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Education for All by 2015: will we make it?

Dominican Republic country case study

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Introduction

The World Education Forum held at Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000, affirmed education as a fundamental right, with free compulsory primary education of good quality as a long term target to be attained by 2015. Special mention was made to girls, disadvantaged groups and children in especially difficult circumstances as well as those belonging to ethnic minorities as target groups.

Six international commitments were established to meet these purposes:

- i) Expand and improve early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children,
- ii) Ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality,
- iii) Ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes,
- iv) Achieve 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults,
- v) Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieve gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality,
- vi) Improve all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Dominican Republic was one of the countries that first subscribed the commitments of Jomtien and prepared a national plan of implementation. The Plan, well known as *Plan Decenal*, followed previous national commitments for educational reform initiated by the end of the eighties (1988) through *Plan Educativo* an initiative promoted by the business sector and civil society organizations. Altogether, these organizations promoted informed dialogues on the educational situation in Dominican Republic and prepared the so called *Decálogo Educativo* with ten educational goals to be met by the country within a decade.

By the time of the World Education Forum in Dakar, Dominican Republic had already pushed forward a huge educational reform and implemented policies and programs which aimed at improving school coverage at pre-school and primary education levels; eradicate illiteracy and create training opportunities for young and adults. Moreover, the overall reform process also included curricular reform processes, teacher training programs and managerial policies to improve the effectiveness of the educational system. Almost ten years had elapsed and the country considered it was time for an evaluation. The result was the Strategic Plan for Educational Development in Dominican Republic. An assessment of outcomes of the Plan Decenal was carried out and new challenges were set forward for a revitalization of the reform processes initiated by the beginning of the nineties and revisited ten years later.

This paper examines the extent to which the goals set forward before and after the Forum at Dakar have been achieved in Dominican Republic from 2001 onwards. A critical appraisal of policies and programmes to improve and increase educational opportunities for marginalised children, youths and adults will also be intended, highlighting successful strategies to overcome social and educational barriers; examine the challenges for implementation and the impact of educational reforms attaining universal coverage at the primary level and improving the quality, equity and efficiency of education and educational performance.

The paper has been divided in six sections, Section one includes a general framework on the overall educational context in Latin America. Section two gives a diagnosis of the situation in Dominican Republic. Thirdly, there is an identification of key priorities to be tackled with in order to meet the EFA commitments and, finally in subsequent sections, an analysis is done of existing constraints for the achievement of these goals as well as policy conclusions and lessons learned from outcomes in the efforts of Dominican Republic to reach the EFA goals before their deadline in 2015.

The analysis is completely based on secondary data gathered for the preparation of the Dominican Republic Report Card 2006 (EDUCA/PREAL/Plan), reports prepared

by experts from PREAL's network in the country as well as reports and studies conducted by multilateral organizations such as The World Bank; the Inter-American Bank and bilateral cooperation agencies such as USAID, CIDA, private foundations and other donors.

The paper profits extensively from research and analysis carried out in the framework of PREAL's activities with Dominican Republic partners and from the special contributions of EDUCA's team in charge of the preparation of the most recent Report Card on Dominican Republic's educational progress.

Papers prepared by Oscar Amargos and Francisco Polanco, both from PREAL's network were also valuable inputs as much as the information gathered by the PREAL/Aprendo team in charge of identifying policy options to minimize school abandonment for child labour. Information and analysis prepared for regional and national report cards as well as progress reports on PREAL's activities were also extremely valuable to contextualize the analysis. The authors thank the comments to previous drafts to program and team coordinators from PREAL as well as those that came from members of the task forces in Dominican Republic.

Section I

1. Dominican Republic in the Latin American educational context

Despite impressive efforts to reform, most schools in Latin America still fail to provide children—and particularly poor children—with the skills they need for economic and personal success and active citizenship. True, the percentage of children entering and completing primary and secondary education has risen faster in Latin America than in any other part of the world over the past decade and public spending on education has increased significantly. However, more than a third of young people in most countries never enrol in, much less complete, secondary education. And the region has made almost no progress in improving learning and in reducing inequality in its schools. Among the major shortcomings:

1.1. Quantity

Most governments have had great success in getting more children in school. Enrolment rates have risen steadily at all levels since at least 1980. Pre-school rates are above the world average, and most countries are close to getting every child (except the poorest and most isolated) to enter primary school. However, preschool and secondary enrolment rates in most countries are still below those of countries with similar levels of income. Forty percent of children still do not enrol in pre-school; 35% do not enrol in secondary school. Primary repetition rates remain almost double compared to the world average and nearly 1 in 10 children in the region does not complete primary school.

1.2. Quality

Latin America hardly participates in international testing and, when this happens, countries scores near the bottom on every global test of student achievement. In the 2003 International Student Assessment Program exam (PISA), roughly half of the 15-year-olds in the three participating Latin American countries (Brazil, Mexico, and Uruguay) had serious difficulties in using reading to extend their knowledge and skills. A majority (three-fourths in Brazil, two-thirds in Mexico, and nearly half in Uruguay) could not consistently apply basic mathematical skills to explore and understand an everyday situation. By contrast, only about 20% of students in OECD countries

showed similar deficiencies. Students in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Peru performed just as poorly in an earlier PISA exam. Only the top 25% of Chilean eighth-graders scored at the average level for countries with similar levels of development. Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and scores on national achievement tests are similarly disturbing, show little sign of improvement.

1.3. Equity

Although a greater percentage of the poor are starting primary school than ever before, poor families routinely score much lower on tests and leave school sooner than those from better-off families. With the exception of Jamaica, the wealthiest fifth of 21-30 year-olds get five to seven more years of schooling than the poorest fifth. In most countries, the gap has either remained the same or gotten worse. Indigenous and Afro-Latin children are also at a disadvantage. They are less likely than their peers to complete primary school or to enrol in secondary school and tend to score below their white peers on achievement tests. However, racial/ethnic gaps, at least in terms of literacy and primary enrolment, do seem to be lessening.

The good news is that most countries, among them Dominican Republic, have embarked on reforms to make schools better. Leaders from business, politics, churches, the media, and civil society have begun to call for better schools.

Bad news is that, despite the efforts, there continues to be weaknesses in the Dominican educational system and the goals to be achieved are yet far to be met. At least three urgent priorities are needed to comply with the Dakar commitments: i) reach universal primary completion; ii) improve learning, and iii) expand secondary education and educational opportunities for young and adults.

Section II

2. Education for All in Dominican Republic: Moving Forward

2.1. The policy environment

Dominican Republic has experienced a strong economic growth and improvement of quality of life through the 1990's with a slow down period through the early 2000. Progress in public sector reforms has had impact on the governance and the management of the education sector and, since the early 1990's; there has been a constant effort to

improve education. Also, a strong commitment from the central government, civil society and local governments towards the design and implementation of educational policies mainly focused on improving equity, quality and the efficiency of the educational system.

With a total population of 8.7 million inhabitants, Dominican Republic ranks within a group of low income countries with relatively low educational levels (UNDP:2003). With a low GDP per capita its economy depends heavily upon remittances from nationals who have migrated and work abroad, particularly in the USA.

According to UNDP's national report on human development (2005) the country occupies place 98 among 177 countries included in the Human Development Index for 2002 while reports on poverty prepared by the World Bank (2006) indicate that 42% of the Dominican population live under poverty conditions, 16% living under extreme poverty. This means that their life expectancy is shorter, they are excluded from basic benefits, and they have not learned to read and write or have very low levels of education. Many of these families often need to use their own family's labour force to ensure their subsistence.

Since the early nineties Dominican Republic has been developing policies to overcome poverty and raise educational levels and has had notable improvements in improving access to primary education, gross and net enrolment rates. Literacy rates are lower now than in the past both among young and adults with no or few years of schooling.

With strong civil society and business organizations, past and present governments have had strong commitments towards the improvement of the educational system and have been highly committed to comply with international goals such as the ones settled in Jomtien and Dakar (Comisión de Educación. Un pacto por la patria y el futuro de la educación dominicana: 1994).

Table 1			
Dominican Republic: Statistical Facts	1996	2000	2004
Population, total	7,788,444.00	8,264,912.00	8,767,870.00
Population growth (annual %)	1.5	1.48	1.46
GDP per capita (constant 2000 US\$)	1,869.27	2,392.31	2,440.57
Public education expenditure as % of GDP	1.93	2.3	1.14
Gross enrollment rate (%), primary, total	93.89	117.79	111.96
Gross enrollment rate (%), secondary, total	50.35	58.43	68.4
Literacy rate, adult total (% of people 15+)	87
Labor force with primary education (% of total)	37.3	38.3	..
Labor force with secondary education (% of total)	15.1	18.6	..
Literacy rate, youth (% aged 15-24), total	94.22
Workers' remittances and compensation of employees, received (US\$)		1.8 billion	2.5 billion

Source: World Bank Database (2007)

In 1993, the Plan Decenal was presented as the major reform to the educational system since 1953¹. The Plan gathered the most relevant social actors and generated a national debate on different approaches to improve education. Main concerns dealt with: i) increasing school access and improve learning for all children. ii) improve the quality of education, iii) improve teachers' status. iv) improve the effectiveness of the Secretaría de Educacion (*Ministry of Education*) and its decentralised organisations, v) engage in a participative and organized involvement of overall society in the educational process, vi) improve the use of public expenditures assigned by the government for education and look for non traditional sources to improve educational investments (Amargos, O: 2006).

This democratic exercise on policy development and policy planning led to the approval, at the Congress, of a new General Law of Education, launched in 1997. This normative framework established standards and expected outcomes of the educational process and enabled the decentralization of administrative responsibilities at national, sub-national and local levels and also enabled community, public and private sector involvement.

Almost a decade elapsed since the Plan Decenal had been launched when an evaluation on outcomes gave way to a revitalized strategy of educational changes for the period 2003-2012 which now focused on improving educational quality and outcomes as a key asset for sustainable development..

¹ The General Education Law has been implemented since 1997, and the previous one dated from 1953.

This plan, known as the *Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo de la Educación Dominicana* (*Strategic Plan for Dominican Republic Educational Development*) presented five priorities: i) *equity and democracy* (by means of promoting early childhood care and universal access to primary education, improve the quality of secondary school and link it to social demands, decrease illiteracy rates and increase the opportunities for lifelong learning for youngsters and adults) ii) *quality of education* (focused on improving learning skills and competences related to the individuals and societal requirements), iii) *teaching quality* (focused on teacher training and improvement of their working conditions), iv) *decentralization* (by engaging the participation and active involvement of all relevant actors and strengthening structures designed on the previous plan), v) *finance* (need to increase the economic resources invested by the government and society to achieve this plan) (Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo de la Educación Dominicana 2003-2012: 2003: 2 vols.).

Impact of these policies on access, retention, and learning outcomes, since 2002 will be summarized in the next sections.

Section III

3. Leading the educational system toward the goals

3.1. Early childhood care and education

The school system in Dominican Republic is divided in three levels: the Initial Level (Preschool) covers children up to 6 years of age; Basic (Primary) Level begins at 6 and lasts 8 years (6 to 13 years old) and the Middle Level (Secondary education) includes youngsters from 14 to 17 years of age and lasts 4 years. According to the *Ley General de Educación* (*General Law of Education*) pre School education in its last year is mandatory and begins at the age of five.

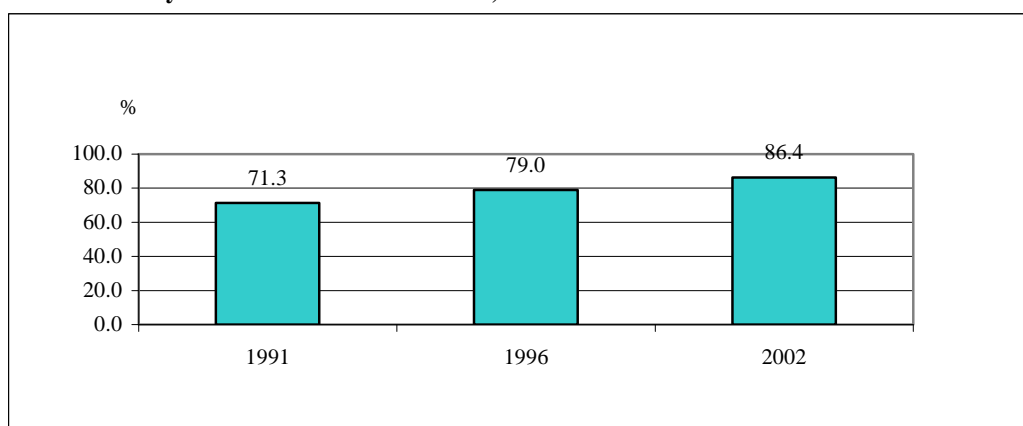
To achieve this goal, the government has promoted the creation and implementation of “*Jardines de Infancia*” throughout the country, bringing this level up as a public good together with primary education. As a consequence of this, preschool education (initial level) has grown almost a 40% in the last decade compared to 1991 when only a

16.2% of the children were enrolled in this level. Although progress has been made, enrolments are still low compared to the Latin American below the 60% average for 2002, with a gross enrolment rate of 34% for the same year (EdStats - World Bank, 2007).

3.2. *Increased Access to Primary Education: meeting the goals*

Increased access to primary education has been the main achievement of the EFA goals in Dominican Republic. A major improvement has been done since the implementation of the Plan Decenal in 1991 when 71.3% of children among 6 and 17 years of age were attending school compared to 86.4% in 2002 (Fig. 1).

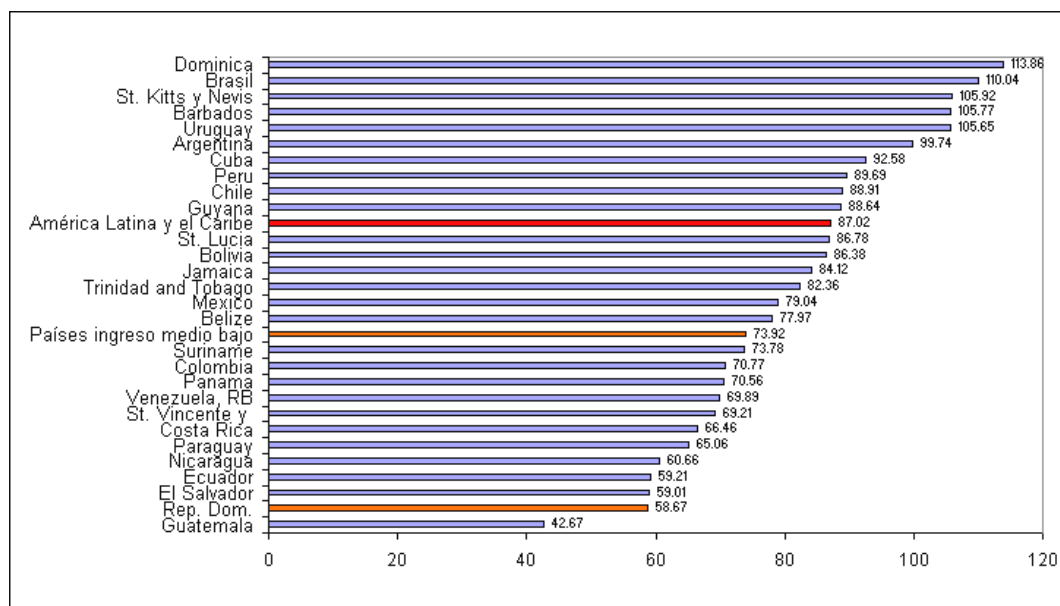
Fig. 1: Net Primary Education Enrollment 1991, 1996 and 2002.



Source: Pasando Balance. Informe de Progreso Educativo. República Dominicana 2006. PREAL; Educa, Plan Educativo 2006

At the secondary level, Dominican Republic is far behind other countries. According to data from the World Bank, the average gross enrolment rate for Latin America and the Caribbean was 87.2%, Dominican Republic only reached 58.7%. (Fig. 2). Data from the Plan Estratégico de la Educación Dominicana (2006) establishes a net enrolment rate of 27.6% and a gross enrolment rate of 53.3%.

Fig. 2: Gross Enrolment Secondary Education, 2002.

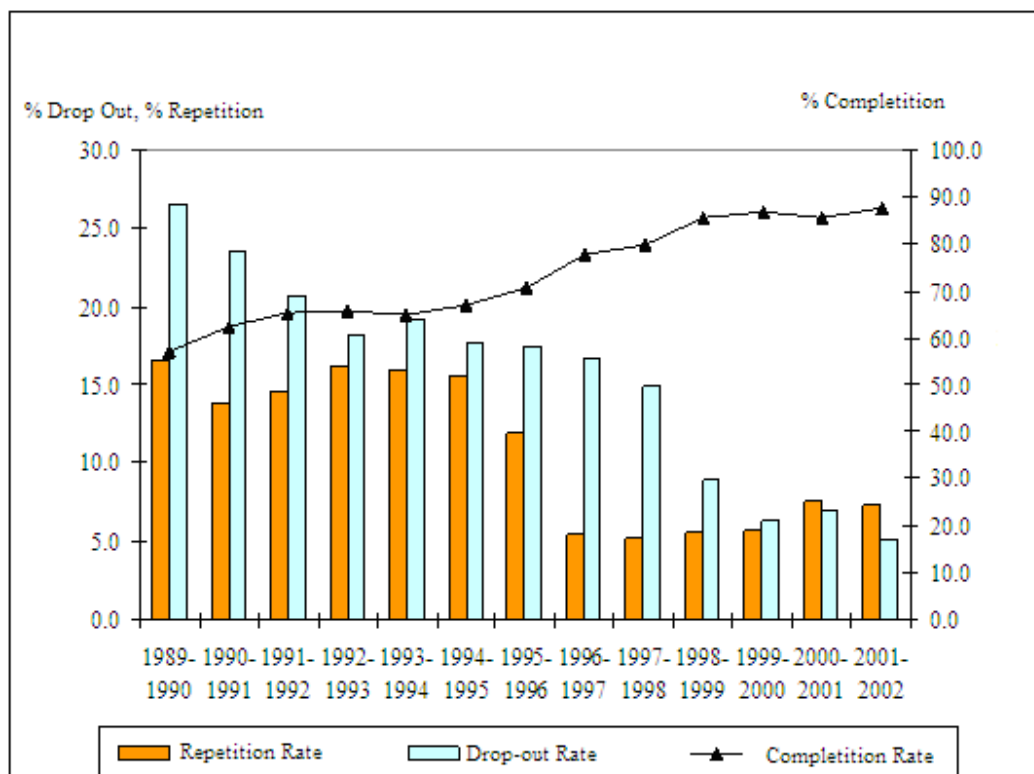


Source: World Bank, 2006. EDSTATS in <http://devdata.worldbank.org/edstats/cd5.asp> in Pasando Balance. Informe de Progreso Educativo. República Dominicana 2006. PREAL; Educa, Plan Educativo 2006, pp.10

Only 40% of students in the primary level continue to secondary education and there is still a high percentage of youngsters (46.7%) over the expected age in this level in spite of improvements in the system's efficiency. Progress is evidenced in the increased capacity of schools to graduate children on the expected time. For 2001, 87 of each 100 students from the primary level were promoted, near 35% more than the promoted on 1990, and the percentage of children that repeated levels had decreased almost a 50% (Fig. 3).

Universal primary completion has not been reached. Primary gross completion rates are lower than 80% in Dominican Republic. Repetition is high and, by 2002, 20 in every 100 students from first grade, which ideally should be aged 6 years old, were 9 years or older. In fourth grade at the secondary level, 28% of students were over 21 years old, even though the statutory age is 17. It has been estimated that there are near 240,000 that are enrolled at the primary level that according to their ages should be on higher grades.

Fig. 3: Evolution of internal efficiency at the public primary level 1989 – 2002.



Source: Pasando Balance. Informe de Progreso Educativo. República Dominicana, 2006 (pp.11) in Informe de Progreso Educativo: Republica Dominicana (Preal & Educa, 2006) pp.11

Although improvements have been made on access, and there are almost no gender disparities, there are still a large number of children on primary school age outside the educational system. Child labour is a key issue on school dropouts and educational attainment in Dominican Republic

According to a National Poll on Child Labour for 2000, around 436.000 children and teenagers were working instead of studying. The legal age to start working is 14 years, but this is disregarded by some employers who hire children mainly on sectors such as: services, commerce, manufacturing, and agriculture, cattle activity as wage earners, paid apprentices, unpaid family helpers or self employed (PREAL/Aprendo:2006)

This situation has become extremely relevant for the government as these children,

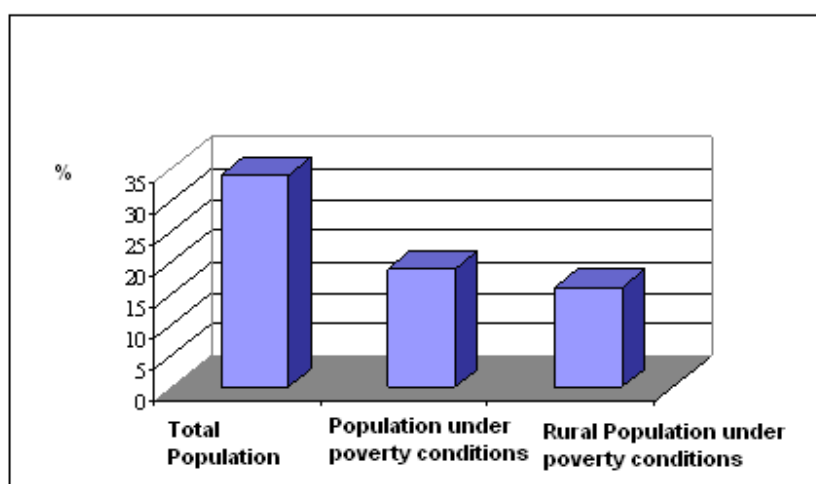
mainly from poorer families, will have less opportunity to improve their life conditions generating a vicious circle of poverty.

3.3. *Unequal chances for the rich and the poor*

Equity gaps continue to be a big social debt in Dominican Republic. Only 19% of the families living under poverty conditions can enrol their children between 3 and 5 years old at pre-school level in public schools while 34% of the wealthier groups can afford to pay private child care and pre school services (Fig.4)

The household survey for 1998 (Encuesta de Gastos e Ingresos de los Hogares) indicated that the coverage rate for children aged 3 to 5 in poor households was 15 points lower than the national coverage for initial education. Recent research establishes that the gap in years of schooling among poor and non poor sectors is more than 10 percentual points in some school levels where universal coverage has not been achieved (preschool and secondary education). In the primary level, though, net enrolment rated has increased significantly as seen in previous figures.

Fig.4 Net enrolment difference on early education according to poverty levels, 1998.



Note: Net enrolment as percentage of 3 to 5 years old population at early childhood education..

Source: Informe de Progreso Educativo: Republica Dominicana (Preal & Educa, 2006)

The Dominican Republic report card 2006, observes important differences in school efficiency according to the different geographical zones and provinces. Thus, although in La Romana and Santo Domingo children take 8.9 years in average to complete primary education in the poorer provinces and frontier provinces (San Juan, Bahoruco, Pedernales, Elias Piña) it takes children 12 years to complete primary education. The proportion of children completing primary education goes from 90% in those provinces with better performance (La Romana, Santiago Rodriguez, Puerto Plata, etc.) to 50% for most of those provinces in the frontier with poorer performance in social, economic and educational indicators (Table 2).

Table 2. Internal Efficiency indicators for primary education for administrative province, 2001

Province	Years to complete Primary level	Graduated Rate	Rate of Students that finished first cycle in 4 years	Rate of Students that finished second cycle in 8 years
La Romana	8.9	91.4	77.0	60.4
Santo Domingo	8.9	88.5	82.6	70.1
Santiago Rodríguez	9.0	90.1	70.8	60.1
Puerto Plata	9.0	87.3	77.9	69.2
Distrito Nacional	9.1	87.1	79.8	69.2
San Pedro de Macorís	9.2	85.0	85.8	72.0
San Cristóbal	9.2	86.2	77.3	63.1
Duarte	9.3	86.0	85.8	67.6
María Trinidad Sánchez	9.5	83.0	68.7	56.5
Monte Cristi	9.6	82.5	82.3	64.5
Salcedo	9.8	79.9	70.7	57.4
Españillat	9.8	81.4	73.6	55.9
Sánchez Ramírez	9.9	77.6	67.0	50.7
Samaná	10.0	83.9	62.1	43.3
Dajabón	10.3	76.3	71.0	53.4
Santiago	10.5	73.7	74.5	51.6
Hato Mayor	10.6	69.8	56.0	40.0
Independencia	10.7	67.2	54.2	38.5
Monseñor Nouel	10.7	72.1	62.6	42.7
Monte Plata	10.9	73.7	77.4	52.5
La Altagracia	11.1	66.2	69.6	46.1
Azua	11.2	66.3	64.0	44.6
La Vega	11.3	67.0	66.5	43.7

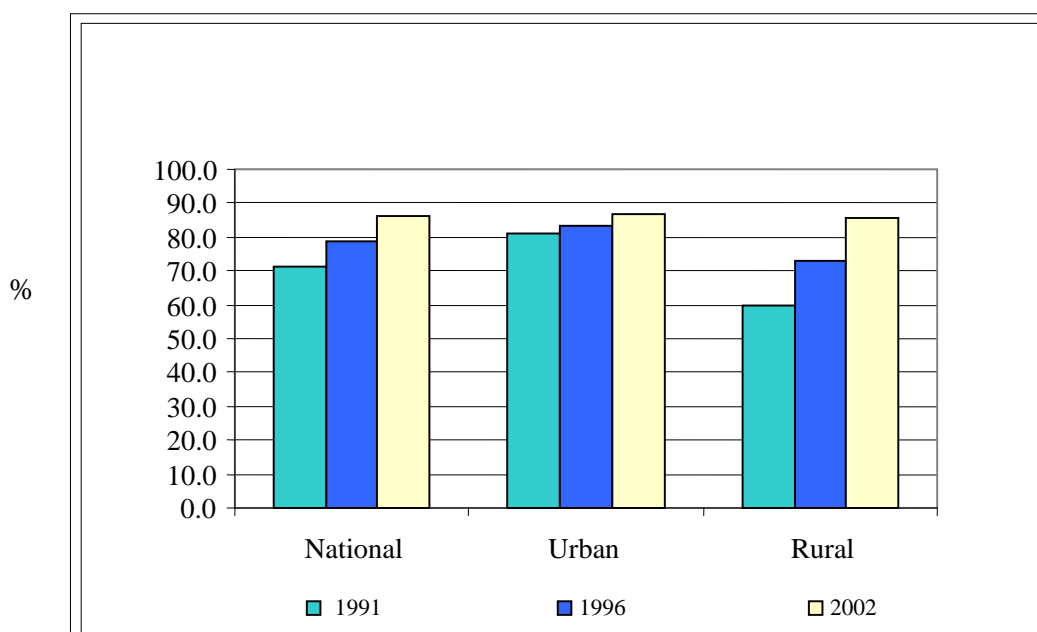
Valverde	11.4	69.8	64.7	40.3
San José de Ocoa	11.6	66.1	50.5	33.5
Elías Piña	12.4	60.9	45.2	28.2
Peravia	12.9	58.0	43.8	25.7
El Seybo	13.2	57.7	51.8	30.5
San Juan	13.2	54.7	53.1	31.2
Bahoruco	13.2	56.0	40.1	22.2
Barahona	13.6	53.5	47.6	24.4
Pedernales	13.6	52.7	49.0	25.6
National	9.9	78.7	71.6	54.6

Source: Informe de Progreso Educativo: Republica Dominicana (Preal & Educa, 2006)

In the same source, estimations for 2003 considering the range of 15 to 24 of age, indicate that 52 out of 100 poor had not completed primary education while 70% of non poor had achieved primary completion rates. Boys and girls from provinces in the frontier are in clear disadvantage in almost all educational indicators.

Urban/rural disparities have been diminishing in primary education coverage. While by 1990 urban educational coverage was 20% higher than that of the rural areas by 2002 both areas were almost equal in terms of access to schools and education. (Fig.5). By the same year, the percentage of people aged 15 to 19 years old who declared to “read easily” was almost the same in urban and rural areas. Despite this, educational indicators also show a negative outcome for the poorer provinces and, thus, confirm the need to invest in primary and initial education on these areas (Pasando Balance. Informe de Progreso Educativo 2006, República Dominicana: Op.cit).

Fig.5: Evolution of Net enrolment for Primary Education according to Urban and Rural Zones 1991, 1996 and 2002.



Source: Endesa. 1991,1996 y 2002 in Informe de Progreso Educativo 2006. Pasando Balance. Op. cit. pp.12

3.4. Education for Active Life: training and education for adults

Education for Active Life is the concept Dominican Republic uses to identify those programs which aim to provide, youngsters and adults, with the skills and competences needed to participate in the labor market and in society as a whole. It includes *Secondary General Education; Technical Education; Adult Education and Vocational Training for the Labor Market*. Potential demand includes youngsters among 14 and 17 years old; illiterate people either young or adult; young and adult people who have not completed schooling and young and adult people who have not completed secondary education and want to raise their educational level.

Near 2.5 million people, out of a population of 8.6 million are estimated to be in need of Adult Basic Education (among illiterates, uncompleted basic education; technical training and acquisition of basic skills). 50% of the potential demand for technical and professional education is said to be covered in the country (Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo de la Educación Dominicana 2003-2012, vol.1. pp.39). This percentage is far below the average for Latin America and the Caribbean.

3.5. Civil society and businessmen involvement

A particular feature of Dominican Republic educational reforms has been the way in which social actors have committed their participation in policy design and implementation. The Plan Decenal and the Foro Social de Santo Domingo, a meeting pre-Dakar (2000), counted upon the active involvement of businessmen and business foundations throughout the country. EDUCA, a private foundation devoted to promote quality schooling and equity in education was founded as the result of businessmen involvement in the formulation of the Decálogo de la Educacion and Plan Decenal. Falconbridge, an interesting model of school patronage and corporative responsibility was also born in this period.

Since its foundation EDUCA has been involved in promoting public consciousness on the importance of basic education for economic, social and political development through various means and strategies. A huge campaign was launched by 1990 to draw public opinion attention towards educational problems in the country. A similar campaign was replicated by 1993. On parallel bases, EDUCA also organizes annual conferences (APRENDO), back to school campaigns and dissemination of international commitments such as the ones of the Educational Forum in Dakar (EDUCA:2005).

BOX 1

EDUCA's work in support of educational reform since 1993

- Implementation of the Plan Decenal
- Support to schools in poor areas
- Preparation and distribution of teaching materials and books
- Training courses of school directors
- Teacher training
- School patronage
- Implementation of administrative and information system.
- Participation in Jomtien and Dakar meeting with institutional resources
- Participation in the preparation of the Plan Decenal (90 and 92)

Source: EDUCA:2005

Recently, the Presidency created the Foro Presidencial para la Excelencia de la Educacion Dominicana (*Presidential Forum for the Excellence of Education*) and, made a public call to support the government in the revitalization of education and

educational reform through better policy and policy making (La escuela no puede sola: 2005). This forum was thought of as a means to promote the participation of all national actors in the improvement of the educational system. Leadership involves the Secretaría de Estado de Educación Superior, Ciencia y Tecnología, Instituto Nacional de Formación Técnica y Profesional y la Secretaría de Estado de Educación. School representatives, business sector and parents organizations among other social actors are organized in thematic working groups. Priority themes for these groups are the: i) quality of education; ii) modernization of the educational system; iii) use of NTICs in schools; iii) educational investment; iii) curriculum and teacher training (Foro Presidencial por la Excelencia de la Educación Dominicana. Convocatoria: SEEC, INFOTEP, SEESCYT: 2005)

Section IV

4. Some key challenges and goals to be met

4.1. Reach universal primary completion

In order to meet the Dakar goals all children should complete primary school. Dominican Republic has higher rates of gross and net primary enrolment than peer countries in Central America, for example. Nonetheless, primary completion rates continue to be low and children who are not finishing basic education come basically from poor populations in urban and rural settings. As in other countries in the region, poverty has a direct impact on completion by discouraging enrolment, timely entrance and permanency in schools (World Bank: 2005).

Some policies and strategies which aim at overcoming these problems and address the needs of the poor at the primary level have been pushed forward successfully in Dominican Republic. As shown in the next table some point towards organizational issues, while other deal directly with teachers and teacher training, teaching methodologies for poor settings and strategies to adapt school and curricular organization to special needs such as child labour and rural migrations (Table 3).

Table 3. Plans and Programs linked with Education, Poverty and Child Labour.		
Plans and programs according to categories	Strategic Axis	Main Actors
I. Planes Sectoriales		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan Estratégico De Desarrollo de la Educación Dominicana, 2003- 2012 	Cinco ejes y diez lineamientos estratégicos: democratización y equidad, calidad de la educación; calidad del docente; descentralización y financiamiento.	Secretaría de Estado de Educación
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Los Objetivos del Milenio. Segundo Objetivo 	Asegurar que para el año 2015, toda la población en edad de 15 años haya completado una educación básica de calidad de 9 años.	Secretaría de Estado de Educación
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan Estratégico Nacional de Erradicación de las Peores Formas de Trabajo Infantil, 2006-2016. 	Erradicar las Peores Formas de Trabajo Infantil (PTFI) en el período 2005-2015. Contempla cinco propósitos: I. Conciencia y sensibilización sobre los derechos de los niños, niñas y adolescentes (NNA); II. Marco legal y sectorial pertinente y aplicación; III. Información confiable y oportuna sobre PFTI; IV. NNA retirados de las peores formas de trabajo infantil; V. Protección y acceso a programas de capacitación técnica de adolescentes.	Secretaría de Estado de Trabajo y el Comité Directivo Nacional de Lucha Contra el Trabajo Infantil.
II. Programas Educativos		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programa para el Fortalecimiento de la Educación Inicial 	Fortalecer la calidad en el grado pre-primario y ampliar la cobertura de acceso de la población de niños y niñas de cinco años, así como apoyar el desarrollo de la población infantil localizada en comunidades pobres.	Secretaría de Estado de Educación
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programa Multifase para la Equidad de la Educación Básica 	Mejorar la equidad de la Educación Básica, fortaleciendo la capacidad de gestión e implementación de programas focalizados para mejorar el logro educativo de los estudiantes de la zona rural y urbano-marginal.	Secretaría de Estado de Educación
III. Programas para la erradicación del trabajo infantil a través de la educación.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salas de Tarea y Preescolares 	Promover cambios en la percepción sobre el trabajo infantil y valor de la educación de los NNA y sus familias y mejorar los indicadores básicos de educación.	OIT/IPEC/SET y EDUCA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminando las Peores Formas de Trabajo Infantil a través de la Educación. 	Lograr que los niños, niñas y adolescentes que trabajan en la agricultura peligrosa, en el sector urbano informal peligroso y la explotación sexual comercial, participen en programas de transición y sean retenidos en el sistema formal de educación o en capacitación técnico-vocacional.	DevTech Systems Dominicana y socios con el apoyo de USDOL

Source: PREAL/Aprendo. Opciones Educativas para la Niñez Trabajadora. República Dominicana: 2006, pp.16

Programa Solidaridad ranks among the intersectorial programs. It was created to help overcome poverty reduction, facilitating access to education by giving the families an economic support and moving children from work to school. The program replicates similar strategies of conditioned transfers for educational purposes in Latin America and no evaluations were found, under initial or progress reports, on its impact upon the poorer families in Dominican Republic (BOX 2).

BOX 2
Programa Solidaridad.

Creado en el 2005, tiene por objeto “implementar la estrategia de salida de la pobreza, dando apoyo al mejoramiento del ingreso y a la inversión en capital humano de las familias en pobreza extrema, mediante el otorgamiento de transferencias condicionadas” (Art. 1 del Decreto). Forma parte de la Red de Protección Social del Gobierno, y tiene dos componentes fundamentales: *Comer es Primero* y el *Incentivo a la Asistencia Escolar* (ILAE). Este último procura contribuir a la disminución de la deserción escolar de los menores entre 6 y 16 años, por medio de una ayuda económica mensual a las familias beneficiarias que oscila entre US\$10 y US\$20 dependiendo del número de hijos inscritos en el nivel básico o primaria, destinada a la compra de útiles escolares, libros y uniformes. Según los informes de las autoridades encargadas de su implementación, el incentivo beneficia en 2006 a 31.826 hogares de 10 provincias del país. El programa cuenta con un mecanismo de identificación de las familias pobres (Sistema Único de Beneficiarios - SIUBEN). Sources: PREAL *Primero Aprendo. Opciones Educativas para la Niñez Trabajadora*, RD, 2006 <http://www.gabsocial.gov.do/solidaridad/beneficiarios.htm>.

On similar bases, the **Programa Multifase para la Equidad de la Educación Básica** (*Primary level Multi phase for equity Program*) is part of the Plan Strategic y was initiated by 2005 under the auspices of the Inter-American Bank (IDB). Its target population is children living under conditions of poverty and child labor. One of its components is a project called *Mejora de la equidad educativa en áreas urbano-marginal*, which aims at reducing educational disparities among middle sector urban schools and schools in poor urban settings with high rates of repetition and drop-outs. As such, it includes workshops to enhance learning outcomes for boys and girls with low educational attainment (1st to 4th grade) and workshops to accelerate learning processes. Last, but not least, the program *Fortalecimiento de la Educación para la Diversidad* aims at creating conditions to include all children in the schools and develops the concept of **escuelas inclusivas** (*Inclusive Schools*) to cope with the educational needs of different social and cultural groups. Fe y Alegría, in a public-private partnership, is one of the executing organizations of these plans (Box 3).

Programa de Reconocimiento al Mérito Estudiantil (Academic Merit Recognition Program, 1996) identified as another strategy used to increase the academic level and strengthen the educational system. It was first implemented at the public schools to then expand to private institutions. The objective was to create incentives for academic excellence, so that students could visualize a better future within the educational system and hence engage improvement in terms of quality and efficiency. Although it has been some time in operation, no evaluations of its impact have been found.

BOX 3
Escuelas Fe y Alegría

Fe y Alegría se define como un *Movimiento de Educación Popular Integral y Promoción Social* de carácter eclesial, cuya acción se dirige a sectores empobrecidos y excluidos, para potenciar su desarrollo personal y participación social. Surgió en 1955 en los barrios marginados de Caracas y actualmente tiene presencia en 17 países de América Latina y el Caribe. Desarrolla sus actividades en los ámbitos de la educación escolar formal en todos los niveles, incluyendo educación técnica; educación semipresencial y radiofónica; educación alternativa y no formal con programas y actividades de complemento a la educación formal para niños, niñas y jóvenes y adultos, tales como refuerzo escolar; atención a niños y adolescentes de la calle; programas de capacitación juvenil y formación para el trabajo dirigidos a los alumnos de los planteles escolares y a jóvenes que se encuentran fuera del sistema escolar.

En República Dominicana un total de 2.951 estaban matriculados en programa de Educación Técnica Media y más de 6.300 participaron del programa *Capacitación Laboral y Empleo*. En la actualidad Fe y Alegría administra en República Dominicana 30 centros educativos con una matrícula de más de 26 mil alumnos de Educación Inicial (Pre-primaria), Básica (Primaria) y Media (Secundaria) diseminados en 10 provincias. También atiende anualmente más de 6 mil participantes en cursos de capacitación laboral. Fuente: www.feyalegria.org

Espacios para Crecer (US Department of Labour - DevTech Systems), a local strategy aiming to take children involved on agricultural work back to school, leveling up those that are averaged improved the efficiency of the educational system. (Box 4). This is an ongoing project and, for the time being, there are no impact evaluations but the project, itself, is internally monitored.

BOX 4
Espacios para Crecer

Auspiciado por el Departamento de Trabajo de los Estados Unidos (USDOL) y ejecutado por DevTech Systems, este proyecto tiene como meta rescatar de las peores formas de trabajo infantil a 4.200 niños, niñas y adolescentes con edad entre 6 y 17 años. Los **Espacios para Crecer (EPC)** aplican un modelo de atención integral al menor de edad, procurando su reinserción en la escuela a través de su desarrollo personal, social y humano, con énfasis en la promoción de las capacidades afectivas, cognitivas, sociales y creativas en estrecha relación con el aprendizaje escolar y la participación familiar y comunitaria.

Cada EPC recibe un promedio de 26 participantes por 3 a 4 horas diarias durante dos años, ofreciéndoles diferentes actividades según grupo de edad. Los participantes de 6 a 13 años son atendidos mediante dos modalidades: la *regular*, que se desarrolla a la par del año escolar y enfatiza el reforzamiento académico conforme con el currículo de la educación básica vigente; y la modalidad *de verano* para el período de vacaciones, que contempla actividades recreativas (teatro, educación física, artes plásticas, música y literatura infantil). A los

adolescentes (14 a 17 años) se les ofrece capacitación laboral en oficios, cursos de informática y contenidos de formación humana, en alianza con instituciones de educación técnico-vocacional. Desde el punto de vista pedagógico, los EPC se sustentan en la metodología “*Quantum Learning*”, que se define como un programa de aprendizaje acelerado que enfatiza el desarrollo de habilidades personales y académicas. Los EPC se ofertan como una especie de “segunda tanda” educativa de carácter no formal en razón del uso flexible de los espacios, los materiales de apoyo utilizados y la forma como se articula con la dinámica de la comunidad. Los EPC se han establecido en zonas del país donde existe mayor presencia de niños y adolescentes que trabajan en actividades consideradas peligrosas.

Educando (Educational Website from Dominican Government) and Aula Virtual, are two strategies to provide relevant information and teaching materials to teachers and other actors. Both use NTICs as delivery mechanisms and created websites that offer on-line courses and specific materials online. It is prepared by the Secretaría de Educación, implementing innovative and dynamic forms of education specifically focused on teachers, through training, consulting and constant update of information. It is a non formal strategy to support teachers and teaching but is not considered a modality of in-service teacher training and does not give them certificates to teach.

Last, but not least, within these strategies, the main lines of the Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo de la Educación Dominicana (2003-2012), which aims at achieving both EFA and the Millennium Goals (2015), the Plan Estratégico Nacional para la Erradicación de las Peores Formas de Trabajo Infantil (2006-2016) as well as initiatives to strengthen preschool education should also be seen as promising actions to improve equity, quality and efficiency in Dominican education. They are young in time and their results are yet to be seen. (Table 3)

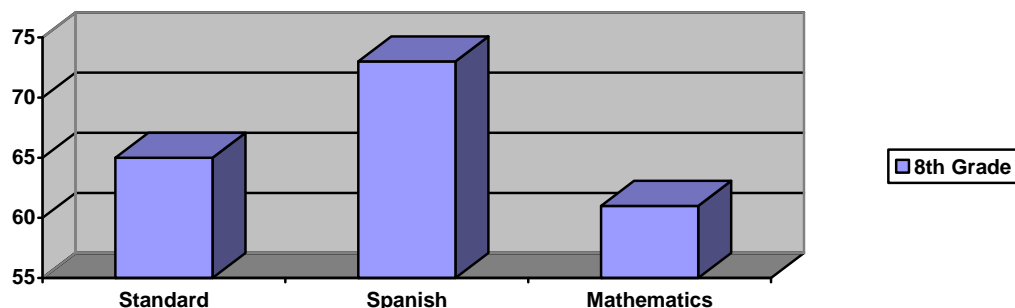
4.2. Raise de quality of learning

As in the rest of Latin America, the sustainability of the policies to ensure good quality learning is still weak in Dominican Republic. Particularly quality schooling for all, boys and girls, is one of the persistent problems in basic education considering that access has been relatively guaranteed for boys and girls in school age.

The average distribution in the national tests in 2001, showed scores over the expected

grades only in Spanish language where the 65 standard was exceeded overcoming 70. Meanwhile, in mathematics the student's only average 61 points out of the 65 expected. (Fig.6).

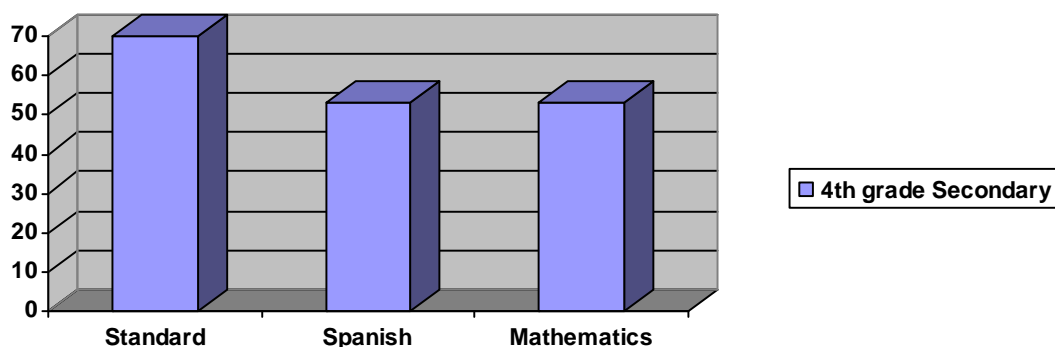
Fig. 6: National Average Results for National Tests Primary Level, 8th grade, 2001.



Source: Informe de Progreso Educativo: Republica Dominicana (Preal & Educa, 2006)

For the secondary level, scores are much lower than expected, as averages are around 53 points quite far from the 70 points considered as the expected results (Fig.7).

Fig.7: National Average Results for National Tests Secondary Level, 4th grade , 2001.



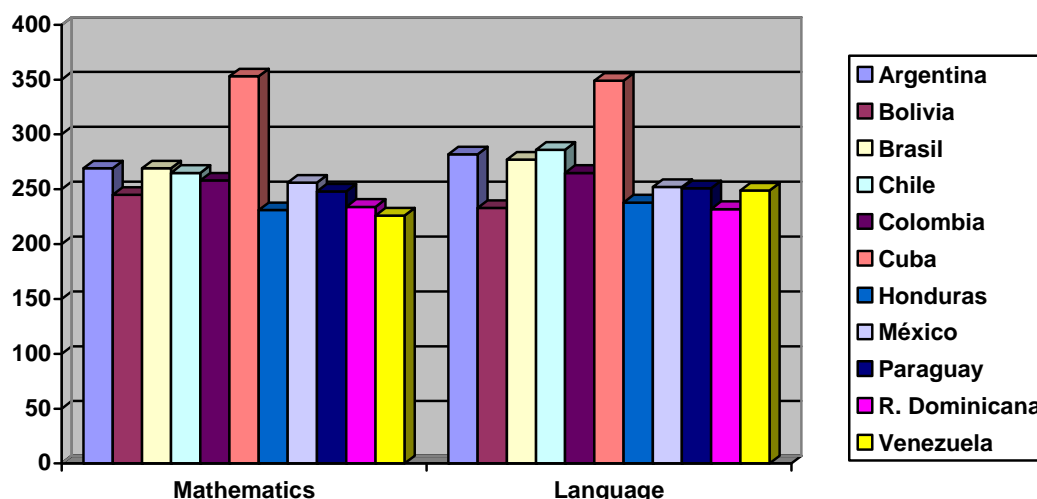
Source: Informe de Progreso Educativo: Republica Dominicana (Preal & Educa, 2006)

As results from the national tests are not standardized there is no possibility to assess the quality of educational development. Nonetheless, it allows determining that there is a challenge of improving the level of knowledge that students are getting at the primary level as this will be determinant for the rest of the educational life.

There are no systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanism to support policy design and implementation. At present time, Dominican Republic is trying to standardize the outcomes of national tests in order to see the progress made by students at primary and secondary level.

Dominican Republic has only participated in one international test to measure learning outcomes (Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación – LLECE/(UNESCO/OREALC:1998). Results placed Dominican Republic among the countries with lower performance in both subjects (Fig. 8).

Fig.8: International Comparative Study on learning outcomes of students from LA countries in language and math. Basic education, fourth grade (2000)



Source: UNESCO (2000). First International comparative study on language, mathematics and associate factors. Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación. 2nd report, Chile, Informe de Progreso Educativo: Republica Dominicana (Preal & Educa, 2006)

This is considered as one of the weakest links on the educational changes. Design of a systematic monitoring scheme, would allow all relevant actors to asses the effect of policies specially on quality standards, as it is relevant not only for policy makers, but for the society to be aware of the outcomes from the learning experience.

Section V

5. Constraints to the achievement of the EFA goals

5.1. Curricula, infrastructure and availability of teaching resources

Dominican Republic implemented a huge curricular reform as part of the Plan Decenal

(1992-2002). The reform included major changes to facilitate teaching and learning. Recent studies (Zaiter, J., et.al. 2004) and impact evaluations have evidenced that the curricular reform has been implemented in 95% of the schools providing primary education level. Achievements have been lower in secondary and technical education schools (Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo de la Educación: 2002).

Throughout application it has been evident that teachers seldom plan their classes according to the orientations in the new curricula; pedagogy continues to be based upon memoristic and passive teaching methods; teachers have little or no management of teaching and learning strategies to develop new contents in first and second grades; they do not manage well the curricular approaches in the different areas and have limited domain of Math and Spanish contents (Zaiter J., et.al. *Cambia la Escuela*).

An infrastructure to promote good quality education seems to have evolved positively since the mid nineties onwards. There are enough schools to meet the demand for primary and secondary education and, concerning adult and non formal education, there are 719 public centres which operate in 565 school buildings with 6.778 classrooms. 45% of these centres work exclusively to offer *Bachillerato*. The rest offer, on shared bases, primary, secondary and technical education to young people and adults. In addition to this, there are 174 centres devoted to *Educación para el Trabajo (Education for Work)* 56 of them offer technical secondary education; 3 offer professional training based on the INFOTEP model; 10 are classified as vocational training centres and 105 are *Escuelas Laborales (labour schools)* (Plan Estratégico. Op. cit. pp.41) .

5.2. *Insufficient instructional time*

In spite of having improved the infrastructure and availability of resources to promote good quality learning there is a big issue on the fulfillment of the school calendar

By law, there should be 42 weeks, 5 days a week with a minimum of 5 hours daily. This is not achieved by all schools, decreasing the learning opportunities for the children. Moreover, there are constraints in the process of organizing and managing existing resources for the improvement of learning. Among these, delays in the initiation of classes or closing the class earlier than expected; lack of information on the way

timetables should be organized and developed in the basic levels; inadequate management of classroom discipline; lack of parental involving in teaching and learning and lack of technical and pedagogical support from supervisors at the Secretaría de Educación.

5.3. Inadequate Learning Materials

Dominican Republic has done enormous efforts to guarantee the provision of school texts and workbooks for students at the primary level. It covers basic areas such as language, mathematics, social and natural sciences, and also foreign language, human and religious formation, artistic and physical education. These elements are supported with infrastructure such as laboratory equipment and IT technologies.

Nonetheless, there is consensus that efforts are required to increase distribution efficiency (i.e. materials to reach destiny on appropriate timing), and also the use of IT technologies to take the best advantages of it (Cfr. Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo de la Educación, Op. cit., Zaiter, J., et.al. Op. cit.)

5.4. Weaknesses in the teacher profession

Dominican teachers had an important participation in the formulation of the Plan Decenal de Educación as in the so called ***Comisiones de Construcción Curricular (CCC)***. Throughout the years, though this participation has been diminishing and needs some revitalization. Reasons differ according to the actors. For some, excessive centralization of policy making and policy implementation diminishes teacher participation and commitment with the reforms. Others consider that teacher's union has been an obstacle to the improvement of the quality of education and learning improvements while struggling for better salaries and working conditions. The central government, on their side, has not created spaces for teacher participation in policy and decision making: in fact, the *Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo de la Educación 2002-2012* was not formulated by means of national consultations as the *Plan Decenal* and its recommendations were disseminated through official publications.

The fact is that the teaching profession continues to be unattractive to talented people and

the living and working conditions of teachers are still difficult particularly in poor settings (Box 5).

Box 5

Young people do not want to study education”

This sentence synthesizes the results obtained on a research done in 2002 which focused on determining if education as a professional career was an option among young students when applying to Pontificia Universidad Madre and Maestra- PUCMM. The results were as follow:

- Students graduated from private schools: only **2%** chose education as a career
- Students graduated from public schools: only **8%** chose education as a career

There was also a question about why they would not study education, and the answers can be summarized as follows:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| - Never interested on education as an option | 39% |
| - Not motivated by the career | 44% |
| - Not prepared to work with children and teenagers | 7% |
| - Economic factor (salary) | 10% |

Although the economic factor does not seem to have a huge impact, the other answers are strongly related with the diminished value of education as a professional career and the poor motivation to engage the teaching career.

Source: EDUCA – Permanent Seminar on Education- Workshop No 3. “*La problemática del magisterio en República Dominicana*” by Francisco Polanco Sánchez.

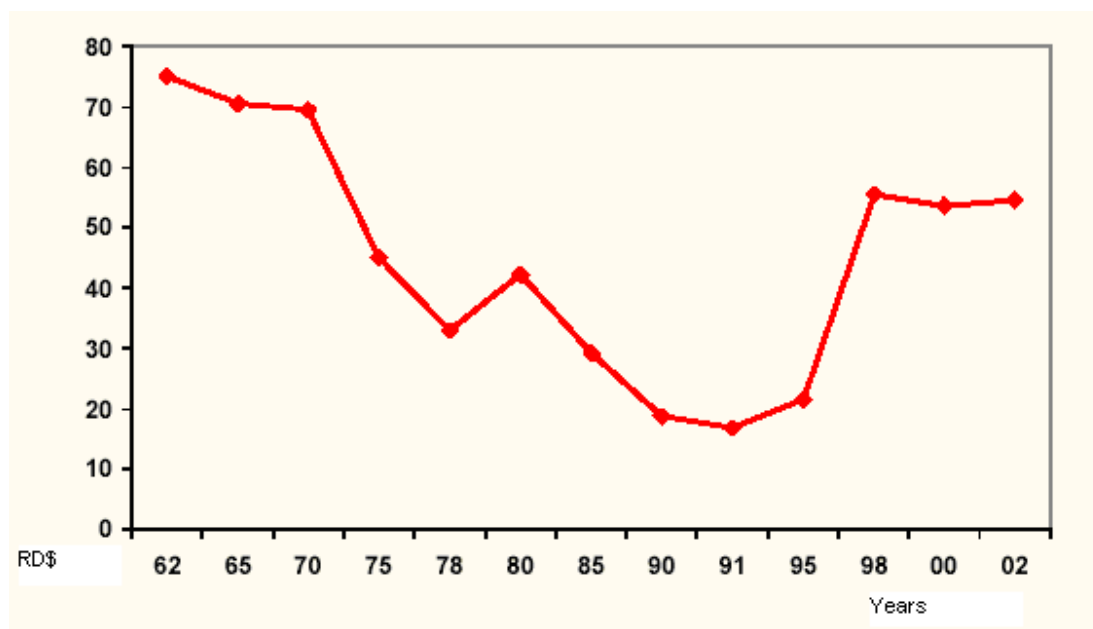
5.4.1. Low salaries and weak performance

Teachers have lost more than 50% of their financial capacities as a consequence of devaluations and the weak performance of economic indicators. For 2003 the real salary of a teacher in primary education is three times higher than in 1991, but their acquisitive capacity is only 72.6% what it was forty years ago and the situation has not changed at present times (Santana, I., *El Financiamiento de la Educación y la Condición del Maestro en República Dominicana, EDUCA:2004*). As evidenced on table 4, there is a marked decreased on the average salary since 2002.

Table 4: Evolution of Teachers Salaries according to educational level, 1999 – 2004.

Level/Year/US\$	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Early Education	262	264	270	270	182	136
Primary Education	258	259	258	253	177	130
Secondary Education	-	-	-	261	179	132
Technical/Professional Education	220	315	309	310	244	179
<i>Average Salary</i>	308	313	318	305	217	170

Source: Informe de Progreso Educativo: Republica Dominicana (Preal & Educa, 2006)

Fig.9: Dominican teachers wages evolution, 1962 – 2002.

Source: Santana Isidoro, El Financiamiento de la Educación y la condición del maestros en la Republica Dominicana, Abril 2003 (RD \$ 1960).

Teacher's salaries consist of a basic salary and additional incentives which account for almost 25% of the overall salary. Since the adoption of the new *Estatuto Docente* in 2003 incentives are applied attending to "level of professional training", "years of service" and "performance". This structure is simpler than the older one but it has no connections with teacher's performance in the classroom and expectations concerning the outcomes of their students. In fact, Dominican Republic does not count with policies and mechanisms

to evaluate teacher performance, nor does it count with standardized tests to measure the quality of learning.

Teachers are trained at the universities. Nonetheless there are no shared visions on what constitutes an adequate training or standards or descriptions of what teachers should learn during their neither formation, nor references to the competences and skills they should dominate at the end of this process. Profiles are defined on the bases of the curricular objectives at initial, primary and secondary levels.

This lack of standards makes it difficult to evaluate the quality and pertinence of the teacher profession as well as the quality of the teachers being trained. An effort to develop and improve the teacher profession has been done within the framework of the activities of the Plan Decenal. Good practices in this area include the priority given in the Plan to the teacher profession and, particularly, the transformation of the *Escuelas Normales* into higher education organizations; higher education plans and programs for teachers; postgraduate courses for school directors and managers; a new curricula for teacher training and the establishment of an academic degree (*licenciatura*) as the entrance level for the profession. All these changes occurred during the implementation of reforms established at the Plan Decenal in the early nineties and they have been discontinued but reinforced by means of the actions planned in the strategic plan for educational development (2002-2007) already cited.

Regional diagnosis of Dominican Republic indicate that there are 46.173 teachers, of these 8.2% are bachelors; 9.6% come from the *Escuelas Normales*, 45.0% have professional diploma from the universities; 35.3% have graduate studies at the level of *Licenciaturas*; 1.1% have postgraduate studies and 0.7% have Master's degree (Polanco, F., *La formación de los recursos del sector educativo. Situación Actual y Perspectivas*: 2001:125/126).

One of the strategies implemented to strengthen the teaching profession have been the policies of in-service training. Teachers who are already working are offered the chance to update and develop their skills. Nonetheless, these policies do not have

mechanisms of follow up neither are they linked to other incentives for the improvement of teachers and teaching in the classrooms. The *Programa de Profesionalización de Maestros Bachilleres (PPMB)* with IDB support; the *Programa de Capacitación de Maestros y Maestros en Servicio* with World Bank, under execution since the approval of the strategic plan for the development of Dominican education are an example of this.

5.4.2. Lack of a culture of assessment and accountability

As in the rest of Latin America accountability is almost inexistent in Dominican Republic. There is a need to institutionalize assessment systems and establish effective dissemination strategies. There is also a need to develop selection criteria for the teaching profession and create incentive mechanisms such as salary scales based on performance; team based merit pay schemes; decentralized systems of teaching monitoring and supervision and school based management strategies.

Decentralization has occurred in the country but decision making is still centralized in subjects such as curricular and teacher's development planning and decision making. Teachers are selected on the bases of open oppositions and hire and fire on central bases. Teachers and heads of schools are in charge of the design of educational projects for their schools (*Proyectos Educativos del Centro*) but do not take decisions concerning other policies. Although parents and community participation has been institutionalized since the application of the policies of the Plan Decenal, school based management is reduced to management of the resources for school equipment and local fundraising to complement these expenditures a fact that impoverishes the participation of the community and parents in a country where parental and community participation has been growing since the beginning of the nineties. Table 5 illustrates some present tendencies in the decision making processes of the Dominican educational system as it works today in the country.

Type of Decisions	Level of Decisión Making				Actors involved in planning & decisión making
	Central	Region	District	School	
Policy and decision making on teacher pay and incentives	X				Secretaría de Estado de Educación y Cultura, SEEC
Hiring and firing of teachers and heads of schools	X	X	X		Regional and Distrital boards examine the results of teacher applications and make a proposal to hire candidates or fire teachers or school directors
Budgeting	X				Las Direcciones Regionales y los Distritos consolidan el presupuesto a nivel de su área geográfica de competencia y lo someten al nivel central.
Criteria for the promotion of students	X				National Council of Education
School calendar	X				SEEC
Textbooks and teaching material	X				SEEC
Curricular policies	X				Regional authorities can make proposals for curricular adaptations in accordance with their reality and needs
Use of financial resources and raise of complementary funds for school maintenance and operation		X		X	APMAES. Association of Parents, manage financial resources provided by the central government for school based management purposes.

Source. Pasando Balance. Op. cit. 20 and Secretaria de Estado de Educación: Modelo e Gestión de la Calidad para los Centros Educativos 2004 – 2008: 2006

5.5 Insufficient financial investments

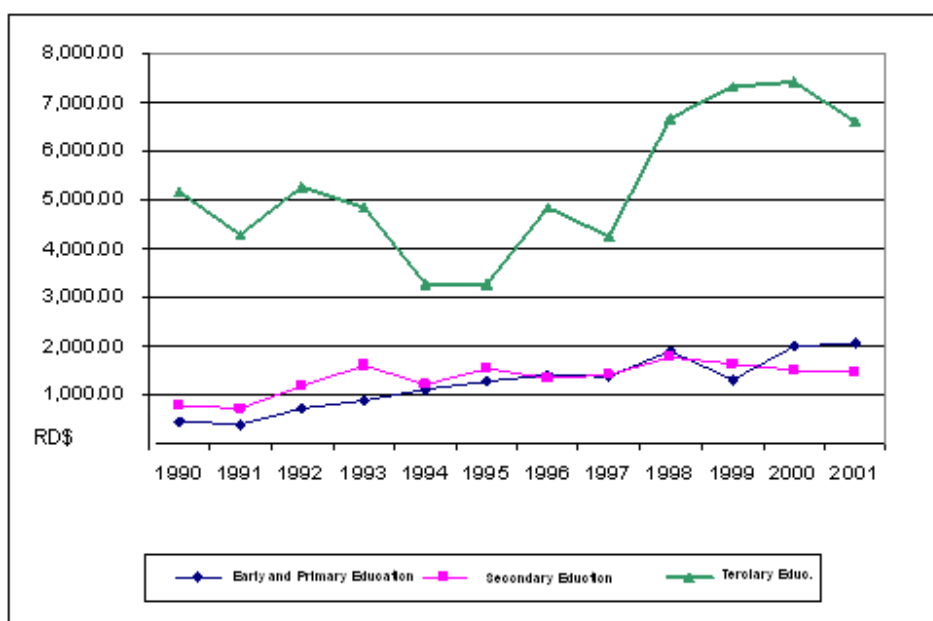
Public investment on education for 2006 in Dominican Republic is lower than the average for Latin America and the Caribbean. The educational finances were one of the weakest points recognized by the Plan Decenal, and quantitative goals were established setting 4% of the GDP or 16% of public expenditure as the maximum value.

Since the implementation of the Plan, these goals have not been met. Although public expenditure in education has increased, from U\$ 36.4 in 1992 to U\$146 in 2001, the expenditure per student is still below the recommended standards.

The distribution of public expenditure is strongly oriented towards higher education (Informe de Progreso Educativo, República Dominicana,;2006). Government invests three times the amount per student of early and primary education and near four times the

investment per student on the secondary level. on students in public universities (**Fig.10**). Considering that the students that reach this level belong to the wealthier groups in society educational investment is not helping to improve equity.

Fig.10: Public Expenditure by student for each educational level, 1990 - 2001.



Note: (*)RD\$ 1999. Educational Expenditure for the tertiary level includes only current transfers to the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo (UASD). The other two dates include direct expenditure and not shared expenses.

Source: Informe de Progreso Educativo: Republica Dominicana (Preal & Educa, 2006)

A relevant issue on education finance in Dominican Republic is the contribution made by Dominican families. During the second Workshop of education – EDUCA “Inversión en Educacion” (2006) I. Santana pointed out that this element was not highlighted as it should have been. This, considering that there is a strong participation from the family budgets and private investments in education account for more than 50% of the national expenditure on education. Dominican Republic report card, based on data from the Central Bank for 1998, estimated that the families contributed with 56% of the family budget to the education of their children. Most of the expenditures were done in fees, fees when sending children to private schools and, in transportation, teaching and learning materials, uniforms and food when sending the children to free, compulsory education provided by public schools. Figures have not been updated but the tendency, nowadays, seems to be same (Pasando Balance: 2006,pp.23)

Section VI

6. Policy Conclusions. Key national priorities to meet the EFA goals

6.1. Expand preschool coverage and reach universal primary completion

Primary completion rates in Dominican Republic, as in most of the countries in Central America are still too low. Most of the children who do not finish this cycle come from poor and rural settings. Poverty has a direct impact upon keeping boys and girls at schools, promoting timely entrance, repetition, short permanence and dropouts.

Various policy options may help overcome these problems. Most of them have been recommended by the Dominican Republic government itself through the recommendations of the *Foro Presidencial por la Excelencia de la Educación* created by President L. Fernandez to revitalize educational reform in Dominican Republic.

One of the recommendations of this group was to universalize preschool education for children aged 3 to 5 years old (.). Preschool education is the bases for the acquisition of good quality (*La escuela no puede sola. Op.cit*) learning and, as such, universal coverage of initial education could well help in the improvement of the quality of education at primary level, diminishing late enrolments, repetition and dropouts. Considering that families have to spend an important share of their annual budget to send their children to school subsidies or vouchers to support public private alliances to implement this policy would be an interesting mechanism to be evaluated in the country for its financemnt. As the World Bank recommends for the Central American countries ‘this would include analyzing further the scope for conditional cash transfers, abolishing fees in primary and increase public spending in education, while ensuring sufficient learning materials ... ‘ (Central America Education Strategy. An agenda for Action. World Bank:2005)

Improving multigrade schooling is another policy option recommended for the Central American countries that could help overcome dropout and repetition in Dominican Republic. As said, the potential of multigrade schooling could be more fully realized by making sure that teachers are adequately trained and experienced in multigrade teaching techniques and that they obtain support to apply these methods.

The overall purpose of all these options is to reach universal primary completion by 2015 by improving and scaling up policies and programs that address the needs of the poor, one of the major problems today to meet the Dakar goals by Dominican Republic. So much for the strategy of strengthening community based school management. The country has made important efforts towards decentralizing school management and improves management and information systems strengthening national assessment, teacher methodologies, teacher performance but a lot needs to be made yet to achieve the goals. Community based school management could help by promoting a better use of existing capacities; increase coverage in rural areas, enable better education flows and improve learning outcomes. At least four countries in Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua) could provide lessons from experience and good practices in this field to Dominican Republic.

Last but not least, Dominican Republic has to choose among expanding the coverage of secondary education or increasing and diversifying adult education programs (including technical and training programs at secondary level). Expanding the coverage of secondary education removing some of the obstacles that prevent students aged 13 to 15 and 15 to 18 from enrolling in this level. This universe includes youngsters who do not enrol due to work related reasons; economic related reasons; learning related reasons and lack of supply either of teachers or schools.

In any of these cases, Dominican Republic has to choose whether or not is better to invest in developing formal and non formal educational strategies that support training for human growth and national competitiveness or support mass schooling for reasons of equity and social cohesion. In both cases, public intervention will be necessary to promote broad based growth of technical education programs at secondary level and training programs for the labor market.

Suggested policy options include: flexible delivery mechanisms such as secondary completion by distance learning as *Telesecundaria* in Mexico. Distance education programs; mixed schemes of public financing/private delivery considering that Dominican Republic has a cost/efficient business private sector and basic education

centers that integrate primary with lower education and lower secondary in the same school or integrate lower secondary with labor market training in non formal adult education programs.

6.2. Improve the quality of learning at all levels

As in the rest of Latin America, Dominican Republic has to improve learning at all levels. Improving learning, as well as the quality of education in overall terms, has to do with individual and national growth opportunities, competitiveness, and eradication of poverty and improvement of quality of life.

Achieving good quality schooling has a direct relationship with investments in strengthening the teacher profession and evaluate teacher's performance institutionalize and improve the national assessment system; which could increase the instructional level as well as teacher's attendance to classes and the adequate use of teaching materials including NTiCs.

The improvement of teacher selection and preparation is a policy option that should not be disregarded. The improvement of learning depends heavily on the quality of teachers and teaching. Various options experienced in Central American countries with a similar level of educational development could be helpful in Dominican Republic. These include accreditation exams of in service teachers; non monetary incentives for higher effective hours of work; teacher's monitoring and supervision ; empowerment of school directors and parents to hire, fire and monitor teacher's performance.

6.3. Increase public investment

The increasement of public financing has been in the social and political agenda since the Plan Decenal in 1993. The goal established for public investment was to spend in education a 4% of the GDP or 16% of the public budget. These goals have not been met although public investment in education has followed a growing tendency it continues to be below expenditures in other Latin-American countries.

Thus, policy options in the country continue to emphasize upon the need to increase public investment to 5% of the GDP; increase investments per pupil and declare

basic education a priority for public investment. Moreover, the country will need to spend more of the GDP if universal coverage of preschool education and broad base coverage of secondary education are to be attained by 2015. Scholarships and demand side subsidies may be a good policy option to cope with these goals.

Mixed schemes of public private financing have also a high potential considering the involvement of the private sector in education and the commitment of both parents and businessmen in providing complementary resources for their children's education.

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