of the education sector. Bolivia's quantitative indicators showed a marked improvement, reaching net coverage rates of 97 per cent at the primary level and 60 per cent at the secondary level. However, the quality of Bolivian education did not advance at the same rate. Among other factors, the ambiguity and overlap of responsibilities among different levels of government dramatically affect the quality of education every day.

Despite the process of education reform that helped provide new educational supplies for the first two cycles of primary education and assigned technical staff to every municipality, the gaps between the quality of private versus public and rural versus urban education have not changed substantially. The poor, both urban and rural, attend public schools, which are particularly inadequate in remote rural areas because, aside from limitations in infrastructure, few trained teachers accept work there and the provision of education inputs is deficient.

In addition, improvements at the primary level have fallen short because secondary education reform remains no more than a project. Because of this system, secondary school graduates that want to attend

university must take a pre-university course that will help them improve their knowledge. Only 20 per cent of students admitted to university actually graduate, which reveals an academic failure rate of 80 per cent at the university level.

During this time of change in Bolivia, when government bills, decrees, short laws (*leyes cortas*), measures and resolutions are passed at unusual speed, the Law on Autonomy is a reason for hope—but also a risk—for the education of future generations. The Law on Autonomy could be an opportunity to provide quality education if it allows the education system to be managed by institutions less distant than the central government and gives enough authority and decision-making power to local and departmental authorities. In order to guarantee that future generations receive quality education, departmental and local authorities must be enfranchised and vested with legitimate authority to manage systems of supervision, information, initial teacher training, monitoring and evaluation; this would open space for addressing the education needs of a culturally and socially diverse population within the framework of national norms and policies.

Currently, the Ministry of Education exerts its administrative authority through nine Departmental Education Services (SEDUCAs in the Spanish acronym), which are sub-units under departmental au-

thority. SEDUCAs have a series of day-to-day responsibilities in the administration of education, especially those related to staffing and gathering information about the education system to be relayed to the central government for its analysis and dissemination. Teachers are paid by the Ministry of Education and the departmental and municipal levels have no authority over them.

To date, the role of departmental governments (formerly known as prefectures) in education has not been very relevant because the process of decentralization that started in 1994 favoured relationships between the national and municipal levels. Even though the education reform of 1994 transferred some responsibilities to the prefectures, such as hiring and designating staff at the municipal and departmental levels, in practice the selection process and hiring for positions is carried entirely by the Ministry of Education. Initially, this was due to the weak technical capacity on the part of the departmental governments, although the ministry has also demonstrated a lack of will to delegate responsibilities as established by law. It also must be mentioned that, for years, the prefectures made no effort to assume the responsibilities that had been assigned to them.

The ambiguity and overlap of responsibilities among the central, departmental and municipal levels continuously affect the efficiency of the local management of education.

Table 1


Jurisdiction over education according to bill for a Framework Law on Autonomy

Responsibilities at the central government level (among others)	Responsibilities at the departmental level (all)	Responsibilities at the municipal level (all)	Responsibilities at the indigenous autonomy level (all)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design policies for the education system; • Create norms for the management of the education system; • Design and approve the basic curriculum; • Oversee SEDUCAs; • Oversee universities; • Control and regulate the functioning of teacher training schools and of technical and technological institutes, as well as manage their human resources; • Manage and supervise the human resources and the budget of personal education services in co-ordination with SEDUCAs; • Issue professional university degrees and secondary school diplomas, and recognize degrees obtained abroad; • Regulate and manage the Plurinational Scholarship Program; • Define basic guidelines for the creation of educational materials; • Design and define policies to monitor, measure, evaluate and accredit the quality of education of the Plurinational Education System. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build, renovate and maintain physical infrastructure and basic services at SEDUCAs, district directorates, public technical institutes, schools for higher education in teacher training, and others; • Fund, maintain and replace equipment, furniture, materials and inputs for all of the above; • Create and implement programs and projects related to education for children and adolescents; • Guarantee funding for supplementary school meals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build, manage and maintain physical infrastructure and basic services at public school units; • Fund, maintain and replace equipment, furniture, materials and inputs for public school units under its jurisdiction; • Provide supplementary meals, including school breakfasts, for students in public school units under its jurisdiction; • Create and implement programs and projects related to education for children and adolescents under its jurisdiction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build, manage and maintain physical infrastructure and basic services at public school units under its jurisdiction; • Fund, maintain and replace equipments, furniture, materials and inputs for the public school units under its jurisdiction; • Provide supplementary meals, including school breakfasts, for students under its jurisdiction; • Create and implement programs and projects related to education for children and adolescents under its jurisdiction.

Source: Bill for a Framework Law on Autonomy. Section I. Jurisdiction over education.

For example, at the municipal level, the district director, who is responsible for managing the schools in his district, reports to the Ministry of Education, while the mayor, who is responsible for providing infrastructure and inputs, is an authority elected through popular vote. This situation usually leads to lack of co-ordination because neither the departmental government nor the mayor has any authority over the district director or over any other civil servant in the education sector; this can delay or limit the provision of inputs to school, or make support to the district director's work insufficient, among other negative consequences for the quality of education. Overlaps also exist at the departmental level: in Santa Cruz there are currently two departmental education directorates: one that reports to the Ministry of Education and one that reports to the departmental government.

The Law on Autonomy is emerging as a reason for hope in improving the quality of education in Bo-

livia. Right now, the bill for a Framework Law on Autonomy, which is under revision, proposes that the central government keep virtually all the responsibilities that it has had until now. However, keeping in mind the urgent need to improve education services, the bill's revision could allow for some fine-tuning in the transfer of responsibilities, especially those that concern the operational management of education, to sub-national authorities. To date, these authorities simply provide infrastructure and inputs. Millions of boys and girls will have a better future if, in this process, the quality of education is prioritized over political concerns. 

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Technology

Bridging the digital divide

Latin America has taken a jump start in bridging the digital divide in the past years by improving access to technology and the Internet for school children. Several countries in the region such as Argentina, Peru, Uruguay, and more recently Brazil, have implemented programs to deliver free laptops in elementary schools. This initiative began in Uruguay in 2007 with *Plan Ceibal* (Education Connect) that aimed to provide one laptop for every student in the country as well as offer training for teachers on how to use them. The goal was to reduce the gap between those that can access the digital world with the knowledge and opportunities it brings and those who could not. *Plan Ceibal* succeeded in providing more than 362,000 computers since its inception and its success spread the idea throughout the region.

Thus far in 2010, Argentina, Brazil and Peru have begun similar programs and made major investment and acquisitions of laptops to improve access to technology. In Peru, 590,000 laptops have been delivered to elementary school children, especially in poor rural areas. In Argentina, the government recently delivered the first 250,000 laptops for students of technical high schools, and the mayor of Buenos Aires announced his city will order 190,000 more for elementary school children. For its part, Brazil announced in April that it would buy 1.5 million laptops for elementary schools.

Redefining success in Aboriginal learning in Canada

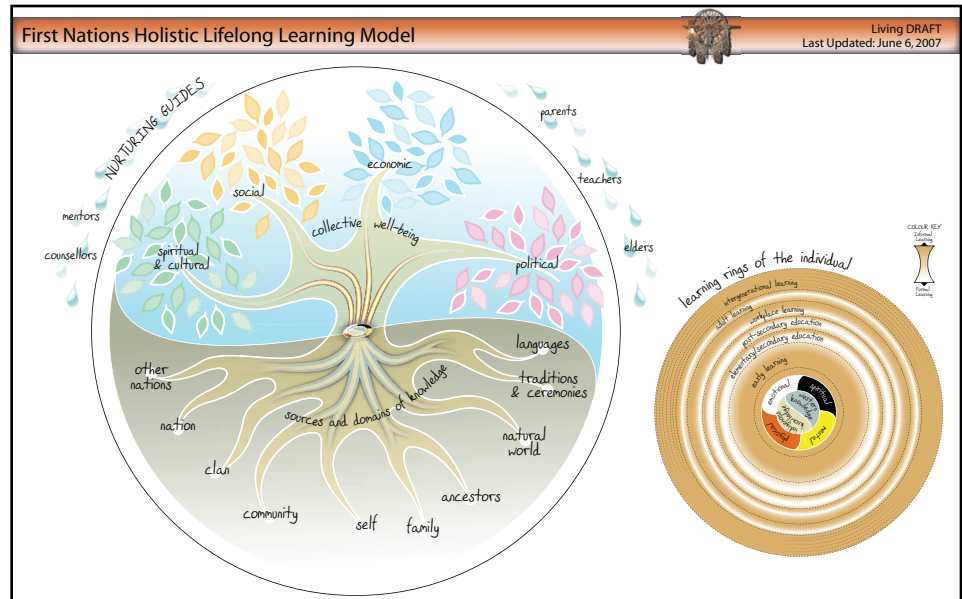
Jarrett Laughlin and Dilys Leman

(La traduction française suit)

Despite decades of policy and program development, the learning outcomes of Aboriginal Peoples remain low.

During the recent economic recession, Aboriginal Peoples in Canada —First Nations, Inuit and Métis— bore the brunt of job losses. According to a Statistics Canada study released May 13, 2010, Aboriginal unemployment rates rose from 10.4 per cent in 2008 to 13.9 per cent in 2009 compared with six per cent to just over eight per cent for non-Aboriginal Canadians. Policy-makers consider education and training as key to reducing persistent high rates of Aboriginal unemployment, poverty, incarceration and other socio-economic challenges, which as statistics affirm, far exceed those faced by non-Aboriginal Canadians. Yet despite decades of policy and program development, the learning outcomes of Aboriginal Peoples remain low, suggesting widespread disengagement from the formal education process.

Recognizing the need for informed, effective policy to engage Aboriginals as learners, the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) and its Aboriginal partners across Canada undertook an innovative approach to redefining Aboriginal learning success. The initiative began with the creation and development of three Holistic Lifelong Learning Models —one each for First Nations, Inuit and Métis— that demonstrate the many aspects of Aboriginal learning and help Canadians to understand the diverse aspirations and perspectives of Aboriginal Peoples.



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. *Redefining How Success is Measured in First Nations, Inuit and Métis Learning*. Ottawa: CCL, 2007.

Created in 2007, the learning models are being explored and applied by Aboriginal communities and organizations across Canada. This is a significant accomplishment as First Nations, Inuit and Métis encompass hundreds of communities with profoundly diverse cultures, languages and nation-based governance and treaty-related rights. Yet integral to each learning model is a shared core principle: the need to recognize Aboriginal cultures, traditions and values, while incorporating the Western knowledge and skills required to participate in Canadian society.

The learning models are a necessary part of a process to restore Aboriginal Peoples' learning heritage. Historical assimilation policies, including the removal of Aboriginal children from their families to at-

tend residential schools, disrupted Aboriginal systems of learning. The consequences were profoundly tragic and enduring, including the severance of critical social and cultural connections such as traditional leadership, ancestral languages and spiritual practices that for centuries had sustained Aboriginal communities. Government policies to address the mounting marginalization effects have been mostly piecemeal and ineffectual, largely for two reasons: they do not recognize that an Aboriginal perspective on learning fosters the necessary conditions for nurturing healthy, sustainable communities, and they fail to generate the complete evidence and knowledge needed to make effective policy and program decisions.

Current policy and measurement approaches tend to reflect a

mindset that equates learning with performance in formal education (such as completion of high school) or on standardized tests. Knowledge and experience acquired outside the classroom (in the home, community, workplace and on the land) is not usually factored in. Consequently, policy typically focuses on reducing the discrepancies in high-school completion rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth and often overlooks the many aspects of learning that are integral to Aboriginal communities. Policies and programs, therefore, rarely reflect the specific needs and aspirations of Aboriginal Peoples. Aboriginal disengagement is an inevitable outcome, contributing to, for example, low rates of high-school attainment among Aboriginal youth.

The three Holistic Lifelong Learning Models provide a broadened understanding of the many aspects that constitute First Nations, Inuit and Métis learning success. Each model uses a stylized graphic to map the dynamic relationships among learning purposes, processes and outcomes across the lifespan, from infancy to the senior adult years, affirms Aboriginal values and beliefs, and provides the basis for developing a comprehensive framework for measuring success.


The learning models highlight the many factors upon which Aboriginal learning success and quality of life depend. Learning from —and about— culture, language and tradition is considered an essential element, part of a highly social process that serves to nurture relationships in the family and throughout the community, a cornerstone for teaching and learning about cultural her-

itage. Learning at school is considered an integral component of the process, but just one of many within this holistic system. Experiences such as participating in social, cultural and recreational activities are also highly valued, as they can foster a desire to learn and can help with the acquisition of new skills. Importantly, the learning models demonstrate how the relationship between learning and community well-being throughout life is regenerative.

CCL has used the learning models to develop the Holistic Lifelong Learning Measurement Framework, an innovative, first-of-its-kind measurement tool that incorporates more than 30 statistical indicators reflecting the full range of learning opportunities for Aboriginal Peoples. The framework combines the use of conventional indicators, such as high-school attainment and prose literacy levels, with indicators that reflect the many types of learning experiences that take place outside the classroom: from ancestral language use and participation in cultural ceremonies and hunting, to distance learning and job-related training. Many of these indicators are overlooked by policy-makers as essential aspects of success in Aboriginal learning.

The learning models and measurement framework have the potential to shift the current focus of policy and program development from one that reacts to learning deficits alone, to one that recognizes, builds upon and celebrates strengths —the kind of critical building blocks that can contribute to future improvements. They are intended to be living documents that can be adapted to address local priorities. Com-

munities, researchers, educators, governments and others are exploring their use as tools for a variety of purposes including: community assessment, planning and development; curriculum development and teacher training; and renewal of cultural connections and intergenerational bonds.

However, successful use of the learning models and measurement framework requires the full partnership of First Nations, Inuit and Métis. To realize transformative change in Aboriginal learning, policy-makers will need to understand the value of holistic, lifelong learning and engage Aboriginal Peoples as full participants in fostering that change. 

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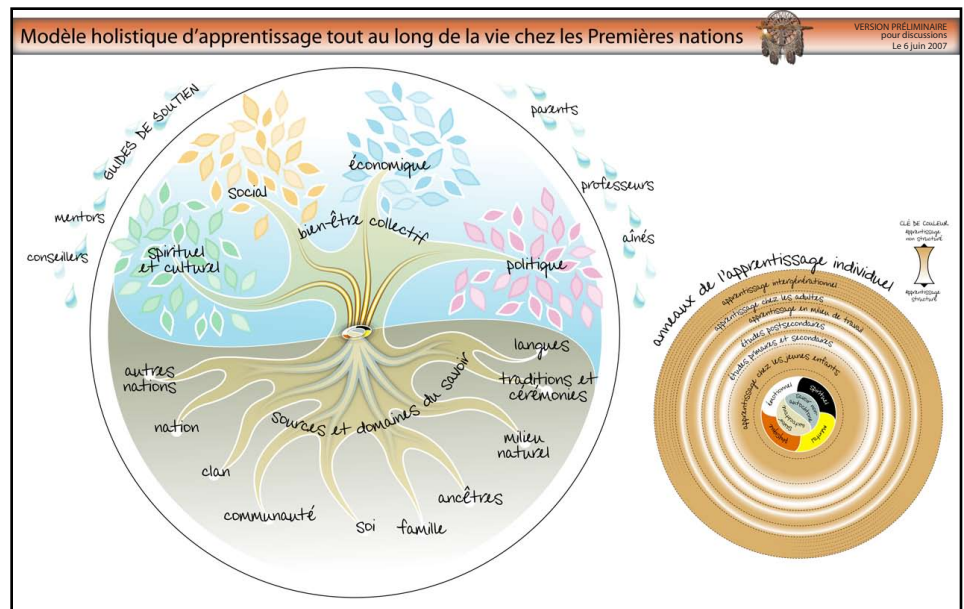
Redéfinir la réussite de l'apprentissage chez les Autochtones

Jarrett Laughlin et Dilys Leman

Le système d'éducation formel demeure inadéquat malgré des décennies d'efforts pour les y intégrer.

Les peuples autochtones du Canada —les Premières nations, les Inuits et les Métis— sont la tranche de la population ayant été la plus durement touchée par les pertes d'emplois durant la récente récession économique. D'après une étude de Statistique Canada parue le 13 mai dernier, le taux de chômage chez les Autochtones est passé de 10,4 pourcent en 2008 à 13,9 pourcent en 2009, tandis qu'il a enregistré une hausse moins marquée chez les Canadiens non autochtones, passant de six à un peu plus de huit pourcent durant la même période. Les responsables des politiques considèrent l'éducation et la formation comme des éléments essentiels pour réduire les taux élevés de chômage, de pauvreté et d'incarcération, ainsi que d'autres problèmes socio-économiques qui perdurent chez les Autochtones et qui, comme les statistiques le montrent, dépassent de loin ceux observés parmi les Canadiens non autochtones. Malgré des décennies d'élaboration de politiques et de programmes, les résultats d'apprentissage des Autochtones demeurent insuffisants, ce qui porte à croire qu'ils se soient désintéressés du processus d'apprentissage formel.

Reconnaissant la nécessité d'adopter des politiques éclairées et efficaces afin que les Autochtones deviennent des apprenants motivés, le Conseil canadien sur l'apprentissage (CCA) ainsi que ses partenaires autochtones de partout au Canada ont mis en œuvre une stratégie novatrice afin de redéfinir la réussite de l'apprentissage



Source: Conseil canadien sur l'apprentissage. *Redéfinir le mode d'évaluation de la réussite de l'apprentissage chez les Autochtones*. Ottawa: CCA, 2007.

chez les Autochtones. Premiers fruits de cette stratégie, les trois modèles holistiques d'apprentissage tout au long de la vie —un destiné aux Premières nations, l'autre aux Inuits et le dernier aux Métis— ont permis de mettre en évidence les nombreux aspects de l'apprentissage chez les Autochtones et ont aidé les Canadiens à comprendre les diverses aspirations et points de vue de ces peuples.

Créés en 2007, les modèles d'apprentissage sont actuellement envisagés et adoptés par les collectivités et les organisations autochtones partout au Canada. Il s'agit d'un pas important puisque les Premières nations, les Inuits et les Métis regroupent des centaines de collectivités extrêmement diversifiées, tant en ce qui concerne la culture et la langue que la gouvernance et les droits accordés en vertu de traités. Les modèles

d'apprentissages ont en commun un principe fondamental, à savoir la nécessité de reconnaître les cultures, les traditions et les valeurs des Autochtones tout en intégrant les connaissances et les compétences occidentales nécessaires pour participer à la société canadienne.

Les modèles d'apprentissage sont une composante essentielle d'un processus visant à ramener la longue tradition d'apprentissage des peuples autochtones. Les politiques historiques d'assimilation, y compris le retrait des enfants autochtones de leur famille et leur placement dans des pensionnats, ont perturbé les systèmes d'apprentissage des Autochtones. Les conséquences ont été désastreuses et persistantes, occasionnant notamment la rupture de liens sociaux et culturels importants comme le leadership traditionnel, les langues

ancestrales et les pratiques spirituelles qui, pour des siècles, avaient soutenu les collectivités autochtones. Les politiques gouvernementales visant à s'attaquer aux effets grandissants de la marginalisation ont été surtout ponctuelles et souvent inefficaces pour deux raisons principales : d'une part, elles ne reconnaissent pas le fait qu'un point de vue autochtone sur l'apprentissage permettra la mise en place des conditions nécessaires afin de développer des collectivités saines et viables et, d'autre part, elles ne réussissent pas à fournir tous les renseignements et toutes les connaissances nécessaires pour prendre des décisions judicieuses sur le plan des politiques et des programmes.

Souvent, les politiques et les méthodes d'évaluation de l'apprentissage chez les Autochtones sont sous-tendues par une philosophie selon laquelle l'apprentissage se mesure en fonction du nombre d'années de scolarité (comme l'obtention d'un diplôme d'études secondaires) et le rendement obtenu à des tests normalisés. Donc, la mesure de l'apprentissage ne rend habituellement pas compte des connaissances et de l'expérience acquises à l'extérieur de la salle de classe (à la maison, dans la collectivité, au travail ou sur les terres). Ainsi, les politiques ont généralement pour objectif de réduire l'écart entre les jeunes autochtones et non autochtones en ce qui concerne le taux d'obtention de diplôme d'études secondaires et font souvent fi des nombreux aspects de l'apprentissage faisant partie intégrante des collectivités autochtones. Les politiques et les programmes ne tiennent donc compte que très rarement des besoins et des aspirations de la population autochtone. Le désintéressement des

Autochtones est une conséquence inévitable, contribuant par exemple au faible taux d'obtention du diplôme d'études secondaires chez les jeunes.

Les trois modèles holistiques d'apprentissage tout au long de la vie permettent de mieux comprendre les divers aspects à la base de la réussite de l'apprentissage chez les Premières nations, les Inuits et les Métis. Chacun de ces modèles est illustré par un dessin stylisé qui traduit les processus, les résultats et les rapports dynamiques qui ont cours tout au long de la vie d'une personne, de la petite enfance jusqu'au troisième âge. Ils soulignent les valeurs et les convictions des Autochtones et offrent les assises nécessaires à l'établissement d'un cadre complet qui permettra de mesurer la réussite de l'apprentissage.

Les modèles d'apprentissage font ressortir les nombreux facteurs sur lesquels dépendent la réussite et la qualité de l'apprentissage chez les Autochtones. L'apprentissage à partir et à propos de la culture, de la langue et des traditions est considéré comme un aspect indispensable faisant partie d'un processus extrêmement social qui sert à cultiver des relations dans la famille et dans l'ensemble de la collectivité et est une pierre angulaire de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage sur le patrimoine culturel. L'apprentissage à l'école, considéré comme une composante intégrante du processus, constitue seulement l'un des nombreux éléments des modèles holistiques. Des expériences telles que celles acquises par la participation à des activités sociales, culturelles et récréatives sont très valorisées puisqu'elles stimulent le désir d'apprendre et peuvent contribuer à l'acquisition de nouvelles compétences. Il y a lieu de mentionner que les

modèles d'apprentissage permettent de mettre en évidence comment le lien existant entre l'apprentissage et le bien-être des collectivités est régénérateur tout au long de la vie.

Le CCA a élaboré le cadre d'évaluation holistique de l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie à partir des modèles d'apprentissage. Celui-ci est un outil d'évaluation novateur, premier en son genre, qui intègre plus de 30 indicateurs statistiques illustrant toute la gamme des occasions d'apprentissage qui se présentent aux Autochtones. Le cadre comporte des indicateurs classiques, comme l'obtention d'un diplôme d'études secondaires et le niveau d'alphabétisation, ainsi que des indicateurs qui tiennent compte de nombreux autres types d'expériences d'apprentissage se produisant à l'extérieur de la salle de classe, depuis l'utilisation de langues ancestrales, la participation à des cérémonies culturelles et à la chasse jusqu'à l'éducation à distance et la formation liée à l'emploi. Les responsables des politiques négligent plusieurs de ces indicateurs qui représentent pourtant des aspects essentiels à la réussite de l'apprentissage chez les Autochtones.

Les modèles d'apprentissage et le cadre d'évaluation, qui sont en quelque sorte les pierres d'assise des améliorations futures, ont le potentiel d'orienter les politiques et les programmes afin qu'ils tiennent compte des forces des apprenants et en tirent parti, plutôt que d'uniquement réagir aux lacunes en matière d'apprentissage. Ces documents sont évolutifs et peuvent être adaptés afin de respecter les priorités locales. Les collectivités autochtones, les chercheurs, les éducateurs et les gouvernements, entre autres, étudient la possibilité de les utiliser comme des outils à diverses

fins : évaluation, planification et développement communautaires; élaboration de programmes d'enseignement et formation des enseignants; et renouvellement des liens culturels et intergénérationnels.

Toutefois, l'utilisation efficace des modèles d'apprentissage et du cadre d'évaluation passe par l'entière collaboration des Premières nations, des Inuits et des Métis. Pour transformer l'apprentissage chez les Autochtones, les responsables des politiques devront comprendre l'importance de l'apprentissage holistique tout au long de la vie et inclure les Autochtones à titre de participants à part entière à ce changement. 🌐

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Inserción laboral de jóvenes en Venezuela

Daniel Mogollón Muñoz

(English translation follows)

La asistencia a la educación secundaria para adquirir habilidades básicas es clave para aumentar las oportunidades de trabajo.

La sociedad venezolana deberá encarar grandes retos para salir de la pobreza, uno de ellos es masificar la educación media en el país y buscar que los jóvenes puedan ingresar al mercado laboral a los 18 ó 19 años de edad.

Superatec es una organización venezolana sin fines de lucro, cuya misión desde el 2002 es promover cambios en la vida de los jóvenes de escasos recursos económicos y en su entorno mediante la formación humana, tecnológica y la inserción laboral. Como parte del proyecto de investigación donde se intenta medir el impacto de esta organización, se ha obtenido a grandes rasgos información preocupante. De los datos del Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación, para el Municipio Libertador (Caracas), sólo el 13 por ciento de los centros educativos cuentan con ciclo diversificado (bachillerato) o formación técnica-media, ya sean públicos o privados.

Además, de los centros educativos que no poseen educación diversificada o técnica-media, el 60 por ciento son públicos y de los centros educativos con ciclo diversificado o técnica-media el 75 por ciento son privados. Las escuelas privadas son aquellas cuya administración se encuentra en manos privadas, donde los representantes cancelan una cuota de inscripción o una mensualidad, por lo tanto no necesariamente se refiere a escuelas

de altos costos de acceso.

Como resultado, aproximadamente sólo 12 por ciento de los jóvenes de Caracas logran acceder al ciclo diversificado y posteriormente a la educación superior, ya sea universitaria o técnica. ¿Qué sucede con el resto de los jóvenes? Además de no acceder a la educación superior, van al mercado de trabajo con una baja capacidad profesional. Efectivamente, la calidad de la educación en las escuelas privadas supera la de las públicas, lo que deriva en que el acceso a las universidades está predeterminado por la escuela de origen del estudiante. Esto nos lleva a la conclusión de que la mayoría de los jóvenes que no acceden al ciclo diversificado, y posteriormente a la universidad, y que se movilizan al mercado de trabajo, son los jóvenes de bajos niveles socioeconómicos. En el peor de los casos los jóvenes excluidos del sistema educativo cuando no pasan a formar parte del mercado laboral tienen una alta probabilidad de caer en la delincuencia, uno de los mayores problemas que actualmente padece el país.

Evidentemente existe un desequilibrio entre la oferta y la demanda en educación. No se evidencia que el desequilibrio sea en la demanda porque la data levantada a lo largo de los varios años no muestra una matrícula en disminución en función de la capacidad instalada de los centros educativos en atender



Foto: Superatec

Jóvenes estudiante del último año de bachillerato, recibiendo cursos de computación en el Centro Superatec de Antímamo (barrio popular de Caracas).

los jóvenes que van subiendo en los niveles.

En este sentido, se presenta una baja oferta de centros educativos, especialmente en las escuelas públicas. Esto indica claramente la necesidad de intervenir mediante políticas públicas que incentiven el aumento en la dotación de infraestructura, así como en la calidad educativa.

En fin, existe la dificultad en el acceso al sistema educativo por falta de recursos económicos de sus familias, la ubicación geográfica de sus hogares con respecto al lugar donde está la escuela o por falta de adaptación a la cultura escolar.


Existen diferentes respuestas a nivel gubernamental ante esta situación, entre ellas y la principal, las políticas y acciones desarrolladas por el Instituto Nacional de Capacitación y Educación Socialista que tiene entre sus funciones promover la inclusión socio-productiva de todas las personas, especialmente de aquellas en situación de pobreza

extrema y condiciones de especial vulnerabilidad o exclusión. Asimismo el gobierno central ha creado programas sociales como la “Misión Ribas” dirigida a jóvenes y adultos para su formación en el nivel de secundaria para egresar como bachilleres. Queda por estudiar el verdadero impacto de esta misión en cuanto a sus metas y población objetivo. Aun así, luego de semejantes iniciativas gubernamentales siguen existiendo problemas en el acceso a la educación superior y en la calidad técnica de los jóvenes que ingresan en el mercado laboral.

Una posible solución a este problema es descentralizar el sistema educativo, hasta el nivel municipal, otorgándole responsabilidades sobre la calidad de la educación a la sociedad civil organizada y a las autoridades locales. Se debe evitar el uso del sistema educativo como instrumento para el clientelismo político, definiendo los perfiles de competencias que respondan a la

realidad social, económica y cultural del país. Es en el aula donde se debería estimular la construcción del comportamiento social y del conocimiento académico-profesional y donde se fortalezca la autoestima en las relaciones sociales.

Bajo estas premisas, Superatec se presenta como una opción alternativa al sistema educativo para contribuir al fortalecimiento de las capacidades humanas y tecnológicas de jóvenes de comunidades pobres, cursantes del último año del ciclo de bachillerato brindándoles herramientas que los hacen más competitivos y preparados para su superación profesional y personal dentro del mercado laboral.

Superatec presenta el reto de la replicabilidad y escalabilidad para realmente impactar en la problemática social descrita. En sus años de vida ha logrado cambiar la vida de más de 5,000 jóvenes que han pasado por sus aulas. Actualmente, un estudio de medición de impacto se está realizando utilizando modelos econométricos. Resultados preliminares permiten concluir que, con programas de educación alternativos dirigidos a jóvenes de escasos recursos que están ingresando en el mercado laboral, Superatec está contribuyendo positivamente en la solución de sus problemas: superar la pobreza. 

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Youth entry into workforce in Venezuela

Daniel Mogollón Muñoz

Attendance in secondary education to acquire basic skills is key to increase employability.

Venezuelan society will have to face great challenges in order to rise from poverty; one of them relates to the need to increase attendance in secondary education and prepare youth to enter the workforce at 18 or 19 years of age.

Superatec is a Venezuelan non-profit organization that has sought to bring about change in the lives of poor youth and their environment since 2002 through training, technology and workforce entry. A research project measuring the impact of this organization uncovered some worrying information. According to statistics from the Ministry of Popular Power for Education for the Liberator Municipality (Caracas), only 13 per cent of secondary schools, whether public or private, offer diversified education (high school diploma or *bachillerato*) or vocational training.

Furthermore, 75 per cent of the schools that offer the *bachillerato* or vocational training are private whereas 60 per cent of those that do not are public. The private schools require students to pay a registration or monthly fee but this does not imply that they necessarily have high access costs.

As a result, only roughly 12 per cent of young people in Caracas attain their *bachillerato* and then go on to post-secondary education, be it university or technical

education. What happens to the rest of the youth? Having no post-secondary education, they enter the job market with few professional skills.

Given that the quality of education in private schools is superior to that in public schools, access to university is often predetermined by the school the student attended. This leads to the conclusion that the majority of young people who drop out before getting their *bachillerato* and move into the workforce are from poor socio-economic backgrounds. In the worst cases, when the young people excluded from the education system do not enter the workforce, they have a higher probability of falling into delinquency, one of the biggest current problems in the country.

University access is often determined by the school the student attended.

Evidently, there is inequality between the provision of and the demand for education. The data invalidates the hypothesis that inequality lies in the demand; indeed, statistics compiled over many years do not show a decline in the registration rate linked to

Reports

Poor countries not meeting education targets: UNESCO

The 2010 *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reports that many poor countries are not set to meet their Education for All (EFA) 2015 targets for education. The document says this reality is a product of a lack of education funding, due to the global economic crisis. One practice the report suggests is the creation of an international recovery plan that would involve an emergency pledging conference targeted for later in the year.

The document highlighted that Chile has some of the deepest and most persistent education inequalities in Latin America. It also states that in Guatemala, the average years of schooling range from 6.7 for Spanish speakers to 1.8 for speakers of Q'eqchi'. The report, released in February 2010, keeps track of the progression of goals set in Dakar 10 years ago.

The six goals of EFA include expanding early childhood care and education, providing free and compulsory primary education for all, promoting learning and life skills for youth and adults, increasing adult literacy, achieving gender parity and equality in education, and overall improving the quality of education in all aspects.



Photo: Superactec

Youth in the last year of the *bachillerato* attending computer classes in the Superactec Centre of Antímano (popular neighbourhood of Caracas).

the capacity of educational institutions to serve students moving into higher levels.

But there is a low supply of educational institutions, especially public schools. This clearly indicates the need for public policy intervention to increase spending on infrastructure, as well as the quality of education.

Infrastructure spending is needed to boost supply of education.

Finally, there exist difficulties in accessing the education system due to the families' lack of economic means, the geographic location of their homes as compared to that of the school, or failure to adapt to school culture.

There have been different governmental responses to this situation, the main ones being the policies and initiatives developed by the National Institute of Socialist Education and Training, which has among its functions the promotion of the productive inclusion in society of everyone, especially those in extreme poverty or in conditions of particular vulnerability or exclusion. As well, the central government has created social programs such as the *Misión Ribas* directed at training young people and adults so that they can graduate with their *bachillerato*. The real impact of this program in terms of meeting set goals and reaching its target population still needs to be studied. In spite of these government initiatives, there are continuing problems with access to higher education and with the skill level of young people who enter the

Rebuilding

IDB pledges to reform Haiti's education

The Inter-American Development Bank has pledged to reform Haiti's education. IDB President Luis Alberto Moreno vowed to provide up to US\$250 million and help raise the estimated US\$2 billion needed to implement a new education plan. Haitian President René Prével gave the IDB the mandate to develop a five-year education plan and help the country's National Education Commission and Ministry of Education reform Haiti's educational system. The plan is aimed at expanding tuition-free education services in a country where poorer families face significant barriers in access to education since the majority of schools are private. Under the IDB plan, schools will remain privately owned, but will be publicly funded. A central fund would be created to pay for salaries of teachers and administrators of schools that would participate in the program. The plan will also aim at improving facilities, training teachers and reforming the educational curriculum.

The IDB encourages other multilateral organizations and private donors to support Haiti's educational reform in order to raise the funds necessary to implement the plan. This education reform is likely to be among the first programs presented for funding to the World Bank-managed Haiti Multi-Donor Trust Fund and the Interim Haiti Reconstruction Commission.


workforce.

One possible solution is to devolve responsibility for education to the municipal level, granting responsibility for the quality of the education to civil society organizations and local authorities. There is a need to prevent the use of the education system as an instrument of political patronage, and to define profiles of competencies that respond to the social, economic and cultural reality of the country. It is in the classroom that social skills as much as academic and professional knowledge can be developed, in turn strengthening self-esteem in social relations.

Under these assumptions, Superatec provides an alternative option to the education system, in order to contribute to the strengthening of social and technical skills of young people from poor communities in the last year of their *bachillerato*, offering them the tools to succeed personally and professionally in the labour market.

Superatec works to make youth more competitive.

Superatec is faced with the challenge of creating a model that can be replicated and implemented on a large enough scale to have a real impact and solve social problems. In its years of existence it has changed the lives of more than 5,000 young peo-

ple that have passed through its classrooms. A study measuring Superatec's impact is now being conducted using econometric models. Preliminary results allow us to conclude that with alternative education programs directed at poor youth entering the labour market, Superatec is contributing positively to the country's efforts to overcome poverty. 

Daniel Mogollón Muñoz is a Professor of Public Policy and a Consultant in social responsibility, development and innovation. He is a founding partner of SustentaCorp, a consulting company working on models of sustainability.

Reports

Education pays off for Canada's aboriginal women: study

A study released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in April 2010 found that aboriginal women with higher education earned superior incomes than their non-aboriginal counterparts.

Aboriginal women with university degrees earned substantially more than non-aboriginals: those with bachelor's degrees earned \$2,471 more annually than non-aboriginals while those with master's degrees earned \$4,521 more. These figures suggest that income inequality among women with university degrees has been reduced.

However, there persists a significant income inequality between the general population of aboriginals and other Canadians. Indeed, according to this study, in 2006 aboriginals earned only 70 cents for every dollar earned by non-aboriginals.

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FOCAL's Fourth Seminar Series on Migration and Development

June 16, 2010 - Ottawa, Canada

FOCAL will host a seminar with Rosa Candia, the Diaspora Volunteering Program Co-ordinator at CUSO-VSO. She will discuss supporting the engagement of the LAC diaspora communities in the development effort of their homelands. The event will take place in the FOCAL Board Room at 1 Nicholas St., Suite 720 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. To RSVP or for more information, please send an e-mail to Fatima Gardaad at fgardaad@focal.ca before June 14.

Health conference: Challenges in education

June 17, 2010 - Ottawa, Canada

FOCAL will host a conference on challenges in education in Bolivia and Peru. Featured speakers will include Cesar Guadalupe, Senior Programme Specialist UNESCO-UIS; María Cristina Mejía, International Consultant, Former Education Minister of Bolivia; and Javier Luque, Education Specialist, World Bank. The event will take place in the FOCAL Board Room at 1 Nicholas St., Suite 720 from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Space is limited and reservations are on a first-serve basis. To RSVP or for more information, please send an e-mail to Fatima Gardaad at fgardaad@focal.ca before June 14.

New policy paper: Bolivian maternal and child health policies

Erika Silva and Ricardo Batista

Bolivian maternal and child mortality rates are alarming: they are the highest in Latin America and the Caribbean, after Haiti. The situation is even worse for some vulnerable populations. This paper dissects all three plans, evaluates their impact on women and children and highlights persisting inequalities affecting the indigenous population. Policy recommendations are put forward based on this diagnostic. To view the paper in English, please visit http://focal.ca/pdf/Silva_EN.pdf. To view the paper in Spanish, please visit http://focal.ca/pdf/Silva_ES.pdf.

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FOCALPoint is undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada provided through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).



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