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**From literacy to lifelong learning:  
Trends, issues and challenges  
in youth and adult education  
in Latin America and the Caribbean**  
Regional synthesis report

Rosa María Torres



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Institute  
for Lifelong Learning



confintea VI

# **From literacy to lifelong learning: Trends, issues and challenges in youth and adult education in Latin America and the Caribbean**

## **Regional Synthesis Report**

**Rosa María Torres**

## **A contribution of CREFAL to CONFINTEA VI**

Revised report presented at the Regional Conference on Literacy and  
Regional Preparatory Conference of the  
Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI),  
“From Literacy to Lifelong Learning: Towards the Challenges of the XXI Century”, organised  
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20148 Hamburg  
Germany

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# About this regional report<sup>1</sup>

This regional report was prepared as part of the process leading to the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI), “Living and Learning for a Viable Future – The Power of Adult Learning” (Belém, Pará, Brazil, 19-22 May 2009), organised by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL).

What has happened in Latin America and the Caribbean in terms of education, and of adult learning and education (ALE) in particular, since CONFINTEA V (Hamburg, 1997)? Are there quantitative and qualitative advances in relation to the major tasks and challenges identified over a decade ago? Who are the new actors intervening in the field? Are renewed thinking and strategies in place? How has the expansion of modern Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) affected the field? What have been the lessons learned over the past decade? What are the main issues, trends, and challenges facing ALE today *vis-à-vis* the current regional and international scenarios? What parameters define ‘good practice’ in ALE, honouring the centrality of learners and learning, beyond traditional indicators of enrolment, completion or accreditation? How is the proposed lifelong learning paradigm received, interpreted and utilised in legislative frameworks, policies, programmes and practices in education, training and learning in general, and of youth and adults specifically, in the various countries? These are some of the questions this document addresses and wishes to illuminate. Its purpose is to help provoke and organise a much-needed reflection and informed debate on ALE and on lifelong learning at national and regional level, while taking into consideration and participating in the wider international discussion and momentum facilitated by the CONFINTEA VI process, its preparation and follow up.

A preliminary draft of this regional report (in Spanish) was presented and discussed at the Regional Conference on Literacy and Preparatory Conference of CONFINTEA VI “From Literacy to Lifelong Learning: Towards the Challenges of the XXI Century”, organised by UIL and INEA in Mexico (10-13 September 2008). This revised version benefits from the debates, panels and contributions during the conference. It also benefits from meetings with and comments from the authors of other regional reports and of thematic chapters of the *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* prepared for CONFINTEA VI.

## Information sources

Following UIL guidelines, the main sources of information for this report were the national CONFINTEA VI reports prepared by governments, Ministries of Education and Adult Education Departments during the first semester of 2008, based on a questionnaire that was distributed by UIL to all countries and regions. Twenty-five out of the 41 countries and territories that comprise the region submitted such reports: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, St Vincent & the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela (one in North America, seven in Central America, ten in South America, and seven in the Caribbean). The majority of reports received were drafted in Spanish (18); the rest were in English (five), Portuguese (one) and French (one). Most of them were produced by Department of Adult Education officials, or by consultants hired for the task. For Mexico and Colombia there were also independent and complementary documents produced by ALE specialists. Only in a few countries – notably Brazil and Uruguay – were such reports the result of participatory processes beyond governmental offices. The UIL suggestion to organise national commissions was taken up only in very few cases.

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<sup>1</sup> This regional report was commissioned by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). Its production was financed by CREFAL (*Centro de Cooperación Regional para la Educación de Adultos en América Latina y el Caribe*, based in Mexico) as a contribution to CONFINTEA VI.

The need to complement these national CONFINTEA VI reports with additional sources of information became evident given that (a) not all countries prepared and submitted such reports; (b) in most cases, they were focused on governmental perspectives and actions; (c) many adopted a descriptive and rather uncritical approach; and (d) their focus was on policies and norms rather than on implementation. Therefore, supporting information was drawn from the many other national and regional reports and studies on ALE in the region which have been produced in the past few years. Information available on the Internet, at websites of ministries of education and other relevant institutions and programmes, was also used.

Five sets of documents were the main additional sources of information used:

- a) the various preparatory and follow-up reports around CONFINTEA V (1997) elaborated in the region, including the *Regional Framework for Action on Adult and Youth Education in Latin America and the Caribbean* (2000-2010) prepared by UNESCO-OREALC, CREFAL, INEA and CEAAL (see Box 4), and the Regional Report presented at the Mid-Term Review (Bangkok, 2003);
- b) Nineteen national reports elaborated by Adult Education Departments for the Ibero-American Plan for Youth and Adult Literacy and Basic Education (PIA, 2007-2015) coordinated by the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI): Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela;
- c) Twenty national studies and a regional synthesis report on the state of the art of youth and adult education produced by independent researchers in the framework of a regional CREFAL/CEAAL study conducted in 2006-2008, including: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay and Venezuela (Caruso *et al*, 2008);
- d) a cross-national field study, *Literacy and access to the written culture by youth and adults excluded from the school system*, conducted in nine countries in the region in 2006-2008 by CREFAL and Fronesis: Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela (Torres, 2008b); and
- e) a sub-regional report, *Literacy in the Caribbean: A Mid-Decade (2003-2008) Report*, commissioned by UNESCO, and another, *Public Policies, Strategies and Programmes for Literacy and Adult Education in Nations of the Caribbean 2003–2008*, commissioned by the Organization of American States (OAS) (Warrican, 2008a, b).<sup>2</sup>

In the research process and in the drafting of this regional report, special effort to incorporate *all* countries in Latin America and the Caribbean has been made, including those that did not submit national CONFINTEA VI reports. In particular, efforts were made to incorporate the small Caribbean countries and territories that are often absent from regional statistics, diagnoses and prospects even when these refer to the region as a whole – Latin America *and* the Caribbean.

In total, over 300 documents and 150 websites were consulted. Specific online consultations and collaboration requests were also organised during the preparation of the report. Thus, in the cases of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Guatemala, Mexico and Uruguay, national researchers – most of them linked to CEAAL or CREFAL – collaborated in preparing a comparative

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<sup>2</sup> The first study (UNESCO) comprised 19 countries, including both independent and dependent territories. The independent ones are: Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, St. Kitts & Nevis, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad & Tobago. The dependent ones are: Anguilla, Montserrat, British Virgin Islands, Turks & Caicos Islands, and the Cayman Islands; these countries have not sought their independence from Britain. The second study (OAS) analysed the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), comprising 14 countries, mainly English-speaking nations: Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago, plus Haiti (official language French) and Suriname (official language Dutch, located in South America).

analysis of the various national reports and studies on ALE produced in each of these countries over the past five years.<sup>3</sup>

The provision here of detailed quantitative and statistical information has been avoided, given its rapid obsolescence and the fact that it is easily available today on the Internet. Interested readers may visit a number of suggested websites consulted for this study.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The author is thankful to the researchers who did such national transversal analyses: Argentina: María Sara Canevari and Andrea Zilbersztain, Universidad Nacional de Luján; Bolivia: Benito Fernández, Wilfredo Limachi and Leocadio Quenta, German Association for Adult Education; Chile: Edgardo Alvarez, CEAAL; Guatemala: Francisco Cabrera, CEAAL; Mexico: Gloria Hernández, Instituto Superior de Ciencias de la Educación del Estado de México; and Uruguay: Jorge Rivas, CREFAL.

<sup>4</sup> Among others in the list of acronyms at the back of this report are: ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean); EFA Global Monitoring Reports; FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations); IDB (Inter-American Development Bank); OAS (Organization of American States); OEI (Organization of Ibero-American States); PRIE (Regional Education Indicators Project); SITEAL (Sistema de Información de Tendencias en Educación de América Latina); UNESCO-OREALC (Regional UNESCO Office for Latin America and the Caribbean); UIS (UNESCO Institute for Statistics).

# The regional scenario: A specific and highly heterogeneous region

Latin America and the Caribbean is a highly heterogeneous and specific region in all aspects – historical, political, economic, social, cultural, linguistic, and also in educational terms – thus making it difficult to generalise diagnoses, conclusions and recommendations for the region as a whole. On the contrary, acknowledging such heterogeneity reinforces the need for diversified and context-sensitive policies and programmes.

The region consists of two sub-regions – Latin America, and the Caribbean – each of them also internally heterogeneous. They constitute different worlds in many respects and have little contact due to geographical as well as historical, cultural and linguistic barriers. Latin American countries are organised geographically into North, Central and South America. There are also sub-groupings according to various specific supranational coordination and trade agreements, such as the Andean Community (CAN), the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the Association of Caribbean States (ASC). Moreover, there are different geopolitical groupings organised around different international bodies.<sup>5</sup>

In a region inhabited by 577 million people (less than 10 per cent of the world population – UN, 2004 data), the indigenous population is estimated at around 40 million, organised in over 400 ethnic groups. Mexico, Bolivia, Guatemala, Ecuador and Peru have the highest numbers of indigenous people. There is also an important Afro-descendant population in several countries, especially in the Caribbean and in Brazil.

Spanish and Portuguese are the two main official languages in Latin America, and English and French in the Caribbean, but some 600 languages are spoken throughout the region as well as standard and non-standard variants of many of them. Beneath the few main official languages, associated to their respective colonial pasts, the region has a highly complex linguistic reality often hidden in regional diagnoses and studies and not properly acknowledged in education policies and programmes. Multilingual and multicultural contexts are common in Latin America. The Caribbean has also a varied linguistic situation. In the majority of English- and French-speaking countries in the Caribbean the first language of the population is a Creole, related to the official language (such as in Guyana, Jamaica or Haiti) or to a non-official one (as in Dominica and St. Lucia where English is the official language but the main spoken language is Kwéyòl, a French-based Creole, or in Suriname where the official language is Dutch but the language spoken is Sranan Tongo, an English-based

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<sup>5</sup> Latin America and the Caribbean – the denomination adopted by UNESCO and the most commonly used, both regionally and internationally – comprises 41 countries and territories, 19 in Latin America and 22 in the Caribbean, 33 of which are UNESCO Member States.

The Americas comprises all countries in the American continent, including Canada and the United States of America (USA). Since Cuba's exclusion from the Organization of the American States (OAS), Cuba is not a member of OAS and does not participate in US- and OAS-coordinated activities and plans linked to the Summits of the Americas or Hemispheric Summits.

IberoAmerica comprises 22 countries: 19 Spanish and Portuguese-speaking countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (ex-colonies of Spain and Portugal), and three countries in Europe (Iberian peninsula): Spain, Portugal, and the Principality of Andorra (Andorra's official language is Catalan). (This is the list of countries included in the Base Document of PIA – Ibero-American Plan for Youth and Adult Literacy and Basic Education, OEI, 2006. Puerto Rico, and Equatorial Guinea (in Africa), also appear in the list of Ibero-American countries in OEI's website. See <http://www.oei.es/acercaoei.htm>)

Creole). However, in all these countries, except for Haiti, education – including literacy classes for adults – is conducted in the official language (Warrican, 2008a, b).

Latin America and the Caribbean is the most urbanized region in the South. Between 1950 and 2005, the proportion of the population living in urban areas grew from 41.9 per cent to 77.6 per cent. There are important and systematic rural/urban gaps in most countries, the education gap being just one of them.

This is also the most unequal region in the world, with the biggest difference between rich and poor. The region has the highest concentration of the ‘ultra-rich’ (those with over \$30 million in cash, besides properties and art collections). Their fortunes are growing faster than those of their counterparts in other regions in the world, and they are the least generous (Merrill Lynch and Capgemini, 2008). On the other hand, by 2007 34.1 per cent of the population were living in poverty and 12.6 per cent in extreme poverty (CEPAL, 2008). Youth and adults participating in ALE programmes generally belong to these segments of the population. This is why adult education has traditionally been associated with social transformation and political action. In modern neo-liberal times, however, it appears to be associated with plans and strategies aimed at ‘poverty alleviation’, ‘social inclusion’ and ‘social cohesion’ – the new terminologies and trends.

There was a slight reduction in poverty in the 2002-2007 period. However, this trend stopped in 2008, due fundamentally to the world increase in the prices of food and of oil. Three million people moved back from poor to extremely poor (CEPAL, 2008). According to FAO (2008), between 2006 and 2008 the fight against hunger in the region practically lost all the advances that had been made during the previous two decades. Between 1990 and 2005 malnutrition in the region had been reduced from 12 per cent to 8 per cent; in 2007, however, scarcity of food resulted in an increase in the number of hungry people to 51 million, a figure similar to the 52.6 million in 1990. Following the eruption of the international financial crisis at the end of 2008, initiated in the United States and rapidly expanded throughout the world, it is estimated that the situation of the poor will further deteriorate in 2009 and many of the gains of previous years may be lost once again (CEPAL, 2008).

ALE faces many major economic, social and political challenges in this region, including illiteracy still concentrated in a few countries, in rural areas, among women and among indigenous peoples; limited access to and completion of compulsory education (of generally poor quality) for out-of-school youth and adults; unemployment; social exclusion; increased urban segregation; internal and international migration; violence; racism; and sexism. As in the rest of the world, there is a growing ageing segment of the population.

In many countries there is concern with the increasing number of ‘unattached’ youth – youth who do not study and do not work (in Spanish, *No Estudia ni Trabaja* has become an acronym – NET).<sup>6</sup> In 2004 in Paraguay, 65 per cent of urban youth and 78 per cent of those living in rural areas were in this situation. In Argentina, in 2005, it was one out of every 20 youth. In Brazil, in 2006, this figure was 27.1 per cent. In Mexico, in 2007, 30 per cent of students completing secondary education continued studying, 25 per cent found a job, while the remaining 45 per cent had no activity (Rivas, 2007). In Jamaica, in the period 1998-2001 between 24 per cent and 34 per cent of youths were ‘unattached’, over half of them in rural areas, one quarter of them living below the poverty line and having attained education to grade 9 level or lower, and half of them living in female-headed households (Jamaica CONFINTEA VI report, 2008). Cuba is at this point the only country that has systematic government policies to deal with youth who drop out of school; they are incorporated to public vocational education and training institutions that offer students the possibility of completing formal secondary education while they are provided on-the-job training

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<sup>6</sup> “To reduce youth unemployment and significantly lower the percentage of young people that neither study nor work” was one of the national commitments of the Plan of Action adopted at the IV Summit of the Americas (Mar del Plata, Argentina, 2005). See <http://www.summit-americas.org/IV%20Summit/Eng/mainpage-eng.htm>

opportunities. Cuba is in fact the only country in the region that has a lifelong learning policy – ‘from cradle to grave’ – without calling it such.

## The situation of education and learning in and out of school

Latin America and the Caribbean traditionally has a good reputation for its high primary school enrolments rates – at this point almost universal (97 per cent) – and opportunities for school-age children. Retention and completion rates have also improved, although repetition remains high, socially devastating and costly: an estimated US\$12,000 million are wasted every year in primary and secondary school repetition (UNESCO-OREALC, 2007).

Other important developments in recent years have been the expansion of compulsory education beyond primary and even lower secondary education in many countries; increased attention to early childhood and pre-school education, often including one or two years of pre-school within basic/compulsory education; revised curricula; renewed teacher training efforts; networking in many areas and fields; increased investment in school infrastructure and equipment including ICTs; and student achievement assessment and evaluation systems in place at regional level and at national level in many countries.

The biggest quantitative progress over the past decade has been on secondary and tertiary education: the proportion of youth aged 20-24 years who completed upper secondary education grew from 27 per cent to 50 per cent, and the proportion of youth aged 25-29 years who completed at least five years of tertiary education grew from 4.8 per cent to 7.4 per cent. Such increases benefited mostly middle and upper classes (CEPAL, 2007). Completion of studies is always lower among the poor, showing that equal educational opportunity for all is not a reality.

### Box 1

#### Primary, basic and compulsory education in the region

According to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 1997, *basic* education comprises primary education and lower secondary education.

However, the term *basic education* is used differently in the various countries in the region. In some countries, *basic* education also comprises one or two years of pre-school education. In many countries, *basic* education has become equivalent to *compulsory* education, generally including 8, 9, 10 or more years of schooling. In some cases *basic* education starts with pre-school education (e.g. in Argentina, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, and Turks & Caicos Islands). In a few countries (e.g. Cuba, Chile, Argentina) compulsory education today includes completion of upper secondary education.

In the case of adults, the term *adult basic education* continues to be applied generally as equivalent to *primary* education. For example, the Ibero-American Plan for Youth and Adult Literacy and Basic Education – PIA (2007-2015) assumes *basic education* as a three-year course, the first one devoted to literacy.

A table with a 2006 description of school systems in the region can be found in UNESCO-OREALC 2007.

(Elaborated by R.M Torres)

Quality and equity remain major unresolved issues, related – in this order of importance – to (a) socio-economic condition, (b) zone of residence (urban-rural), (c) ethnic identity, and (d) gender, as confirmed by numerous studies and evaluations in the region. There are no indications of improved student learning over the past decade in any country, despite the many education reforms and the increased investment in evaluation efforts,

as revealed by the two regional studies conducted by the Latin American Laboratory for the Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE, 1997, 2008). A third regional study is currently being prepared.<sup>7</sup>

The urban-rural, indigenous-non indigenous, and age (child/youth/adult) gaps persist, with priority given to school-age children while young children and youth/adults are sidelined in education efforts and budgets. However, as revealed by these same LLECE studies, factors associated with school academic achievement show the importance of family, community and context-related factors, among them parents' education and participation in school matters.

Gender parity has been achieved in the majority of countries in terms of the traditional quantitative educational indicators (school enrolment, retention, completion and adult literacy), with the exception of countries and zones with high concentrations of indigenous people. In some countries, especially in the English-speaking Caribbean but also in several Latin American ones, girls and women outnumber boys and men at all levels of education; they also have better academic achievement, especially in language, as is the dominant trend worldwide (see, for example, PISA results). However, even in those cases where statistics show parity or even advantage in favour of women, discrimination persists in qualitative and rather 'invisible' areas (such as family and teacher expectations, curriculum, pedagogy, and so on) and are later expanded to the world of work (fewer opportunities and lower pay for the same job). Also, gender discrimination tends to persist within the ALE field, with women being the majority of learners – and of educators/facilitators – in literacy programmes and centres, but men predominating in higher educational levels, vocational and professional training programmes, ICT-related training and utilisation, and non-formal educational opportunities that go beyond simple tasks and the domestic world (Infante, 2000; Messina, 2001; Torres, 2008b).

In the context of 'developing regions', Latin America and the Caribbean exhibits relatively high adult literacy rates (see Table 1). According to the latest statistics available, 35 million people (aged 15+) consider themselves illiterate and 88 million have not completed primary education, 4.5 million of them 15- to 19-year-olds (UNESCO-OREALC, 2007). In 1997, over a decade ago, these figures were 39 million and 110 million respectively. (Over a broader time perspective, between 1980 and 2000 the number of illiterates was reduced from 45 million to 39 million people, that is, from 20 per cent to 14 per cent.) In the Caribbean, the literacy rate is below the regional average.

Over 14 million people between 20 and 24 years of age have not completed lower secondary education (part of *basic education* and of compulsory education in many countries) and nearly 25 million people of the same age group have not completed upper secondary education. Central American countries face the greatest challenges regarding completion of both primary and secondary education (UNESCO-OREALC, 2007).

**Table 1: Estimated adult literacy rates (age 15+) 1985–2015**

	1985-1994	2000-2006	Projections to 2015
Latin America and the Caribbean	87%	91%	93%
– Latin America	87%	91%	94%
– The Caribbean	66%	74%	78%
Developing countries	68%	79%	84%
World	76%	84%	87%

Source: EFA *Global Monitoring Report 2009*

<sup>7</sup> See LLECE <http://llece.unesco.cl/ing/actividades/serce.act>

Brazil, the largest country in the region and one of the largest economies in the world (total population 185 million), has the highest number of illiterates (approximately 13 million people, 40 per cent of the region's total), and has currently a slightly higher incidence of illiteracy among men (11.4 per cent) than among women (11.1 per cent).<sup>8</sup> More than 68 million Brazilians over 15 years of age have not concluded primary compulsory education (nine years, since 2006), representing almost 50 per cent of the total youth and adult population. In the 15-24 age range, 12 million have not concluded primary education and almost two million are illiterate. In Haiti, one of the poorest countries in the world, half of the adult population is illiterate (Haiti CONFINTEA VI report). At the other extreme, three countries – Cuba, Argentina, and Uruguay – have a literacy rate of 97 per cent or more, and are considered technically free of illiteracy; Venezuela was officially added to this list in 2005 (CONFINTEA VI national reports) and Bolivia in late 2008.

Looking for education trends over the past two decades, SITEAL processed statistics (data from 2000 to 2003) with urban-rural disaggregated data for the adult population (aged 15 years and over) with either no education or 'incipient education' (completion of three years of schooling) in 13 Latin American countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay (SITEAL, 2007). The most critical situations were found in Central America: in Guatemala, half of the adult population was in this situation, and one third in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras. In Brazil and Bolivia this figure was 25 per cent of the population; in Mexico, Paraguay and Peru two per cent. Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica and Uruguay had the most advanced situations. Peru, Bolivia and Chile showed the biggest urban-rural gaps; here, rural population with incipient education was three times bigger than in urban areas. No education and incipient education tend to be higher among the adult and older generations, a reflection of increased school access by the younger generations over the past few decades.<sup>9</sup>

In the past few years there has been sustained increase in the financial resources allocated to education, but "such increase is the result of the growth of the economy and of tax recovery, rather than of a greater priority given to the education sector, since the proportion of public spending allocated to education has tended to remain stable." (UNESCO-OREALC, 2007: 21. Translated from the Spanish original.) External debt for education has remained constant: in 1999-2005 World Bank's loans for education totaled US\$400 million, more than half of World Bank loans for education in all regions of the world. Since 1999, five countries – Bolivia, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua – were integrated to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative.

In terms of social impact and change, the regional follow-up on Education for All (EFA) concludes that "available information shows that education systems are not contributing to revert social inequalities, but are rather reproducing them" (UNESCO-OREALC, 2007: 22. Translated from the Spanish original.)

Nonetheless, as ratified by a recent study conducted by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) based on the Gallup World Poll, Latin Americans are in general satisfied with their lives. Costa Ricans and Guatemalans stand out as the most optimistic in all aspects of their lives, whereas Chileans are the most pessimistic. The poor are in general more satisfied than the rich regarding public policies. The 'aspiration paradox' between subjective perceptions and what indicators tell is clear in the field of education. "The majority of Latin Americans are satisfied with their education systems because they value discipline, safety, and the physical infrastructure of their schools more than the scores their children achieve on academic tests." (Lora, 2008: ii. Preface. Translated from the Spanish original.)<sup>10</sup> People's

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<sup>8</sup> Data provided in September 2008 by the Secretary of Continuing Education, Literacy and Diversity (SECAD), in charge of the '*Brasil Alfabetizado*' (Literate Brazil) programme.

<sup>9</sup> See SITEAL [http://www.siteal.iipe-oei.org/vistazo/datosdest\\_12.asp](http://www.siteal.iipe-oei.org/vistazo/datosdest_12.asp)

<sup>10</sup> The Gallup World Poll surveys annually citizens from 140 countries. The question on standard of living is: "Are you satisfied or unsatisfied with your standard of living, all the things you can buy and do?" IDB added some

low expectations and demands, in turn related to education, explain many of the vicious circles that reproduce poverty and inequality in this region, and the persistence of low-quality supply and demand in education.

## Education for All (EFA) developments and prospects in the region

The EFA *Global Monitoring Report 2008* estimated that 18 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean were in an intermediate position with regard to the possibility of achieving by 2015 the four goals included in the EFA Development Index (EDI): universal primary education; increase of adult literacy; gender parity; and educational quality. Three countries – all of them in the Caribbean – have already achieved such goals, five are close, and none were far from achieving them (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Prospects for reaching the four goals included in the EFA Development Index (EDI)**

<p><b>A. Achieved the four EFA goals</b> (EDI between 0.98 and 1.00)</p> <p>Three countries: Aruba, Barbados and Cuba</p>	<p><b>B. Close to achieving the four EFA goals</b> (EDI between 0.95 and 0.97)</p> <p>Five countries: Argentina, Bahamas, Chile, Mexico, and Trinidad &amp; Tobago</p>
<p><b>C. Intermediate positions</b> (EDI between 0.80 and 0.94)</p> <p>18 countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, St Vincent &amp; the Grenadines, St. Lucia, Uruguay and Venezuela</p>	<p><b>D. Far from the four EFA goals</b> (EDI below 0.80)</p> <p>No countries</p>

Source: EFA *Global Monitoring Report 2008*, UNESCO, Paris.

It is worth noting that educational data are usually three or more years behind, and that only 26 countries were listed in this table. One country in Latin America (Costa Rica) and many Caribbean countries (Anguila, Antigua & Barbuda, Belize, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Guyana, Haiti, Caiman Islands, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, St Kitts & Nevis, Suriname, Turks & Caicos Islands) are not included, because of lack of or incomplete information.

It is important to bear in mind that the EFA Development Index, created in 2003 for monitoring EFA worldwide, measures ‘quality’ as survival to grade 5, not in terms of effective learning processes and achievement, a very problematic issue in this region. It also leaves out two EFA goals: Goal 1 (early childhood care and education) and Goal 3 (“ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes”). The explanation given for these omissions is that “the data are insufficiently standardized” to allow their inclusion (EFA *Global*

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specific questions related to the quality of life in Latin America and the Caribbean. In total, 40,000 people in 24 countries in the region answered to the survey.

See Gallup <http://www.gallup.com/consulting/worldpoll/24046/About.aspx> and IDB Publications <http://iadb.org/publications/>

*Monitoring Report 2006, Summary: 4*). The EFA *Global Monitoring Report 2009* adds that systematic monitoring of EFA goal 3 and the latter part of goal 4 (“equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults”) has been stymied by problems of definition and lack of data (EFA *GMR*, 2009). However, UNESCO has detailed each of the EFA objectives in a quite comprehensive manner.<sup>11</sup>

For whatever reason, both early childhood and adulthood have been systematically neglected within EFA since its launch in 1990 (Torres, 2000, 2004, 2008a). The EFA *Global Monitoring Report 2009*, focused on inequality, highlights four areas considered central to achieving EFA by 2015: early childhood care and education (ECCE), universal primary enrolment and completion, the quality imperative, and progress towards gender parity. This time, ECCE is included. However, once again, the basic learning needs of young people and adults are left out, as if they were not part of Education for All. Age remains a major discriminating factor in education despite mounting lifelong learning rhetoric.

#### **Box 2**

##### **Age usually ignored as a discrimination factor in education**

Age is not mentioned in UNESCO’s Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960), or in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) or in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966). It is also ignored in modern publications of UNESCO and other international organisations, which usually highlight discrimination linked to gender, zone, ethnic identity and disability.

See: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/>

(Elaborated by R.M. Torres)

Although EFA goals (see Annex B) and the EFA Development Index do not include student achievement, it is interesting to note that this EFA-related grouping of countries coincides to a great extent with the grouping resulting from the 2006 LLECE assessment of student outcomes in fourth and sixth grades in 16 countries in the region. Cuba was on top; Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico and Uruguay formed group 2; Argentina, Colombia and Brazil group 3; and the remaining countries, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay formed the last group. Both LLECE studies conducted so far have included only Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries, not English- and French-speaking ones that are the majority in the Caribbean.

## **The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and ALE**

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have the merit of being multisectoral, not focused on one particular ‘sector’ (see Annex C). Two out of the eight MDG goals refer specifically to education. None of them includes adult education. Education, and adult learning and education, however, run across all MDGs and are a condition for their achievement.

Most countries in the region have achieved Goal 2, “universal primary education”, calculated as ‘survival to Grade 5’, that is, completion of four years of schooling. In fact, primary schools that provide less than six years of schooling – which predominate in rural areas – are labeled ‘incomplete schools’ in Latin America. Moreover, there are no quality or learning indicators linked to this goal. For these reasons, it has been proposed to expand this goal for Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>12</sup> Many countries have also achieved – and others are likely to

<sup>11</sup> See an explanation for all EFA goals in UNESCO’s EFA section [http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=53844&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=53844&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

See also the EFA Observatory: *Myths and Goals of Education for All* <http://educacion-para-todos.blogspot.com/>

<sup>12</sup> See ECLAC – Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean  
[http://www.eclac.cl/mdg/goal\\_2\\_en.html](http://www.eclac.cl/mdg/goal_2_en.html)

achieve by 2015 – gender parity in primary and secondary education (part of Goal 3, “promote gender equality and empower women”), including gender parity in literacy, one of the indicators within this goal.

As regards “eradicating extreme poverty and hunger” by 2015, ECLAC’s data and projections by 2007 indicated that most countries in the region might be able to accomplish this first and most important MDG goal (CEPAL, 2007). However, the most recent world crises – the food crisis and the financial crisis – are challenging all previous calculations and projections, and announcing rising poverty, hunger and unemployment worldwide and in this region in particular. (See ILO website.)

## Hemispheric, regional and Ibero-American education plans

Besides world initiatives such as Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals, there are regional, hemispheric and Ibero-American education initiatives that run across the region, each with its own coordinating bodies, frameworks, strategies, goals and deadlines. Table 3 synthesises three such initiatives.

- The Summits of the Americas or Hemispheric Summits, an initiative of the US government coordinated since 2001 by the Organization of the American States (OAS), based in Washington, bring together the Heads of State and Government of the Americas. Five summits have been conducted so far: in the US (Miami, 1994), Bolivia (Santa Cruz, 1996), Chile (Santiago, 1998), Canada (Québec, 2001) and Argentina (Mar del Plata, 2005). There was also a Special Summit held in Mexico (Monterrey, 2004) dealing with economic growth with equity for social development, democratic governance and to reduce poverty. Since 1994 countries have been submitting follow-up and implementation reports around the Mandates and Plans of Action derived from these summits (and from the various ministerial meetings associated to them), which comprise a wide range of issues, education being just one of them.
- In Miami, education was included as ‘initiative 16’ within the agreed platform. In Santiago, specific objectives and goals were established regarding universal access to quality primary education for all children, access to and completion of quality secondary education for young people, and access to lifelong learning for the population. OAS, IDB, ECLAC and the World Bank were requested to support countries in achieving these goals. In 1999, the XXIX OAS General Assembly held in Guatemala adopted the “Inter-American Program on Education”, and the Secretary of Public Education of the Mexican Government assumed its coordination. In Mar del Plata, the summit focus was on ‘Creating Jobs to Fight Poverty and Strengthen Democratic Governance’. Among other things, it was decided to advance in the eradication of illiteracy, to improve technical and professional training, and to include in the school curricula the study of the fundamental principles and rights at work according to ILO’s approach to ‘decent work’. A final evaluation of this Summits process in 2010, the year adopted as its deadline, will tell us what has been accomplished over 16 years of numerous meetings and activities in many areas, and in education in particular.
- PREALC is a regional project coordinated by OREALC, UNESCO’s regional office based in Santiago de Chile. It was approved by the Ministers of Education in Havana, in 2002, as a continuation of the Major Project of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, also coordinated by OREALC, which came to an end in 2000. PREALC aims to support the achievement of the six EFA goals in the region by 2017. It is conceived as an action framework, organised around four guiding principles – from inputs and structure to people, from content transmission to human integral development, from homogeneity to

diversity, and from schooling to the education society – and five strategic focuses to facilitate necessary changes, promote regional dialogue, and mobilise and enhance international cooperation for this purpose. At the II Meeting of Ministers of Education convened by PREALC in Argentina in 2007, progress and achievements since 2002 were evaluated and a Declaration and Recommendations were issued to guide PREALC's implementation in the coming years.

- The 2021 Education Goals are a new Ibero-American initiative, coordinated by OEI, officially proposed and launched in May 2008 and currently under debate (preliminary document) in various ministerial and expert meetings as well as on the internet.

**Table 3: Hemispheric, regional and Ibero-American education initiatives and plans (1998-2021)**

<p><b>'Initiative 16' and Inter-American Program on Education</b> (agreed at the I and II Summit of the Americas, Miami, 1994 and Chile, 1998)</p>	<p><b>PREALC Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean</b> (approved by Ministers of Education, Havana, 2002)</p>	<p><b>2021 Education Goals</b> (agreed at the XVIII Ibero-American Conference on Education, El Salvador, May 2008)</p>
<p><b>1994-2010</b></p>	<p><b>2002-2017</b></p>	<p><b>2009-2021</b></p>
<p>Summits of the Americas/ Organization of American States (OAS)</p>	<p>UNESCO-OREALC</p>	<p>Ibero-American Summits/ Organization of IberoAmerican States (OEI)</p>
<p>- Goal 1: universal access to and completion of quality primary education for all children; - Goal 2: access for at least 75% of young people to quality secondary education, with increasing proportion of young people who complete secondary education; - Goal 3: offering lifelong learning opportunities to society.</p>	<p>Five strategic focuses considered strategic to achieve Education for All goals in the region:  - Focus 1: education contents and practices. - Focus 2: teachers and strengthening their participation in education change. - Focus 3: the culture of schools to convert them into participatory learning communities. - Focus 4: management of education systems in order to make them more flexible and to offer effective lifelong learning opportunities. - Focus 5: social responsibility for education to generate commitment to its development and results.</p>	<p>- Goal 1: Reinforce and widen social participation in educational action - Goal 2: Increase educational opportunities and attention to students' diverse needs - Goal 3: Increase the supply of initial education and enhance its educational potential - Goal 4: Universalise primary and basic secondary education and improve their quality - Goal 5: Offer a meaningful curriculum that ensures the acquisition of basic competencies for personal development and democratic citizenship - Goal 6: Increase the participation of youth in upper secondary, technical professional and higher education - Goal 7: Facilitate the connection between education and work through technical professional education - Goal 8: Offer all people lifelong education opportunities - Goal 9: Strengthen the teaching profession - Goal 10: Widen the Ibero-American knowledge space and strengthen scientific research - Goal 11: Invest more and better</p>
<p><a href="http://www.summitsoftheamericas.org/">http://www.summitsoftheamericas.org/</a> <a href="http://www.summit-americas.org/Education/education.htm">http://www.summit-americas.org/Education/education.htm</a></p>	<p><a href="http://www.unesco.org/santiago">http://www.unesco.org/santiago</a></p>	<p>Translated from the Spanish original <a href="http://www.oei.es/metas2021/indice.htm">http://www.oei.es/metas2021/indice.htm</a></p>

(Elaborated by R.M.Torres)

# The identity of the adult learning and education field: Terminologies, actors, objectives, areas and trends

## Conceptual and terminological issues

### Adult education

UNESCO's definition of *adult education*, as given by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED, 1997; see Annex A) – which includes all levels of formal education, including tertiary education – does not reflect common understandings and realities of the term as used in this region. In most Latin American countries, *adult education* is associated with the poor and with basic learning needs. Literacy, primary and/or basic education, (pre-)vocational education, and non-formal education programmes dominate the scenario. In some countries (including some small ones, like Bolivia) adult education is being expanded to cover not only primary but also secondary education. Only in Cuba, Venezuela in recent years, and some English-speaking Caribbean countries is it extended all the way to tertiary education. In the latter, some countries – for example Anguilla and Jamaica – include also teacher education and public sector training within *adult education*.

On the other hand, ALE (adult learning and education) – the term proposed by UIL for the elaboration of national CONFINTEA VI reports – is not familiar in this region. In the majority of English-speaking Caribbean countries the term used is *Adult and Continuing Education* (ACE), with adulthood starting at age 18. The most common term utilised across Latin America is *EPJA – Educación de Personas Jóvenes y Adultas* (literally: Education for Young and Adult Persons).<sup>13</sup> Among the various terms used, many include the word *Youth*, incorporated since the mid-1980s and 1990s in recognition of the increasing presence and importance of young people in 'adult education' programmes and classes, and the need to give specific attention and treatment to young people within such programmes.

In Chile and other countries, the official term continues to be *Adult Education*. In Brazil the extended term is *Youth and Adult Education* (EJA). Many refer to *Continuing Education* or to *Popular Education* as equivalent to Adult Education. Others use the term *Alternative Education* (for example, Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and Nicaragua), *Non-Regular Education* (for example, Panama) or *Permanent Education* (for example, Bolivia and Paraguay). Bolivia defines Permanent Education as "that which takes place throughout life, gathers knowledge and experiences acquired daily, both individually and collectively, and is promoted by the initiative of organised social groups in response to needs and interests in the line of Popular Education."<sup>14</sup> In Ecuador, the name adopted in the 1980s for the Adult Education Department within the Ministry of Education was *Permanent Popular Education*, which remains. Also, in several countries there are associations and activities around *Social Education*, which comprises adult education, but the term is not used in official structures and documents.

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<sup>13</sup> During the preparation of this regional report an online consultation on the topic was organised, which concluded that EPJA should be the term used. Comments received (in Spanish) may be read at the blog organised for this working process <http://confinteavi.blogspot.com/> The final document of the Mexico regional conference adopted the acronym EPJA and translated it into English as 'Adult and Youth Education' (AYE).

<sup>14</sup> See Bolivia's Ministry of Education/Alternative Education website <http://www2.minedu.gov.bo/veea/dgea/index.htm>

Whatever the name adopted, national reports and studies confirm the existence of different understandings of 'adult education' throughout the region. Three important differentiating factors are:

- **Age:** the majority establishes 15 years as the starting point, but the range varies between 10 and 18 years. Some countries have programmes for out-of-school adolescents (such as Mexico's 'Education Model for Life and Work 10-14' and Peru's sub-programme for 12-18-year-olds within the Alternative Basic Education Programme). Also, some countries or programmes restrict the age upwards (current certification programmes by INEA in Mexico run from 15 to 34 years of age), while others place no age limit;
- **Levels covered:** from basic literacy to tertiary education, with the majority of countries currently offering the equivalent to primary or basic education. St Vincent & the Grenadines explicitly eliminates tertiary education from its definition of ACE, understood as '*education or training on a part-time basis for persons over compulsory school age to advance knowledge, skills and cultural awareness, but does not include tertiary education*' (St Vincent & the Grenadines CONFINTEA VI report, 2008:10); and
- Inclusion or not of **training:** some countries/programmes include within ALE only activities conceived as 'education', while others also include *training*. In Haiti the term used is Adult Education and Training (*Éducation et Formation des Adultes – EdFoA*); since 2006 the name of the ministry has been *Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle – MENFP*).

In all cases, reference is made to various promoters and providers of ALE, including government, civil society, churches, and the for-profit private sector, with the exception of Cuba where the government is the only provider. In most countries, ALE is officially under the responsibility of Ministries of Education. In Antigua, it is the Women's Desk that organises ALE programmes (Warrican, 2008b). In the past few years, some national literacy campaigns have been located under the responsibility of Ministries for Social Development (for instance, Uruguay and Panama, who both use the '*Yo Sí Puedo*' programme). Specific programmes addressed to youth or women are often in the charge of ministries of the Family, Youth, Women, Social Inclusion, and others; also, programmes dealing with vocational and technical training are often linked to Ministries of Labour. Although it is generally acknowledged that ALE runs across different sectors and Ministries, statistical and financial information is seldom provided or available for the 'non-education sector'.

## Literacy

"Literacy is the ability to use printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential."

(Definition of *literacy* by the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey)

*Literacy* is a particularly confusing area, characterised by varied and even *ad-hoc* terminologies and definitions, as verified in the preparation of this regional report by the analysis of numerous documents (see Box 3). The lack of international consensus on the subject, and the continued changes of terms and notions, are also reflected in this region. Some traditional differences relate to the usual understanding of *literacy* as youth/adult literacy versus literacy as an all-embracing concept, for all ages, in and out of school; the inclusion or not of *numeracy*; literacy as a *stage* versus literacy as a (lifelong learning) *process*; the *scope* of literacy, understood as initial, basic, literacy, or as more advanced knowledge and use of the written language. Some specify the language/s to be considered in the definition of a literate person (for example, Creole in Haiti or Dutch in Suriname). The term *litteracies*, in plural, has been introduced in the past few years by academics linked to so-called New Literacy Studies; others, on the contrary, prefer to expand the concept of literacy to include the new and wider demands posed on reading and writing (Torres, 2008b). Also, the terms *illiteracy* and *literacy* are increasingly used in a loose way, as

equivalent to 'lack of knowledge on'/'basic knowledge of' practically any field (for example, digital illiteracy/literacy, scientific illiteracy/literacy, environmental illiteracy/literacy, health illiteracy/literacy, and so on), thus embracing the old prejudice that associates *illiteracy* with ignorance.

### Box 3

#### Notions of adult literacy in selected Latin American and Caribbean countries

**Argentina:** "Mechanical reading and writing are differentiated from the literacy process that allows people to understand the world, their own community, their context."

**Guatemala:** "Literacy is understood as the initial systematic stage of integral basic education. It also implies the development of skills and knowledge that respond to the socio-cultural and economic-productive needs of the population. This initial phase consists in learning to read, write and calculate basic mathematical problems: post-literacy is the follow-up, reinforcement and expansion stage towards integral basic education that is motivational and practical, in the sense of providing immediate benefits to the newly-literate person. Literacy and post-literacy are complementary within one single process in Maya and Spanish languages."

**Haiti:** "Making a person literate in Haiti is leaving him/her apt for reading and writing in a fluid manner, and in Creole, a small text of about 15 lines, and also to maintain and even develop this skill throughout his/her life" (Project of the national literacy campaign 2007-2010).

**Jamaica:** New definition of literacy: "Literacy is not just the ability to read and write, the kind of definition which for many years in the past was the norm. It is more than that. In order to live and learn in our present knowledge-based and information-intensive societies, literacy needs now to be viewed as the ability to understand and to use various types of information, in the various communities; it must be linked to societal and cultural practices for the definition to be meaningful. Literacy encompasses among other things the ability to read, write and comprehend in one's native/standard language; numeracy; the ability to comprehend visual images and representations such as signs, maps and diagrams – visual literacy; information technological literacy and the understanding of how information/communication technology impacts our every action (e.g. using barcodes on goods we purchase) and also scientific literacy."

**Mexico:** "Literacy is a human right that enhances the appropriation of knowledge and favors participation in diverse areas of social life. Therefore, even at the initial level, INEA (Institute for the Education of Adults) believes it is not enough that persons learn to sign or to write their own name; they need to understand what they are signing and, moreover, decide whether they want to do it or not, because they understand the situation."

**St Lucia:** "Literacy involves a complex set of abilities to use and understand all aspects of communication in the modern world". Literacy abilities are not static and will vary according to the needs of our changing societies. Literacy development requires the integration of speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and problem solving. It includes a range of skills required to cope in a dynamic and complex world. The process of acquiring literacy begins before school with the child's acquisition of his/her first language and the institutions developed about the way communication works in natural settings. The development of literacy abilities continues beyond school in the lifelong learning opportunities/potential activated for personal and community development." (Definition adopted within the Literacy Policy and Plan developed by the Ministry of Education in 2005).

**Suriname:** "A person is literate when he/she is able to read and write and especially in Dutch (the official language of Suriname)".

Source: CONFINTEA VI national reports (2008). Translations into English from original texts in French (Haiti) and Spanish (Argentina, Guatemala and Mexico).

(Elaborated by R.M. Torres)

The dominant trend continues bound to the traditional dichotomies – illiteracy / literacy; ‘absolute’ illiteracy / ‘functional’ illiteracy. However, knowledge in the field has advanced considerably over the past decades, showing the obsolescence of such dichotomous thinking. Literacy is a continuum, and there are varied levels of mastery of the written language, as is widely acknowledged today.<sup>15</sup>

The ‘functionality’ of literacy – the term officially approved in 1978 at the UNESCO General Conference, and understood as a person’s ability to “engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his or her group and community and also for enabling him or her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his or her own and the community’s development” (quoted in EFA *GMR* 2006:22) – has come to be viewed with two different lenses: associated to a certain amount of years of schooling, or associated to the linkage between literacy and vocational training, work or income-generating activities.

Both notions are present in this region. The dominant one is that which associates ‘functional illiteracy’ with less than four years of schooling (SITEAL’s notion of ‘incipient education’).<sup>16</sup> However, the idea that four years of schooling ensure ‘*functional literacy*’ has been challenged in this region, empirically tested since the 1980s, and increasingly voiced by the English-speaking Caribbean (Warrican, 2008a). A pioneering cross-national study on ‘*functional literacy*’ conducted by UNESCO-OREALC in the late 1990s in urban areas of seven Latin American countries (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, Paraguay and Venezuela) provided empirical evidence confirming that four years of schooling are not enough to ensure usable and sustainable reading and writing skills, that what matters is not only the number of years of schooling but also the quality of such schooling and of the context (Infante, 2000). For many years ECLAC has been claiming in this region that at least 12 years of schooling are necessary for literacy to be ‘functional’ and make a difference in the life of a person.

### **Lifelong learning**

The concept remains obscure worldwide and is being understood and utilised in most diverse ways. It emerged in the North, closely related to economic growth, competitiveness and employability, a strategy for preparing the required human resources for the ‘information society’ and the ‘knowledge-based economy’ (Torres, 2004).<sup>17</sup>

Generally lifelong learning continues to be used interchangeably with lifelong education, without differentiating *education* and *learning*, as was the case in the Delors Commission report and remains so in many international documents and websites; and it continues to be associated with adults rather than with the entire lifespan, ‘from cradle to grave’. Despite the centrality of lifelong learning in recent UNESCO rhetoric and policies, neither ‘*learning*’ nor ‘*lifelong learning*’ are explicitly associated with EFA. In fact, none of these terms are incorporated in the glossary of the EFA *Global Monitoring Report* 2009.

Lifelong learning is mentioned today in many legal and policy/programme documents in this region, with the same biases that are to be found internationally. The reduction of lifelong learning to adults is present in most national and regional education initiatives and plans. Lifelong learning appears often as a separate line of action or goal rather than as an embracing category. In the Jamaican Ministry of Education’s structure, for example, lifelong

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<sup>15</sup> There are various proposals to classify literacy levels and competencies (for a brief international account see Letelier, 2008). The International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS), which measures literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skill levels, identifies five levels of proficiency. See IALLS/Statistics Canada <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/> See also LAMP (Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme), developed by UIS upon IALLS [http://www.uis.unesco.org/ev.php?URL\\_ID=6409&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201](http://www.uis.unesco.org/ev.php?URL_ID=6409&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201)

<sup>16</sup> In Paraguay the 2002 Census defined an illiterate person as someone aged 15 years or older not having completed second grade. (Paraguay CONFINTEA VI report, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> See European Commission/Education and Training/Lifelong Learning [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/III/III\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/III/III_en.html)

learning has been added as a sixth section, next to the other five sections on early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary and special education.<sup>18</sup>

The fact is that the paradigm shift proposed worldwide – from *education* to *learning*, from *adult education* to *adult learning* – has not been appropriated in this region, not only in relation to youth and adult education but also to the education field in general. Although CONFINTEA V (1997) had strong regional resonance, the term *learning* was never introduced in its follow-up. EPJA (Education of Youth and Adults) was the term adopted in the Regional Framework for Action following CONFINTEA V.

From the documents and websites reviewed, the lifelong learning terminology appears to be more widespread – and more embedded in recent policies and plans – in English-speaking Caribbean countries than in Latin American ones. However, this may also have to do with the fact that lifelong learning has not been properly and consistently translated into Spanish and Portuguese, where the equivalent is a long phrase, and *learning* continues to be exchanged with *education*.<sup>19</sup> Also, in CARICOM countries, lifelong learning seems to follow the frameworks adopted in European countries – for example human resource development. In Jamaica, for example, where a lifelong learning policy was devised in 2005, lifelong learning is oriented towards work and focused on the High School Equivalency Programme (HISEP). The vision of the policy is '*A transformed Jamaica in which each person values and participates in Lifelong Learning to generate and sustain personal productivity in the pursuit of national growth and development*'. The policy was developed by a special committee of the Human Employment and Resource Training (HEART) Trust and the National Training Agency (NTA), the institutions that facilitate and coordinate workforce development in Jamaica.

It is not easy to find programmes dealing with inter-generational education and learning. The most common situations are to be found in the literacy field, with schoolchildren, adolescents and youth teaching their parents, neighbours or other adults to read and write and do basic arithmetic – such as one of the sub-programmes run by CONALFA in Guatemala (UIL, 2008; UIL/DVV, 2008) – and similar experiences in other countries in the region (Torres, 2008b). However, family and community education and learning programmes, where members of all ages are included, learn together and/or from each other, are rather rare, and are difficult to classify as 'adult education' anyway.

## ALE objectives, areas and modalities

"Redefining the objectives of EPJA as: preparing youth and adult persons as autonomous citizens, capable of participating and organizing themselves in a collective, critical and creative manner in local and wider spaces; of assuming their own tasks when facing changes, and of living with one another in solidarity."

Regional Framework for Action for EPJA in Latin America and the Caribbean (2000-2010)  
(UNESCO-OREALC *et al*, 2000:14).

As described in the national CONFINTEA VI reports presented to UIL, objectives attributed to ALE vary considerably from country to country, depending on the political, social, cultural and educational situation, and on the understanding of ALE in each national context and moment. Common aims expressed in these reports refer to ensuring literacy, compulsory education, linkages with and transition to the world of work, and improving overall education and learning opportunities of people in order to improve their lives. In Cuba, where the focus is

<sup>18</sup> See Jamaican Ministry of Education website <http://www.moec.gov.jm/index.htm>

<sup>19</sup> The Spanish equivalent to Lifelong Learning is *Aprendizaje a lo largo de toda la vida*. Translators continue to confuse *education* and *learning* and treat them as equivalent. The First World Forum on Lifelong Learning (Paris, October 2008), organised by the World Committee for Lifelong Learning (CMEF), was translated into Spanish as *Foro Mundial para la Educación y la Formación a lo largo de la vida* and into French as *Forum Mondial pour l'Éducation et la Formation Tout au Long de la Vie* <http://www.3lworldforum.org/>

now on improving secondary and tertiary education, ALE's main objectives are the professional enhancement and training of workers and of housewives, attention to the elderly, and the promotion of an "integral general culture for all citizens." Peru states four main objectives: reducing illiteracy, improving regular basic education, improving higher education, and promoting citizens' participation in public accountability. In Guatemala, a specific objective is "restructuring bilingual intercultural literacy". There are few mentions of critical thinking, social awareness, empowerment, participation and transformation, which were common in the 1970s and 1980s, not only in non-governmental but also in official documents. Paraguay is one of the few countries that mentions empowerment and transformative social action as a specific objective of ALE.

The traditional association of ALE with remedial, compensatory and 'second chance' education for the poor continues to predominate in the region. Four major trends can be identified in educational provision by the various actors:

- literacy for out-of-school youth and adults, especially in Latin America, less so in the Caribbean;
- completion and certification of compulsory education for youth and adults, with equivalency with the formal school system, each country adopting its own standards, strategies, modalities, age groups and levels to be prioritised, often referring to night classes and centres;
- preparation for work, mainly addressed to youth and young adults, through (pre)vocational and (pre)technical education and training programmes by Ministries of Education and/or other Ministries (Labour, Agriculture, Housing, and so on) or directly provided by the private sector; and
- multiple topics covered by a mosaic of programmes, courses and workshops (such as human rights, peace, arts, culture, health, citizenship, leadership, local development, family, environment, social economy, ICTs, prevention of HIV/SIDA, drug addiction, and others).

Several features that have been central to school education reform and to the overall reform of the state in the past two decades have also been incorporated to ALE reform:

- Decentralisation: in many countries, provincial and local governments have been transferred important responsibilities within ALE, especially financial and administrative. A salient example is that of Brazil in the past few years;
- Outsourcing: mostly to organisations of civil society (NGOs, universities, social movements, and others) hired to develop specific programmes or tasks, often adopting results-based schemes. Strong in the 1990s and early 2000s, outsourcing is being reverted to in some countries, especially in relation to adult literacy. This is the case for example in Brazil and Nicaragua, where newly-elected governments decided to resume administration of national literacy campaigns and programmes; and
- Partnerships of diverse nature and scope between government, civil society, faith-based groups, and the private sector, which has been incorporated as a common feature in education reform and policy-making in most countries in the region.

In relation to these and other aspects, there is a wide variety of modalities and combinations in the region and in each particular country. Box 4 below contrasts some of the peculiarities of ALE-related 'models' in Brazil and Mexico, the two largest countries in the region.

#### Box 4

##### Brazil and Mexico: two different realities and 'models' vis-à-vis ALE

Brazil and Mexico, both members of the Nine Most Populous Countries Initiative launched in 1993 within the EFA movement, show different realities, trends and developments in relation to education and to ALE in particular.

Brazil is considered the most unequal country within this most unequal region in the world. Such inequality is reflected of course in education at all levels. Brazil is one of the two countries participating in UNESCO's LIFE (Literacy Initiative for Empowerment) addressed to the countries with the highest illiteracy rates. On the other hand, Brazil is the hub of *Popular Education* and of the MOVA (*Movimento de Alfabetização* – Literacy Movement), initiated by Paulo Freire in 1989, and a regional reference in terms of strong organised social movements demanding their rights – education one of them – and establishing alliances with government to ensure such rights, such as CUT (*Central Unica dos Trabalhadores* – Unique Workers' Centre) and MST (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* – Landless Rural Workers' Movement).

Mexico has a highly institutionalised ALE model operating for nearly three decades through decentralised INEA (National Institute for the Education of Adults, created in 1981). INEA has normative, technical and political roles, and controls 1 per cent of the budget of the Secretary of Public Education (SEP). It operates at national, state and local levels, and has agreements with 27 out of the 32 states in the country. INEA's *Modelo Educación para la Vida y el Trabajo* (Education Model for Life and Work – MEVyT), addressed to the population 15 years and older, is considered one of the most advanced in the region nowadays. There is also a special MEVyT programme for 10- to 14-year-olds.

Brazil, on the contrary, has been operating in a rather *ad-hoc* and flexible manner, with policies and administrative-financial arrangements that change continuously over time, especially regarding literacy provision. The national *Alfabetização Solidaria Programme* (PAS), started in 1997 and co-financed by the government and private enterprise, was in charge of an NGO, AlfaSol, which ran the programme for nine years through alliances with 212 higher education institutions and 166 private companies. The current national *Brasil Alfabetizado* – Literate Brazil – programme, launched in 2003 when Lula assumed the government and based on lessons learned from the AlfaSol experience, was again taken by government through the creation of an Extraordinary Secretary for the Eradication of Illiteracy (SEEA), with decentralised strategies and municipal governments playing a key role. The goal of the programme is to engage 1.5 million people in literacy classes every year. Only in 2004 was a Department of Adult and Youth Education created within the Ministry of Education, four decades after having been eliminated from its formal structure.

Two decades ago, in Brazil and in Mexico more than half of 50-year-olds had no or incipient education. However, Mexico's intergenerational increase of educational access has been more accelerated than that in Brazil. At this point, 13 per cent of the 14-24 age group in Brazil is in the incipient education group, while in Mexico the proportion for the same age group is 6 per cent.

Both the Brazilian and the Mexican "models" for doing business in adult education have flaws, pros and cons. Brazil would benefit from a more institutionalised structure that limits *ad-hocism* and perpetual change, while Mexico would benefit from less rigid and bureaucratic structures, heavy institutional legacies and inertias, and more meaningful social participation. However, education models reflect countries' idiosyncrasies and cannot be interchanged; change must come from within, from their own dynamics and from the organised pressure of their own societies.

Sources: Brazil and Mexico CONFINTEA VI national reports, 2008; Gadotti, 2008; Ireland, 2007, 2008; Di Pierro, 2008a,b; EFA 2008 Global Monitoring Report; SITEAL, n.d.

*Alfabetização Solidaria* website <http://www.alfabetizacao.org.br/>

Brazil MEC website <http://portal.mec.gov.br/>

Mexico INEA website <http://www.inea.gob.mx/>

(Elaborated by R.M. Torres)

## Linkages between formal and non-formal education

Non-formal education (NFE) has always been associated with adult education, and not used – or rarely used – in this region to refer also to children's education, as is the case in Africa and Asia, and as defined in ISCED 1997 (See Annex A).<sup>20</sup> However, in general terms, the traditional association between adult education and NFE is no longer valid for this region as a whole, although it may remain applicable for a few specific countries. ALE moves within and between formal, non-formal and informal learning channels; however, traditional terminologies, dichotomies and structures make it difficult to capture and understand such dynamics.

The borders between formal and non-formal education have never been clear and are additionally challenged today in ALE for a number of reasons, including:

- the strong trend towards completion and accreditation of formal studies – the battle to universalise primary/basic/compulsory education, against 'low schooling', 'sub-schooling', or 'educational backwardness' as some countries put it;
- the expansion and combination of old and new technologies and media in the field, opening the way for new and hybrid teaching and learning modalities that no longer fit traditional formal/non-formal/informal distinctions;
- the many ALE activities taking place in varied instances and fields, although not acknowledged as 'youth and adult education'; and
- the usual confusion between the terms *non-formal* and *informal* applied to education and learning.

NFE has not disappeared; it is probably more available, flexible, diverse and ubiquitous – and thus 'invisible' – than it was before, and a portion of it is regulated and offered by official bodies and is being certificated. As with all other issues, there is great variety in this respect in the realities of the region and of each particular country. Few national CONFINTEA VI reports refer to NFE as a specific category of programmes; rather, programmes are named according to the respective issues and topics covered. NFE is substituted with terms such as *out-of-school*, *alternative*, *open*, *flexible*, *popular*, *community-based* and others. In Peru, the FE/NFE distinction is currently applied to the governmental/non-governmental distinction, regardless of the modalities adopted in each case; also, non-governmental provision is labeled 'community education' (Peru CONFINTEA VI report, 2008). Haiti, while acknowledging the NFE terminology, states that there are no linkages between FE and NFE programmes in the country (Haiti CONFINTEA VI report, 2008).

In many countries, the bridge between ALE and school culture has become stronger and more visible on several fronts: equivalencies and official certification by Ministries of Education; using school institutions for ALE purposes (in some cases with specific policies and/or regulations to ensure shared use of infrastructure and equipment); hiring schoolteachers as adult educators; associating 'quality teaching' in ALE with formal (school) teacher certification; complementing regular programmes with flexible courses or with on-the-job training, and so on.

Venezuela is an illustrative case of challenging borders between FE/NFE across all educational levels: since 2003 the provision of education for youth and adults has been extended on a massive scale from literacy to tertiary education, through non-formal strategies (so-called '*missions*', attached to the Ministry of Education) and formal accreditation of studies. According to official 2008 information, over 4 million Venezuelans have been engaged in the various Missions: a million and a half in Robinson Mission I (literacy), another million and a half in Robinson Mission II (primary education), over 800,000

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<sup>20</sup> See also UNESCO Non Formal Education website, focused on civil society, NGOs, and especially the CCNGO/EFA (Collective Consultation on NGOs on EFA) [http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=30233&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=30233&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

in the Ribas Mission (secondary education), and over 500,000 in the Sucre Mission (tertiary education).<sup>21</sup>

While the general trend is towards 'formalising' or 'regularising' an important portion of ALE governmental/MOE provision, in a country like Uruguay – with a strong public education tradition and with an overall high school level of the population – NFE appears as a novelty, a complement to formal school education alongside life and for adults in particular. The 'Learn Always Programme' ('*Programa Aprender Siempre*'– PAS), launched in 2008 by the newly created Non-Formal Education Area within the Ministry of Education, consists of a series of open weekly courses on very diverse topics addressing the 20-60 year old population (Uruguay CONFINTEA VI report, 2008).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> See Venezuela – Ministry of Popular Power for Education <http://www.me.gob.ve/> *Robinson Mission* <http://www.misionrobinson.gov.ve/>

<sup>22</sup> See Uruguay – Ministry of Education/Nonformal Education Department <http://educacion.mec.gub.uy/noformal.htm>

# The last decade: From CONFINTEA V (1997) to CONFINTEA VI (2009)

2000

*“Meeting the educational needs of 39 million illiterates and 110 million adults and youths with partially completed primary education does not represent a recent challenge, but is the result of a debt that has been growing over many decades. Whatever may and should be done through EPJA in particular and through the global educational system in general, will always be important, albeit insufficient to face such towering problems. What is required – not in addition to, but above all – are measures intended to affect profound social changes, to remedy social inequality, to bring about a reduction in extreme poverty as well as in extreme wealth.*

*Larger budgets will also be required in order to reach those who have been excluded and, as repeatedly stated, that all on-stream educational reform initiatives fully assume the education of adults and youths as a key modality for addressing educational and social exclusion. Those who wield real power would have to produce the political, legal and financial means to allow educators and other social actors to turn this intention into a reality.”*

Regional Framework for Action on Adult and Youth Education (EPJA)  
in Latin America and the Caribbean (2000-2010) (UNESCO-OREALC *et al.*, 2000: 68).

2003

*“In Latin America and the Caribbean, literacy has recently been reinvigorated in many countries. New national coalitions and institutions have been formed specifically to administer youth and adult education. Co-operation in vocational education has begun in some countries. Progress made in constructing adult education theories in the region has led to a redefinition of the basic learning needs of youth and adults, including conflict resolution, education for peace, citizenship and cultural identity; also involved are the appreciation of cultural patrimony as well as health issues, human rights and interculturalism – not only for indigenous peoples, but for the entire population.*

*Nonetheless, there are still 39 million illiterates, 11% of the population 15 years and older. To this figure must be added 110 million young persons and adults who, not having completed their primary education, could qualify as functional illiterates. In this region, 20% of children do not finish primary education. Although relatively advanced, since almost universal access is available, the educational system in Latin America faces a significant problem of quality.”*

In: “Recommitting to Adult Education and Learning”, Synthesis Report of the  
CONFINTEA V Midterm Review (Bangkok, September 6-11, 2003), UNESCO Institute for Education  
(UIE), 2003.

A review of the 20 national studies conducted by CREFAL and CEAAL in 2006-2007 concluded that “ten years after CONFINTEA V, the data compiled in the regional study show little evolution with respect to the diagnosed situation a decade ago.” (Di Pierro, 2008b:118. Translated from the original Spanish.) This is also the conclusion from the research conducted for this regional report.

Structural issues of the diagnosis and the ‘final call’ included almost a decade ago in the Regional Framework for Action (2000-2010) remain as pending challenges, while new social/educational problems have emerged and some old ones have worsened nationally, regionally and globally. The connection between adult education and (sustainable) development is nowhere to be seen. Areas such as the environment and citizenship, emphasised in the Regional Framework, have been little developed or are not being credited as ‘adult education’. The low status and articulation of the ALE field may be contributing to its low profile in relation to these issues that have become increasingly visible over the past few years (Caruso *et al.*, 2008; Di Pierro, 2008b).

It is also true, however, that some of the advances identified both in 2000 and in 2003 have been sustained and further developed. Suriname is the only country that states that nothing has happened in the country in terms of ALE over the past decade (Suriname CONFINTEA VI report, 2008).

This past decade has witnessed major changes globally and regionally, that have had both positive and negative impacts on education and on ALE specifically. Today's scenario is contradictory: there are advances, stagnation and drawbacks in several aspects, as well as identifiable trends and challenges that may help visualise and delineate better the way forward, now that the future is even more unpredictable than it was a decade ago.

Despite the high activity that was triggered in this region by CONFINTEA V (1997), very few national reports mention it as background.<sup>23</sup> This absence is also made evident in the national studies conducted within the regional CREFAL-CEAAL study (Caruso *et al*, 2008). Moreover, few mention the Regional Framework for Action produced collectively in this region as a follow-up to CONFINTEA V, which specified guidelines, strategies and priorities for the 2000-2010 decade (See Box 5). In particular, there is no mention of this Regional Framework in the English-speaking Caribbean, suggesting that it represented basically a Latin American perspective.

Overall, the lack of historicity of policies and actions is a problematic issue in the field of education, and of the ALE field in particular. Everything can start from scratch, ignoring past experience and lessons learned. High turnover of adult education staff, at top and also at intermediate levels and on the ground, facilitates this lack of historicity and continuity.

#### Box 5

##### **Regional Framework for Action on Adult and Youth Education (EPJA) in Latin America and the Caribbean (2000-2010)**

The Regional Framework for Action was the result of a reflection process during the regional preparation for the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V, Hamburg, 1997). It concluded with a regional follow-up strategy to CONFINTEA V mandates. There were three important moments in the elaboration of this Framework: the regional preparatory conference for CONFINTEA V (Brasilia, January 1997), where priority groups and intervention areas were identified; national and sub-regional meetings to socialise CONFINTEA V results and deepen the reflection process on prioritised groups and areas; and the Technical Regional Meeting, "The New Challenges of Permanent Education in Adult and Youth Education in Latin America" (Santiago, August 2000), where the Regional Framework was drafted.

It adopted a ten-year framework (2000-2010), assumed *lifelong education* as a challenge and the following tasks: improving the unequal distribution of education to young and adult persons; contributing to creating the mechanisms to ensure previously hidden demand to be expressed; and satisfying demand effectively.

It was elaborated by a team of professionals and representatives of organisations linked to EPJA, in order to influence policy-makers in this field, especially ministries of education and other public and private organisations. Representatives of 21 Latin American and Caribbean countries participated in its elaboration, including Haiti and Belize, the only two non-Spanish speaking countries. UNESCO, CEAAL, CREFAL and CINTERFOR/ILO collaborated as well as Mexico's INEA and Chile's Ministry of Education.

Four priority groups were identified: indigenous groups, peasants, youth and women.

Seven priority intervention areas were identified: 1. Literacy; 2. Education and work; 3. Education, citizenship and human rights; 4. Peasant and indigenous education; 5. Education and youth; 6. Education and gender; 7. Education, local and sustainable development.

Source: UNESCO-OREALC/CREFAL/INEA/CEAAL, *Regional Framework for Action on Adult and Youth Education (EPJA) in Latin America and the Caribbean (2000-2010)*, Santiago, 2000.

See Spanish original in  
[http://www.ilo.org/public/spanish/region/ampro/cinterfor/newsroom/conf/mar\\_reg/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/spanish/region/ampro/cinterfor/newsroom/conf/mar_reg/index.htm)

<sup>23</sup> The report from Paraguay, prepared by a new team arriving with the new government, explicitly stated: "We have not found any document or reference to CONFINTEA V in the files of the Direction of Permanent Education or in consultation with its staff." (Paraguay CONFINTEA VI report 2008: 69).

## Reactivation of youth and adult education in the region

Since the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, ALE practically vanished in education policies and action in most countries in the region. Many adult education programmes were discontinued and adult education departments were minimised or closed in several countries (for example, in Argentina, Belize, Colombia or Peru). This was, among others, the result of explicit international policies and recommendations by the World Bank that actively promoted investment in primary education for children and argued – initially on the basis of one single desk study that used old data from the Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) in the 1960s – about the failure of adult literacy actions and the overall waste of investing in adult education (World Bank, 1995; Torres, 2000, 2004). Despite the approval in 1990 of the world *Education for All* (EFA) initiative (whose major international promoters and partners were UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank) – which included two specific goals related to youth and adult education (see Annex B)<sup>24</sup> – most governments in the region and many international agencies followed World Bank guidelines. Since the late 1990s and early 2000s the World Bank has been rectifying both arguments – the high ‘rates of return’ of primary education and the wastage and failure of adult education (Lauglo, 2001; Torres, 2004)<sup>25</sup> – and is currently providing loans for youth and adult education programmes and reforms in countries such as Chile and Mexico as well as some countries in the English-speaking Caribbean.

Since the late 1990s and early 2000s there has been a visible reactivation of ALE in the region, as a result of a mix of external factors (to the region and/or to each specific country, linked to international actors, initiatives and goals) and internal ones, linked to politics, social stability and organised pressure from interested national/local actors and groups.

The international background leading to the current regional scenario included the expansion and increasing visibility of poverty, unemployment, migration and social protest; the lack of attention to and poor results of ALE-related goals within the EFA agenda since 1990; a better information and knowledge base on ALE, its benefits and ‘cost-effectiveness’; the activation of lifelong learning as a new paradigm for education; the expansion of modern technologies; and the continued presence of the international adult education movement (Torres, 2004).

ALE in the region faces two contradictory trends: a strong push towards homogenisation (of policies, models, standards, benchmarks, and so on, via regional and international organisations promoting various initiatives and plans); and a call towards wider diversification, innovation, gender-, age-, context-, language- and culture-sensitive policies and interventions, in order to respond to specific needs and groups within each country.

The region also now faces an over-emphasis on literacy. There are too many and overlapping national, regional and international youth/adult literacy programmes and plans. There is a proliferation of events and meetings on the subject, and of inventories of ‘good’ or ‘best’ practice collected in recent times and available in publications and websites.<sup>26</sup> There is

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<sup>24</sup> EFA Goal 6, approved in 1990 (Jomtien) – dissemination of information through mass media and all available means – was not included in the evaluation of the 1990-2000 EFA decade and was eliminated from the EFA goals approved at the World Education Forum in 2000 (Dakar).

<sup>25</sup> See the World Bank’s Adult Outreach Education website, archived in a toolkit since June 2005 <http://go.worldbank.org/2F6VWCXNJ0> See also the World Bank’s section on lifelong learning [http://www1.worldbank.org/education/lifelong\\_learning/](http://www1.worldbank.org/education/lifelong_learning/)

<sup>26</sup> CEAAL: Bank of literacy methods and approaches <http://ceaal.org/content/blogcategory/33/122/>  
Convenio Andrés Bello (CAB): Literacy Portfolio <http://www.micrositios.net/cab/index.php?idcategoria=1091>  
Fundación Santillana: *Register your experience* <http://www.alfabetizacion.fundacionsantillana.org/paginas/registra.asp>  
OEI/SEGIB: Prizes for Ibero-American Literacy (Experiences in Youth and Adult Literacy and Education) <http://www.oei.es/concursoalfabetizacion/index.html>  
UNESCO: Effective Literacy Practices <http://www.unesco.org/uil/literacyprogrammes/>  
UNESCO-OREALC: *Red Innovemos / Innovemos network* <http://www.redinnovemos.org/>

an over-production and unnecessary duplication of diagnoses on ALE at country level, feeding the various programmes and plans. *Adult literacy* was the topic selected by the Global Campaign for Education for the 2009 Global Action Week (April 20-26).<sup>27</sup> This over-visibility of literacy compounds the low attention to and visibility of the many and varied areas of ALE that have less political impact.

Reactivation of ALE in the region is reflected by the following:

### Renewed impetus of youth/adult literacy

Many countries are currently running national literacy programmes or campaigns, even some of the countries with a tradition of strong public systems, high education standards and illiteracy rates of lower than 3 per cent such as Argentina and Uruguay, technically considered 'illiteracy free' for some time. The exception is Cuba, declared 'territory free of illiteracy' almost half a century ago (1961), as well as several countries in the English-speaking Caribbean where governmental focus on literacy is on the formal system (national CONFINTEA VI reports; Warrican, 2008a). There are also national, sub-national and local programmes operating under the responsibility of local governments, religious groups, teacher unions, NGOs, social movements and organisations (Caruso, *et al*, 2008; Torres, 2008b).

Following almost two decades of 'illiteracy reduction' goals within the EFA agenda (1990-2015), a new wave of 'illiteracy eradication' has taken over the region. On the one hand, this drive is related to the emergence of various progressive governments over the past few years, thus reviving the traditional link between literacy campaigns and progressive and revolutionary processes. In recent years/months countries such as Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Panama and Ecuador have launched national campaigns or programmes aimed at eradicating illiteracy, the first four using the Cuban 'Yo Sí Puedo' system. On the other hand, there is the emergence of new supranational and international actors engaged in adult education and especially adult literacy in the region, notably the Cuban government and its 'Yo Sí Puedo' programme, the Organization of IberoAmerican States (OEI) and the Ibero-American Plan for Youth and Adult Literacy and Basic Education (PIA) that it coordinates (see Table 4). The United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD, 2003-2012), coordinated by UNESCO worldwide, may also be providing an international framework for this renewed impetus.

**Table 4: Main supranational literacy *plus* initiatives operating in the region (2003-2015)**

	<i>Yo Sí Puedo</i> (Yes, I can)	PIA Ibero-American Plan for Literacy and Basic Education for Youth and Adults
Start/ Launch	2003 (Venezuela – Robinson Mission)	2007 XVI Ibero-american Summit (Montevideo, Nov. 2006) Base Document of PIA approved at the XVII Ibero-American Summit (Santiago, Chile, Nov.2007)
Timeframe	2003 – no deadline	2007-2015
Coordination	Cuban government IPLAC (Pedagogical Institute for Latin America and the Caribbean)	Spanish government OEI (Organization of Iberoamerican States) SEGIB (Iberoamerican General Secretariat)
Partners	Venezuelan government (since 2005)	<i>Convenio Andrés Bello</i> (CAB)

<sup>27</sup> See GCE 'The Big Read' <http://www.campaignforeducation.org/en/big-read> GCE describes *literacy* as "the acquisition and use of reading, writing and numeracy skills, and thereby the development of active citizenship, improved health and livelihoods, and gender equality."

Scope	International: operating in 27 countries in the world by 2008, most of them in Latin America and the Caribbean. <sup>28</sup>	Ibero-American: 18 Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries in the region, plus Haiti in the Caribbean (admitted in June 2008) <sup>29</sup> , and three countries in Europe: Spain, Portugal and Andorra.
Target population	Illiterate and semi-literate population in Third World countries (an estimated 1,500 million people)	34 million illiterates and 110 million with incomplete primary education (considered 'functional illiterates')
Goals	Eradicate illiteracy and ensure six years of primary education	Declare Ibero-America 'illiteracy free territory' and offer youth and adults the possibility of completing basic education (three-year course) and continue learning throughout life.
Literacy methodology	'Yo Sí Puedo' system (video-classes, primer, manual and facilitator)	No method specified
Estimated costs	Not specified	Per capita: US \$40 per student annually. Total amount needed until 2015: US \$4,000 million. (450 million annually over nine-year period)
Website	<a href="http://www.iplac.rimed.cu">http://www.iplac.rimed.cu</a>	<a href="http://www.oei.es/alfabetizacion_pia.htm">http://www.oei.es/alfabetizacion_pia.htm</a>

(Elaborated by R.M.Torres)

There are other supranational adult literacy initiatives initiated in the 1990s such as the PAEBAs (Adult Literacy and Basic Education Programmes – *Programas de Alfabetización y Educación Básica de Adultos*) approved in 1992 at the II Ibero-American Summit. The programme, aimed at achieving "limited goals", started in the Dominican Republic and El Salvador, and was later expanded to Honduras (1996-2003), Nicaragua (1997-2003), Paraguay (2000 onwards) and Peru (2003 onwards). There is also the 'Biliteracy Regional Project in Productive, Environmental, Gender and Communitarian Health Issues' initiated in 1998 by UNFPA/ECLAC in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay, and Peru (Torres, 2008b)<sup>30</sup>.

Also, since 2006 two countries in the region – Brazil and Haiti – are engaged in UNESCO's Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE, 2006-2015), a global strategic framework for the implementation of the United Nations Literacy Decade in order to meet the Education for All (EFA) goals, with particular focus on adults and out-of-school children. LIFE is coordinated by the UIL and targets the 35 countries in the world with the highest levels of illiteracy.

### Literacy within a broader educational and cultural perspective

As a trend, youth/adult literacy is viewed within a wider primary, basic and/or continuing education perspective, where literacy is considered an initial step or the first level of a regular education programme, in some cases comprising a few years of primary education, in others

<sup>28</sup> Cuba's CONFINTEA VI report indicated that between 2003 and 2008 over 3 million people had participated in 'Yo Sí Puedo' in the 27 countries and in the various levels of the programme.

<sup>29</sup> Haiti, official language French, is not an IberoAmerican country. Following regional pressure, including a campaign organised by CEAAL, OEI included Haiti in PIA (resolution taken at the IberoAmerican Literacy Congress held in Havana in June 2008). Since that time, however, according to Haiti authorities, OEI assistance has not yet materialised. In February 2009 the Haitian government, through the National Literacy Secretariat, announced that, due to serious budgetary constraints, the goal of providing literacy to 3 million people until the year 2010 will be reduced to 250,000 people. It also announced that the government would not request foreign aid, since "education is a matter of national sovereignty" (translated from the original French). Agence Haitienne de Presse (AHP), Port-au-Prince, 9 February, 2009.

<sup>30</sup> On PAEBAs see <http://www.mepsyd.es/educa/jsp/plantilla.jsp?id=2&area=coop-ib>

For the 'Biliteracy Project' see ECLAC [http://www.eclac.cl/Celade/bialfa/CE\\_BiAlfa-que00e.htm](http://www.eclac.cl/Celade/bialfa/CE_BiAlfa-que00e.htm) and <http://www.eclac.cl/bialfa/> See also UNFPA Bolivia <http://www.unfpa.org.bo/Intervencion/BiAlfa.htm>

including also secondary education (now part of compulsory education in several countries). In many countries, what used to be called *literacy* has now become Level 1 and *post-literacy* Levels 2/3 of a regular programme, generally adopting accelerated modalities.

An example of this trend can be found in Jamaica. The well-known Jamaican Movement for the Advancement of Literacy (JAMAL) was transformed in 2006 into the Jamaican Foundation for Lifelong Learning (JFLL), now engaged in expanding its traditional basic literacy and numeracy programmes to a wide range of educational opportunities for individuals aged 15 years and over, leading to improved basic and continuing education and secondary-level certification for 250,000 Jamaicans over the next five years (Jamaica CONFINTEA VI report; Anderson, 2008). OEI's PIA, Cuba's '*Yo Sí Puedo Seguir*' and UNESCO's LIFE also propose going beyond initial literacy. The declaration of Bolivia as 'illiteracy-free territory' in December 2008 – through the National Literacy Programme '*Yo Sí Puedo*' that lasted two years and a half, conducted in Spanish, Quechua and Aymara, with Cuban and Venezuelan support – was accompanied by the announcement of the '*Yo Sí Puedo Seguir*' follow-up, starting in early 2009 and offering completion of primary education in two to three years.<sup>31</sup> The same process will follow Nicaragua's national literacy campaign '*From Martí to Fidel*' (2007-2009), and the declaration of Nicaragua as free of illiteracy in July 2009. Ecuador's current government has also set July 2009 as the deadline to eradicate illiteracy in the country.

Concern with enhancing literate environments has begun to be subsumed within literacy policies and programmes in several countries. In the English-speaking Caribbean literacy, reading and linguistic policies tend to form part of a package rather than usual isolated lines of action (national CONFINTEA VI reports; Warrican, 2008a). In Venezuela, two and a half million 'Family Libraries' (*Bibliotecas Familiares*), containing 25 books each, were distributed to graduates of the Robinson Mission I, in 2004-2006. In Peru, 700 itinerant community libraries (100 books each) were created in 2008 in districts that achieved planned literacy goals within the National Mobilization Programme for Literacy (PRONAMA). In Brazil, a series of reading materials for neo-readers, produced through a National Literature for All Competition, was published within the Literate Brazil programme to reach over one million students in 2007, in the framework of a Ministry of Education-Brazilian Post Office agreement; also, rural libraries and tele-centres have been established in several zones, and librarians/reading agents trained, including postmen (ALE national report; Ireland, 2007). In Colombia, the designation of Bogotá as World Book Capital in 2007 was a recognition of the multiple and highly innovative initiatives taken by the city government to make reading a public good (Torres, 2008b).

### **Steps towards a clearer institutionalisation of ALE**

Advances have been made in terms of legislation and policy in the majority of countries, as indicated in several national CONFINTEA VI reports. There is increased recognition of the right to (free) education, as well as to linguistic and cultural diversity and to inter-culturality. Youth and adult education has been included, with specific lines of action and goals, in recent national education reforms and plans emerging in the region, some of them 10-year plans (such as in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Paraguay). In Paraguay, the 2020 Strategic Plan for Education Reform includes two priority areas: *school basic education* and *general basic education*, the latter embracing community education, bilingual literacy and basic education for youth and adults (especially for Guaraní native speakers), and special programmes for out-of-school adolescents (10-13 years of age) (Paraguay CONFINTEA VI report). On the other hand, there are countries, such as Belize, still lacking a national coordinating body for ALE (Belize CONFINTEA VI report, 2008).

In a few countries – Cuba and Mexico for some considerable time, and more recently countries such as Chile, Venezuela, Bolivia or Paraguay – ALE has become more

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<sup>31</sup> See more at Bolivia's Ministry of Education and Cultures website <http://www.minedu.gov.bo/>

institutionalised, with policies and institutions pointing towards the building of an adult education *system* or *subsystem*, rather than the usual and discontinued *ad-hoc* measures and interventions. All of them have undergone or are going through significant ALE reforms in the past few years. In Bolivia, the process of transforming adult education started in 1997 experimentally, following a National Congress on Alternative Education. Since 1999 a new curriculum has been developed for adult primary, secondary and technical education, and implemented in over 400 centres in the country, with the assistance of the German Association for Adult Education.

Funding comes from various sources: government, churches, the private sector, social movements and international agencies. In most countries, the government plays the major role, especially in basic education levels. Jamaica indicates that 86.8 per cent of the ALE budget is financed by the Ministry of Education, while the remainder comes from other ministries and a small portion from international cooperation. In many cases, civil society organisations and religious groups are financed or subsidised with public funds. In Chile and in Mexico there are important World Bank loans involved in ALE implementation and reform.

In several countries there are advances in terms of information, documentation, monitoring and/or evaluation of ALE programmes. For participating countries in the region, PIA has created a favourable context to estimate costs and build a common supranational platform for ensuring funding for PIA. A system of indicators to monitor its implementation – student learning, ‘success factors’ in the implementation of the plan at country level, and overall impact of PIA – has been announced by OEI (Letelier Galvez, 2008).

### **New actors and partnerships**

Partnerships between national governments, international agencies, NGOs, universities, religious groups and the private sector, with somewhat differentiated roles among them, adopt diverse schemes in each country (such as Hiring and outsourcing, public or private subsidies, incentives and tax exemptions). In a few countries, government-civil society partnerships for ALE include or have included teacher unions and/or strong social movements (in Argentina, Brazil and Ecuador).

New actors such as the Spanish government/OEI and the Cuban government/IPLAC are the most important actors in the ALE regional scenario at this point, especially in the field of literacy and basic education, with their respective plans and programmes (see Table 4). The *Convenio Andrés Bello* (Andrés Bello Agreement – CAB), an inter-governmental organisation focused on supranational integration, based in Bogotá and linked to OEI and SEGIB, also supports adult literacy among its 12 member countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Spain, and Venezuela.<sup>32</sup> The Organization of American States (OAS) is also reviving adult literacy commitments included in the framework of the Summits of the Americas and the education goals agreed at the II Summit (Chile, 1998) (see Table 3). The 37<sup>th</sup> regular OAS General Assembly meeting (Panama City, June 2007) resolved “*to support the member states through the technical areas of the General Secretariat with specific responsibility in the matter, in their efforts to eradicate illiteracy and improve the quality of education, in coordination, where appropriate, with other regional or international organizations with initiatives in the area.*” (OAS, 2008)<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> See *Convenio Andrés Bello* (CAB)/Literacy for Development <http://www.micrositios.net/cab/index.php?idcategoria=628>

<sup>33</sup> See OAS/Education <http://portal.oas.org/Default.aspx?tabid=239&language=en-US>

## **More and better information and knowledge on ALE**

There is considerable growth in research and documentation at national, subregional and regional level in recent years. Answers to the questions on research, in CONFINTEA VI national reports, reveal lack of information in this area, except in those cases where report writers are researchers, academics or ALE specialists. They also reveal a highly unequal distribution of research resources and experience among the various countries. Big countries such as Brazil and Mexico reported many surveys and studies. In Brazil, academic production on ALE has grown exponentially in the last decade, with 39 research nuclei operating in higher education institutions throughout the country; this academic *boom* appears related to the creation, in 1999, of a Working Group on Adult Education within ANPED (National Association for Research and Postgraduate Studies in Education). Mexico reported several diagnoses conducted in the Mayan Peninsula in 2001-2006 around the bilingual indigenous model of INEA, the Indigenous Bilingual MEVyT (MIB), which led to important changes in the educational modules of the programme. In Chile, studies reported were commissioned by the Ministry of Education and related to current programme operation, including impact evaluation (student satisfaction, self-esteem, family perception, employment, income, citizen participation). Cuba reported 12 research programmes linked to all ALE levels and areas in the island, as well as to the international work carried out by IPLAC. Argentina highlighted a study on costs that found major differences between the various provinces in the country. Jamaica reported two key studies related to ALE that are undertaken annually: the Labour Force Survey (LFS), conducted since 1968, and the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (JSLC), implemented for the first time in 1988. On the other hand, small countries had only a few masters or doctoral theses to report, or none at all. In Haiti, “research in adult education in the country is not yet inventoried” and in Belize “there is no national documentation bringing together the required data of all the various types of ALE programs offered.” (Haiti and Belize CONFINTEA VI reports, 2008)

Various international and regional organisations have been promoting research, especially linked to the ALE initiatives and plans they coordinate or support. This is the case of UNESCO – in relation to UNESCO-coordinated activities such as the United Nations Literacy Decade, LIFE and CONFINTEA – and of OEI in relation to PIA and other plans supported by the Spanish cooperation in the region.

CREFAL and CEAAL joined hands to produce a regional account of youth and adult education, which included 20 analytical-descriptive national studies (Caruso *et Al*, 2008). CREFAL also supported a cross-national field study on literacy and access to the written culture by out-of-school youth and adults in nine countries in the region (Torres, 2008b). It created an Award to the Best Undergraduate, Masters and Doctoral theses, maintains several journals devoted to ALE such as the *Interamerican Journal on Adult Education* and *Decisio*, and launched a new collection – *Paideia Latinoamericana* – that compiles the work of renowned Latin American authors in the field. CEAAL maintains its NGO regional networks, and its various sub-networks and national and sub-regional coordination nuclei, besides its regular journals and bulletins such as *La Piragua* and *La Carta del CEAAL*.

## **Advances in evaluation**

Evaluation has become a central aspect of school systems and reforms in the region since the 1990s. Its incorporation in ALE is rather recent. Unfortunately, in general, trends tend to follow those adopted by school education reform, such as focus on outcomes and weak attention to processes and contents; emphasis on quantitative data (for example, enrolment and completion) rather than on actual learning and impact on learners’ lives; evaluating programme implementation and not also policies, international co-operation, and so on.

Brazil, El Salvador, Mexico and Chile have made some advances in terms of evaluation in the field of adult education. In Brazil, a Functional Literacy Indicator (INAF), based on actual evaluation of reading, writing and numeracy skills among the adult population (15-64 years of

age)<sup>34</sup>, has been developed annually since 2001 by two well-known private institutions. In El Salvador, the measurement of learning achievement has been incorporated for the different levels in the PAEBA (Adult Literacy and Basic Education) Programme. In Mexico, INEA has developed its own evaluation system for the various programmes. The Model of Education for Life and Work (MEVyT), for example, has three evaluation phases: diagnostic, to evaluate what learners know before joining the programme; formative, to identify achievements and areas that need additional support; and finally to verify what learners have learned at the end of every module. In Chile, evaluation of student outcomes is under a National System for the Evaluation of Learning and Certification of Studies, which includes all ALE programmes and modalities, and adopts a competency-based approach. 260,000 people had been evaluated up to 2008. Both Mexico and Chile have adopted results-based schemes to determine payment of institutions and/or teaching staff hired for ALE programmes, *Plazas Comunitarias* in the Mexican case and *ChileCalifica* in the Chilean case; payment is approved only if learners complete and approve the course, level or programme. Also, in both Mexico and Chile, validation and certification of previous knowledge – acquired outside of the school system, via non-formal and informal means – are now in place. In the Mexican case, Agreement 286 issued by the Secretary of Public Education (SEP) in 2000 established rules and criteria for such recognition in diverse occupations. Since then, the demand for accreditation of non-formal and informal learning has increased significantly among the working population interested in continuing their education, although the service is available mainly in urban areas; information, orientation and the personal assistance needed hardly reach rural areas (Mexico CONFINTEA VI report, 2008).

### **Linkages between education/training and work as a major field of research, policy and action**

Linkages between education, the economy and work have become a major field of concern, policy and action in the region, especially for youth and young adults, and within the overall concern with poverty, unemployment and social exclusion. “Social Economy” has gained increased attention as an alternative economic model that generates alternative approaches to education and training linked to production, commercialisation, barter and other income-generation activities by families, cooperatives, and organised communities. There are multiple institutions and websites focused on these topics, compiling innovative experiences.

In several countries, literacy programmes are linked with specific training and/or income-generating activities. In Argentina and Colombia there are government programmes linking literacy, basic education and work: the *Programa Nacional de Alfabetización, Educación Básica y Trabajo para Jóvenes y Adultos* (PNAByT), operating for several years in Buenos Aires, combines completion of primary education and work training; the one in Colombia operates in several departments of the country, with OEI support. In Brazil there is the ‘Fishing Letters Programme’ (*Programa Pescando Letras*), which provides literacy for artisanal fishermen and women, and the ‘Literacy Inclusion Project’ (*Projeto Alfa-Inclusão*) provided by the Ministry of Education and the Bank of Brazil Foundation, which links literacy teaching and training for entrepreneurial activity with a view to generating income and sustainability in rural and urban settlements.

A Technical Vocational Education and Training Project (ETVETP) has been running over several years within the framework of the Summits of the Americas, coordinated by OAS. (Pre-)vocational, technical or professional training programmes are offered in most countries, adopting various types of programmes and modalities, in many cases with trans-sectoral approaches and collaboration, linking formal and non-formal education as well as formal education and on-the-job training. One such programme is *ChileCalifica*. An impact evaluation conducted in Chile with respect to completion of secondary school within the *ChileCalifica* government programme revealed positive effects on self-esteem, family perception, work environment and citizenship, as well as on income (an increase of 9.7 per

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<sup>34</sup> See INAF/Instituto Paulo Montenegro <http://www.ipm.org.br/> and INAF/Ação Educativa [http://nsae.acaoeducativa.org.br/portal/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1344](http://nsae.acaoeducativa.org.br/portal/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1344)

cent, resulting not from an increase in current jobs, but from finding a new job). Such positive impact was bigger among women and younger students; for male adults the impact was slightly negative (Chile CONFINTEA VI report, 2008).

### **Increased attention to ‘special groups’**

Visible attention has been given in recent years to the disabled adults, migrants and prison inmates. The use of traditional and modern technologies has facilitated this task, especially with disabled adults and with the migrant population.

Attention to prison education, mentioned in almost all national reports, has been enhanced since 2006 in the framework of the EUROsociAL programme of the European Commission; ‘education in the context of imprisonment or confinement’ is one of its lines of action.<sup>35</sup> The Latin American Network of Education in Prisons – RedLECE, financed by the European Commission and the French Ministry of Education, includes Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. RedLECE acknowledges prison education as a lifelong learning human right (UNESCO Brazil/OEI Brazil, 2008).

Initiatives aimed at blind, visually-challenged and hearing-impaired adults have been developed in recent years in many countries. In Antigua and Barbuda, for example, a government initiative is highlighted that includes technologies and special facilities and that benefits the Association of Persons with Disabilities (Antigua and Barbuda website).

From our own observations on the ground, we have witnessed that adult education is an inclusive field in itself. People of all ages and ethnic backgrounds; those expelled from the school system and convinced that they cannot learn; the physically or mentally challenged; migrants, homeless people and orphans are integrated into such centers and find a place where they are welcome, encouraged and treated with affection (Torres, 2008b).

### **New technologies reaching the field**

In the past few years, audio-visual media have become widespread in the ALE field mainly through the Cuba-assisted *Yo Sí Puedo* literacy and post-literacy programme operating in several countries, and utilised for the first time on a massive scale in Venezuela in 2003. Computers and the internet are reaching the field, particularly for the younger population, with Mexico leading the way with its Community Plazas (*Plazas Comunitarias*) programme (see Box 6). *Tele-centres* or *info-centres* (different from *cybercafés*, which are privately-owned and for-profit) are incorporated to basic education programmes in urban and rural areas in several Latin American countries. In remote rural areas, energy plants or solar panels have been installed, for example in Bolivia and Mexico. For better or for worse, in many places today it is easier to find a cybercafé or a tele-centre than a library, a computer than a book (Torres, 2006, 2008b). Radio, a powerful ally of youth and adult education for several decades, continues to have a central place in many countries, and is highlighted especially in the reports from Bolivia, Haiti and Paraguay.

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<sup>35</sup> “EUROsociAL is a technical cooperation programme of the European Commission to support social cohesion in Latin America through the sharing of experiences between public administrations responsible for the administration of Justice, Education, Employment, Taxation and Health”. See <http://www.programaeurosociual.eu/>

### Box 6: Mexico's *Plazas Comunitarias* (Community Plazas)

In Mexico, adult education policies dealing with completion of formal studies started in the 1980s and have been implemented by, among others, the National Institute for Adult Education (INEA), the Centres for Adult Basic Education, the Centres for Out-of-school Education, Workers' Primary Schools, Night Schools and CONAFE's Rural Post-primary Programme. According to the 2005 Population and Housing Census, there were at that time 30.1 million people aged 15 years or over (nearly half of the population in that age group) who had not completed secondary education.\* 5,747,813 of these were illiterate, 9,826,391 had not completed primary education, and 14,573,460 had not completed secondary education. The "*Cero Rezago Educativo*" programme, part of the Education Model for Life and Work (MEVyT) implemented by INEA, aims at incorporating three million young people and adults (15 to 34 years of age) who have not completed secondary education. The goal is to reduce this gap by 4.9 per cent.

The *Community Plazas* are part of this strategy. They are modern spaces equipped with computers and the internet, a video library and other media, located in rural and peri-urban localities. They are run by a promoter and technical computer staff; and there are 'advisers' those who assist the students to learn. Learning is to a great extent independent and self-instructional, following the digitised MEVyT modules.

There are at present over 3,000 *Plazas Comunitarias* in the country. *Plazas Comunitarias* are considered today the most outstanding ICT initiative in the region. They aim to solve two problems at once: the 'educational gap' and the 'digital gap'. The *Plazas* have been studied and evaluated, and these evaluations reveal operational and contextualisation problems. For example, the use of ICTs as the main instructional device leaves out many adults; a dissociation between the learning process and the use of the computers (Salinas *et al*, 2004, 2006; Torres, 2008b).

\* At present *basic education* in Mexico comprises three years of pre-school education, six years of primary education and three years of lower secondary education.

Source: INEA (<http://www.inea.gob.mx>)

(Elaborated by R.M Torres)

### South-South cooperation

South-South cooperation – mentioned as a weak and non-developed area in the global CONFINTEA V follow-up in Bangkok (UIE, 2003) – has taken root in this region, led by Cuba. Since 2002 the Cuban government, through its Latin American and Caribbean Pedagogical Institute (IPLAC), has been offering its '*Yo Sí Puedo*' (YSP) literacy and post-literacy system, initially implemented in Haiti using the radio, and later expanded to Venezuela and other countries using video-classes. Since 2005, the Venezuelan government joined Cuba in its support to Bolivia, where YSP started in 2006, and later in Nicaragua, in 2007.

In the context of LIFE, since 2006 Brazil (Ministry of Education and UNESCO Brazil) together with Cape Verde in Africa have adopted an articulation role for South-South cooperation with Lusophone countries in Africa also selected within the LIFE initiative such as Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique.

Mexico's *Telesecundaria* (Tele-secondary) is a pioneering and strong example in ALE inter-governmental South-South cooperation in the region. The experience started in Mexico in 1968 and has expanded notably over the past four decades. It is not a distance education programme but rather a face-to-face school programme aided by television and televised classes. It provides access to secondary education to boys and girls in rural areas who otherwise would not have this opportunity or would have to migrate to the city, as is the case in most countries in the region. By the year 2000 the *Telesecundaria* was serving over a million students in Mexico and had expanded to the southern states of the United States and to several countries in Central and South America (Torres and Tenti, 2000).<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> See more at the *Telesecundaria* website <http://www.telesecundaria.dgme.sep.gob.mx/>

## Some old and new weaknesses and limitations

Advances co-exist with old and new limitations that may be viewed as challenges for the future.

### **Continued misunderstanding and low status of youth and adult education**

Adult education continues to be misunderstood and mistreated. Its traditional low status is related to the combination of two factors that characterise the majority of the ALE target population: age (vis-à-vis children), and socio-economic status. Estimations of costs of programmes and plans rarely consider infrastructure, equipment or even remunerated work. Let us remember that adult education is often and inappropriately considered a 'special regime' together with other areas that challenge traditional classifications and continue to be denied their specificity, such as "bilingual intercultural education, special education and multigrade schools" (UNESCO-OREALC, 2007:16-17). In Bolivia, for example, the National Directorate of Alternative Education comprises Adult Education, Permanent Education and Special Education. The low social status and lack of specificity attributed to adult education permeates all areas and explains chronic under-financing and low attention to infrastructure, ALE educators, research, and so on.

### **Large gaps between policy and implementation**

The information provided in most CONFINTEA VI national reports focuses on policies and legislation, statistical data and description of activities, but is weak in terms of actual policy and programme implementation. From research and direct knowledge of the field and on the ground, we know there is a huge gap between what is prescribed and what is actually done. A field study on literacy and access to the written culture by out-of-school youth and adults in nine countries of the region conducted in 2006-2008 concluded that "policies in this field have become autonomous, with little or no contact with actual practice on the ground" (Torres, 2008b).

Except for Colombia, all other countries in the region include the right to free public education in their national Constitutions (Tomasevski, 2006). In Ecuador, the new Constitution (2008) guarantees free education all the way to tertiary education. In Brazil, public authorities are held legally responsible for the right to education for all its citizens. However, the right to free, quality education continues to be denied to a large portion of the population in most countries. Observatories, many of them focused on education issues and some of them including also ALE, have proliferated over the past two decades in the region, in an effort to ensure greater social vigilance on policies as well as more social participation in policy-making and validation.

On the whole, a thorough analysis of and conclusions on ALE-related policies over the past decade are limited by a number of factors which are echoed in the national CONFINTEA VI reports, including:

- the uneven provision of comprehensive and organised information on this topic;
- reference in the majority of cases only to recent or to present policy and legal frameworks, lacking a historic and dynamic perspective that would show their fragility and instability, with short-lived policies that often go back and forth, without a clear pattern of advance;
- the fact that many so-called 'policies' are not really such but rather lists of wishes and goals often not translatable into plans or programmes, or backed with cost estimations and budget allocations;
- the lack of social consultation in determining public policies in general and in most countries; and
- the already-mentioned gap between what is formally written and what occurs in reality.

## High political, financial and administrative vulnerability of ALE

Youth and adult education continues to be highly vulnerable to national and local political and administrative changes, as well as to changes in international priorities. This implies a permanent threat to the continuity of policies and programmes, and to the building of national capacities and accumulated practical experience in the field.

A key component of such vulnerability is the meager financial resource available to implement plans and to accomplish promised goals with quality and equity. This is true for education in general and for ALE in particular. Only Anguila, Bolivia, Cuba, Guyana, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, St. Lucia, and Venezuela spend over 6 per cent of GNP in education (UNESCO-OREALC, 2007; CEPAL, 2007; latest data provided by UIS). Education budgets are generally higher in the Caribbean than in Latin America. Few CONFINTEA VI reports and national studies provide concrete information on ALE funding and costs, even for Ministry of Education programmes. Some countries indicate that there is no separate budget for ALE (for example, Belize). The lack of information and transparency is marked in the case of the private sector. Among the countries that do provide information, or for which there is some data, there are those where the ALE budget represents less than 1 per cent of educational spending such as Mexico, Peru and Puerto Rico, and those where the ALE budget is between 2.5 and 3.6 per cent such as Bolivia, Costa Rica, Cuba and Venezuela (Di Pierro, 2008b). From its own data, Brazil calculates that, in terms of budget, an adult learner counts as 0.7 per cent of a primary school child (Brazil CONFINTEA VI report, 2008).

In national CONFINTEA VI reports and in national CREFAL-CEAAL studies, there is scarce information on the financial contribution of bilateral and multilateral agencies to ALE, its uses and impact. There are many and all sorts of international organisations involved in the field in the region, including international NGOs and foundations. Among the most mentioned in CONFINTEA VI reports are (in alphabetical order): the Caribbean Development Bank, CEPAL/ECLAC, CIDA, the European Union, IDB, OAS, OEI, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, USAID, the World Bank, and WTO. The Nicaraguan report lists 52 international organisations cooperating in ALE in the country. Belize mentions foreign Embassies as financial supporters for ALE, and refers explicitly to those from Mexico and Venezuela, which support “the teaching of Spanish and English to adults in order to increase their economic participation” (Belize CONFINTEA VI report, 2008).<sup>37</sup>

Unlike private and business sector programmes, government programmes generally do not charge fees, and many of them provide access to free equipment and materials. Occasionally, participants have to bear some costs related to materials utilised in vocational education and training programmes, as mentioned in the case of Guatemala. Also, various countries have been adopting compensation policies or plans tied to studying, such as Argentina’s *‘Plan Jefes y Jefas de Hogar’*, Venezuela’s Robinson Mission and other education missions, and Mexico’s Opportunities Programme which started in 2002. There are also mentions of scholarships, subsidies for transportation, food or purchase of materials for specific programmes (for example in Chile), as well as subsidies for pregnant adolescents or single mothers (such as in Costa Rica).

Regarding financing, in the national literature reviewed there are no specific and agreed national financial benchmarks for ALE. Internationally, the Global Campaign for Education proposed “at least 3 per cent of the education budget” to be allocated to adult literacy in order to attain the EFA goal of reducing illiteracy by half by 2015 (GCE, 2005). Regionally, the Final Document of the Mexico Regional Conference (CONFINTEA VI, 2008) requested

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<sup>37</sup> It is important to mention that USAID is heavily engaged in school literacy in many countries in the region, especially through the CETTs (Centers for Excellence in Teacher Training), “announced by President Bush in April 2001, working in the Latin America and Caribbean region to improve the quality of classroom reading instruction in grades 1-3, with emphasis on poorer countries and disadvantaged communities.” Activities are implemented through three regional centres based in Jamaica (Caribbean), Honduras (Central America), and Peru (Andean Region). See [http://www.usaid.gov/about\\_usaid/presidential\\_initiative/teachertraining.html](http://www.usaid.gov/about_usaid/presidential_initiative/teachertraining.html)

the same 3 per cent but for ALE in general, not only for literacy. That is, two very different benchmarks. On the other hand, many countries have set financial benchmarks for the education sector in their constitutions, laws and/or policies. Most of them aim at reaching, over several years, the minimum of 6 per cent of the GNP allocated to education, following UNESCO's recommendation. It is thus clear that the fight for higher financial resources devoted to ALE must be associated with the fight for more and sustained financial resources and attention dedicated to education as a whole.

### **Low attention to adult educators and their professionalisation**

The low status, training and working conditions of adult educators continue to be an old, major and vicious circle in the ALE field. The 'golden period' (between the 1950s and the 1980s) where CREFAL played a key role in the preparation of ALE professional cadre in the region, remains in the past. A regional study conducted in 2000 concluded that "in Latin America there are no professional educators in adult education, despite knowledge advances in the field; neither are there sufficient resources devoted to their training and development" (Madrigal, 2000:1. Translated from the Spanish original.) This continues to be the case, according to the information provided by CONFINTEA VI national reports and other national and regional studies on the topic. Requirements for adult educators have been "upgraded" in some countries, including a professional teaching title or completion of secondary education rather than primary education only; such prerequisites tend to loosen in rural areas and in literacy programmes, which continue to operate in most cases with youth or community volunteers.

Training provided is generally poor and short. Its deficits are even more visible in the case of indigenous educators prepared for inter-cultural bilingual education programmes, who have often learned in the official languages themselves, know their native languages but never learned to write them (Moya, 2001).

The availability of audio-visual and digital technologies further reduce the importance of professionalisation and of initial and in-service training, and reduce the importance given to actual teaching, face-to-face interaction and peer socialisation in the teaching and learning process.

The question remains as to what is the desired profile, education and training of someone specialised in educating young people and adults, and whether possessing an official teaching certificate is associated with good teaching, given

- the specific knowledge and skills required for adult education, which are not simply an extension of those required to teach children;
- the worryingly low quality of initial and in-service teacher training in the region, verified by a number of teacher (knowledge and performance) evaluations in several countries, and
- the increasing lack of credibility of national and international academic titles and diplomas, sold and purchased easily today in many countries.

### **Weak dissemination, use and impact of research and evaluation results**

Research, documentation and evaluation efforts lack sufficient and opportune dissemination, within and beyond academic circles. There are rather differentiated circuits of information and knowledge, one closer to bureaucratic structures and another one closer to academia and research institutions.

In the case of Chile, official authorities acknowledge that "evaluation results have not influenced in a direct manner legislation and policy formulation; they have had a greater impact on programme development" (Chile CONFINTEA VI report, 2008: 22). Overall, there is little evidence that research results inform and influence policy-making, training or teaching practice. More and better information and knowledge have not contributed to modifying long-entrenched 'common sense' in the field, including negative perceptions and terminologies linked to illiteracy (such as 'scourge', 'plague', 'darkness', 'blindness', 'shackle', 'eradication' and others), the association between illiteracy and ignorance, between number of years of

schooling and 'functional literacy', and between adult education, non-formal and remedial education. A clear example is the cross-national empirical study on 'functional literacy' conducted by UNESCO-OREALC in the late 1990s (Infante, 2000), which showed the various levels and dimensions engaged in the mastery of literacy, and the insufficiency of four years of schooling, but has not received the necessary follow-up and dissemination. It has not prevented governments, civil society and international organisations from continuing to reproduce the illiteracy/literacy, 'absolute'/'functional' illiteracy dichotomies.

Another limitation of most diagnoses and recommendations is that they continue to be based on literature reviews, with little connection to realities and little or no empirical research. Also, 'regional' studies and reports seldom consider the region as a whole: many of them refer only to Latin America, excluding the English- and French-speaking Caribbean; on the other hand, reports referred to 'the Caribbean' normally include only CARICOM (Caribbean Community) or the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), leaving out Cuba, the Dominican Republic and often Haiti.

### **Age discrimination within the ALE field**

There was a time when young people had to adapt to 'adult education' programmes and classes. Now that youth has been placed at the centre of ALE efforts, this is leading to stronger age-discrimination within the field, in contradiction to the lifelong learning rhetoric. There is a consistent trend towards giving priority to the younger segments of the adult population, establishing age limits (40, 35, in some cases lower), and segmenting educational opportunities by age. Typically, literacy is offered to the adult and older generations – where illiteracy rates are in fact higher – while other programmes are offered to youth and younger adults. Cuba is the only country that mentions the elderly as a priority group in terms of educational and cultural attention by government. Uruguay – known for its high proportion of adult and third age population – is also expanding the age of learners within ALE programming.

For cost-efficiency mentalities, persons over 40 or 50 years of age are "old people", not worth investing in. From a human development perspective, they are citizens, workers, parents and grandparents who sustain families and are vital for family, community and national development. In poor families, grandparents are not people waiting for retirement or waiting to die; often, they act as substitute parents for the millions of children and adolescents who are left behind by working and migrant fathers and mothers, who sustain not only their families but also national economies in many countries in the region.

### **Continued neglect of indigenous peoples and of linguistic realities**

The Regional Framework for Action (2000-2010) identified four priority groups: indigenous people, peasants, youth and women (see Box 5). Youth and women have been prioritised in ALE policies over the past decade; indigenous and Afro-descendant groups continue to be neglected, as consistently shown by empirical evidence and statistics related to school and out-of-school education (UNESCO-OREALC, 2007; LLECE, 2008). Racism continues despite important advances in national and international legislation, including the approval in 2007 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>38</sup>

Brazil's illiteracy data provide a clear picture of the different socio-economic-educational status of white people (7.1 per cent illiteracy rate), black people (16 per cent) and indigenous peoples (18 per cent) in the country (Brazil CONFINTEA VI report, 2008). In Mexico, the illiteracy rate among indigenous groups is 36.1 per cent while the national illiteracy rate is 8.4 per cent (Mexico CONFINTEA VI report, 2008). Similar pictures can be drawn for other multi-ethnic, multilingual and pluricultural countries in the region. There are governmental reports – those prepared for UIL and also those prepared for OEI within the framework of PIA – that do not even mention the existence and educational situation of indigenous groups, although

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<sup>38</sup> See the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=23794&Cr=indigenous&Cr1>

these constitute important and active minorities in countries such as Argentina, Chile and Colombia. Even in countries with a high proportion of indigenous population, such as Mexico, Ecuador or Peru, there are few programmes that honour the right to learn in their own languages and cultures. In general, it is not easy to find comprehensive bilingual intercultural programmes for youth and adults in the region.

Also, Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) continues under the false assumption that indigenous populations are confined to rural areas. They are settled also in urban areas, especially in large Latin American cities, following strong rural-urban migration patterns in the region.

'Yo Sí Puedo' literacy materials (video-classes, primers and manuals) have been translated into some indigenous languages such as Quechua and Aymara, for use in Bolivia, and also into Creole in the case of Haiti; however, as is well known, translation is not the best way to deal with education in bilingual and multilingual/multicultural contexts. Guatemala – a country with one of the highest indigenous populations in the region – reports that literacy programmes in the country are currently being conducted in 17 (out of 21) Mayan languages, with materials prepared and available in all of them. This is a valuable step forward. However, the lack or insufficiency of reading materials in indigenous languages (in libraries, in mass media, through the Internet and so on), beyond the classroom or the literacy/post-literacy programmes, remains a major, unresolved problem, dependent not only on technical issues but mainly on political ones.

### **Continued neglect of rural areas**

Despite the equity rhetoric, and the agreed need to prioritise the peasant population, both formal and non-formal education programmes continue to concentrate in urban and peri-urban areas, thus maintaining and even deepening the urban-rural educational gap rather than reducing it.

Schooling and ALE urban-rural gaps are present in almost all countries in the region, as shown by regional statistics on literacy and completion of primary and secondary education by the young and adult populations. The likelihood of youth and adults in rural areas receiving no or incipient education is twice as great as that in urban areas, and in some countries three times greater (SITEAL, n.d.).

Peru is the country with the highest urban-rural school gap, according to the Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (LLECE, 2008). The gap is also reflected among the young and population: average schooling in rural areas is 4.4 years, compared to 9.2 in urban areas. Peru's CONFITEA VI (2008) report acknowledged that "practically all educational institutions doing adult education are located in cities and are thus not accessible to an important percentage who would require them, especially rural, illiterate and indigenous populations" (Translated from the original Spanish). In Brazil, the number of illiterates in urban areas is 9.7 million against 4.7 million in rural areas; however, in percentage terms rural areas have almost three times more illiterates – 26.3 per cent, as against 8.7 per cent in urban areas. Countries such as Jamaica report that unemployment and 'unattached youth' are significantly higher in rural areas.

At the same time, it is in rural areas and in the most precarious conditions that some of the most innovative and challenging education experiences are to be found in the region.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Just to mention a few: the 'Pedagogy of Alternance' model for youth secondary education, emerged in and devised specifically for rural areas, and operating for many years in various countries in the region; the *Escuela Nueva* multigrade programme in Colombia, spread to several other countries; CONAFE and *Telesecundaria* in Mexico, among others. These and other inspiring experiences have been compiled in the blog <http://otraeducacion.blogspot.com/>

### **Low coverage of programmes**

The coverage of ALE programmes, including those provided by national and local governments, continues to be very limited compared to actual needs and effective demands. A recent study in Latin America, based on home surveys and population census in 17 countries, showed the very limited government provision of formal and non-formal education to youth who have never been to school or who have dropped out. Despite being a priority age group, less than 10 per cent of 20-29-year-olds who have not completed secondary education attend some educational programme (UNESCO-OREALC, 2007).

In Peru, it is estimated that 1.9 per cent of potential ALE demand was met in 2002 (Caruso *et al*, 2008). In large countries such as Brazil and Mexico, given the magnitude of the problems, all efforts seem small and advances slow. According to Brazil's CONFINTEA VI report, only 10 per cent of the demand was being met in 2008. Chile, a small country and with continued efforts in ALE, estimates that four million Chilean adults have not completed basic or middle schooling; in 2008, the adult education programme, in all its modalities, covered 200,000 people annually. At this rate, it would take 20 years to reach these four million people (Chile CONFINTEA VI report, 2008).

### **Quality and learning remain distant issues**

Quantitative indicators (enrolment and retention, number of groups organised, materials or equipments distributed, and others) predominate as indicators of achievement and success – and thus of selection and definition of 'good' or 'exemplary' practices – in education. A minimum number of participants is often established as a requisite to start a programme or a centre, equip it and pay the facilitator, thus leading often to cheating in order to fulfil such quantitative requirement (for example, by manipulating statistics, or by completing the list with family members, friends or persons who are not part of the target population) (Torres, 2008b).

In literacy programmes, national and international goals continue to be set in terms of 'eradicating' or 'reducing' illiteracy rates, rather than in terms of learning, reaching a sustainable literacy level and ensuring effective use of reading and writing. Speed (of the duration of the programme, of the training of the facilitators and so on) tends to be placed at the centre and more valued than actual learning; completion of the programme and even enrolment figures are often added to literacy statistics (Torres, 2008b). Moreover, participants with previous school or literacy experience, and who therefore are not included in the official illiteracy statistics, are also counted as new literates. These and other recurrent problems add to the traditional lack of reliability of literacy statistics.

Only in very few cases have adult literacy programmes and campaigns been thoroughly evaluated, including both an internal and an external evaluation as well as attention to all actors involved in the process; one such examples is Ecuador's National Literacy Campaign '*Monsignor Leonidas Proaño*' (1988-1990)<sup>40</sup>. In current times, only a few countries – Chile one of them – have started to incorporate monitoring and evaluation as systematic components in government educational provision. Experience shows that the emphasis on completion, results and accreditation has the risk of becoming an end in itself, losing sight of and even sacrificing learning.

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<sup>40</sup> On Ecuador's National Literacy Campaign '*Monsignor Leonidas Proaño*' see [http://www.fronesis.org/ecuador\\_cna.htm](http://www.fronesis.org/ecuador_cna.htm)

**Box 7****Literacy: the quicker, the better?**

Two examples of the renewed emphasis on quantity and speed in the past few years:

1. Part of the attraction of the Cuban audio-visual-based *Yo Sí Puedo* literacy and post-literacy programme is that it offers to make a person literate in eight weeks; it also proposes to reduce the time and efforts necessary for the training of the literacy facilitators.

2. The World Bank has come up with highly controversial literacy proposals for both children and adults that take *speed* in reading as the main indicator of reading achievement and method effectiveness, regardless of effective understanding and making sense of what they 'read'. Indicators proposed for primary school children are as follows: Grade 2 – 60 words per minute; Grade 3 – 90 words per minute; Grade 4 – 110 words per minute.

For more information see:

WB's proposal for Peru <http://go.worldbank.org/MFIEBQMLW0>

WB's "Increasing adult literacy: a focus on reading speed and accuracy" [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/main?menuPK=64187510&pagePK=64193027&piPK=64187937&theSitePK=523679&entityID=000011823\\_20061012154432](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/main?menuPK=64187510&pagePK=64193027&piPK=64187937&theSitePK=523679&entityID=000011823_20061012154432)

(Elaborated by R.M. Torres)

**Continued weaknesses of technical and vocational education/training programmes**

For some time now, there has been scepticism and criticism in relation to the effectiveness of these programmes; several international organisations have commissioned studies and impact evaluations of the programmes they support. There is also tension and debate between keeping or 're-inserting' adolescents and youth in schools (often against their will – the same unchanged schools that expelled them in the first place – or facilitating their entry into work. An IIEP study of 52 programmes in 14 Latin American countries concluded that education/training programmes oriented towards preparing young people for work

- take a simplistic view of youth inclusion in the labour market;
- reach only a small proportion of the potential population;
- adopt a narrow approach focused on specific training; and
- do not take into account sufficiently the importance of formal education, the competitiveness of the labour market and the scarcity of decent jobs (Jacinto, 2007, 2008).

**Rise of for-profit spirit and market mechanisms**

There is a visible decline in volunteerism, social mobilisation and political commitment traditionally linked to ALE history in this region. In many countries, NGOs and other organisations of civil society are hired and paid by governments to implement ALE programmes. On the other hand, the trend towards accreditation and certification of formal studies (completion of primary/basic/secondary education) has attracted the for-profit private sector, introducing fees and other market mechanisms into the field. Pay-for-result schemes have also been introduced by governments/Ministries of Education in countries such as Mexico (*Plazas Comunitarias*) and Chile (*ChileCalifica*), with innovative although controversial approaches, results and impact (Di Pierro, 2008; Salinas *et al*, 2006).

**Major coordination problems at national, regional and international levels**

Decentralisation processes and diversification of educational provision have increased coordination and articulation problems amongst the diverse national actors: government across sectors and at the various levels, governmental and non-governmental bodies, profit and non-profit private sector, NGOs, universities, churches, and others.

At the same time, increased international and South-South cooperation in ALE, and in the literacy field in particular, have made more evident the lack of collaboration and parallelism between the various regional and international actors. Each of them has its own selection of countries, objectives, goals, timeframes, diagnoses, approaches, methodologies, reporting and financing mechanisms. This becomes especially evident today in the field of adult literacy, with so many actors, plans and initiatives playing in the regional scenario, often overlapping in the same countries. This is the case of OEI/PIA and the Cuban-assisted ‘Yo Sí Puedo’ programme. Moreover, Brazil and Haiti are associated to all three: Cuban ‘Yo Sí Puedo’, OEI/PIA, and UNESCO’s LIFE.

The ‘battle against illiteracy’ has a long history in this region, a history that includes many international initiatives – aimed at either ‘eradicating’ or ‘reducing’ illiteracy – with varied and confusing timeframes and deadlines (See Table 5).

**Table 5: Regional and international adult literacy goals (1980-2015)**

MPE Major Project for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean	EFA Education for All		UNLD United Nations Literacy Decade		PIA Ibero-American Plan for Youth and Adult Literacy and Basic Education
	Jomtien	Dakar		LIFE Literacy Initiative for Empowerment	
1980-2000	1990- 2000	2000- 2015	2003-2012	2006-2015	2007-2015
OREALC- UNESCO	UNESCO-UNICEF- UNDP-World Bank		UNESCO	UIL-UNESCO	OEI
Eradicate illiteracy by 2000	Reduce illiteracy by half by 2000	Reduce illiteracy by half by 2015	Reduce illiteracy by half by 2012	Reduce illiteracy by half by 2015	Eradicate illiteracy by 2015

Elaborated by R.M. Torres

## Expectations for CONFINTEA VI and future perspectives for ALE (as expressed by government CONFINTEA VI national reports)

UIL’s questionnaire distributed to governments included a section on expectations for CONFINTEA VI and future perspectives for ALE in their respective countries. More than half of national CONFINTEA VI reports merged both questions, understanding them as closely related.

Answers varied considerably from country to country, from domestic operational issues to complex regional and international ones. Altogether, national CONFINTEA VI reports provided an overview of some of the most important needs and challenges of ALE in the region. Only one country (Peru) mentioned the Regional Framework of Action on Youth and Adult Education 2000-2010 (see Box 5) as a reference for identifying regional advances and pending challenges in the field.

Few official reports referred to structural issues such as poverty, migration, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, or the food and oil crisis.<sup>41</sup> ALE tends to be seen in isolation and from the inside, with its many needs, without due attention to its social contexts and objectives. Some reports appeared primarily concerned with accomplishing international goals such as EFA and MDGs.

<sup>41</sup> It is important to note that these national CONFINTEA VI reports were written in the first semester of 2008, before the major international financial crisis broke out, in October 2008.

The need to strengthen cooperation and networking as well as building synergies (between government and civil society, and across sectors) within and between countries, both regionally and internationally, appeared as a strong and widespread concern in the national CONFINTEA VI reports. There were also mentions of enhancing the training and professionalisation of ALE educators (Ecuador, Nicaragua) and ALE staff in general (St. Lucia). Peru and Suriname referred to the need to identify and prioritise certain research topics nationally and regionally. Peru and Honduras mentioned accountability and the need for social audit in relation to ALE. Nicaragua was concerned with “relaunching the value of Non-Formal Education approaches” in the country. Suriname was the only country referring to the need for benchmarks. St. Vincent & the Grenadines would like to see distance education improved and the private sector taking up 75 per cent of the financing of ALE in the country. Panama called for public education on HIV/AIDS. Belize’s main expectation from CONFINTEA VI was “the compilation of a report documenting the present status of ALE/ACE at the regional and international level”, as a result of which “a plan of action for ALE should be developed for the region” and “a regional and international network of ALE providers” could be created.

Chile and Mexico highlighted the need to make lifelong learning a reality. Mexico recommended more proactiveness from actors in the ALE field. Paraguay said it expected clearer political commitment from governments towards ALE in order to reverse exclusion and inequality, to develop education policies founded on *Popular Education* – recuperating the political transformative intentionality of education – and to encourage wider participation of social actors in the definition of ALE programmes.

Despite the fact that bilingual and multilingual situations are the norm in the region, and a field of great complexity, few reports referred to ethnic and linguistic challenges linked to ALE and to be addressed at CONFINTEA VI. Among the exceptions were St. Lucia (need to improve literacy teaching in Kweyol, the national language), Bolivia, Ecuador, Panama and Paraguay.

Identifying, documenting, disseminating and/or exchanging ‘good practices’ – also called ‘innovative’, ‘inspiring’ or ‘effective’ – was a popular demand and a concrete expectation related to CONFINTEA VI, both in Latin America and in the Caribbean.

Most countries saw themselves as benefiting from the knowledge and experience of others, while a few countries (especially Cuba, Venezuela, and Chile) saw themselves contributing their own experience and lessons learned. Brazil, the host country of CONFINTEA VI and one of the few countries where the national CONFINTEA VI report was done in collaboration with civil society organisations, obviously sees this as an opportunity to strengthen its own internal process, with improved coordination, enhanced dialogue, and stronger participation of social movements.

Three countries made specific references to UNESCO: Jamaica called for more and better UNESCO technical assistance to countries in ALE; Uruguay proposed creating a specialised body to provide technical assistance to countries ready to follow CONFINTEA VI recommendations; and Mexico requested that expanded visions of literacy and basic education, the creation of literate environments and the lifelong learning paradigm permeate UNESCO as a whole and be reflected in all its bodies and lines of action.

Jamaica’s national report provided a clearly articulated statement on CONFINTEA VI: “CONFINTEA VI must result in: a redefined, realistic global policy framework for action in adult education and learning; clearly defined operational goals and strategic objectives proposed as ‘process markers’ and which will help achieve the goals; clearly articulated regional and national targets /outcomes to be achieved within specified timeframe; and commitment to assist with new initiatives at national level, being mindful of failures/ challenges, and drawing on successes, since CONFINTEA V.”

# Revisiting ALE in Latin America and the Caribbean: Some overarching challenges

This section is based on national CONFINTEA VI reports and other literature consulted for the preparation of this regional report, as well as on the author's own knowledge, empirical research and experience in the field for over 30 years, both regionally and internationally.

## **ALE fully assumed as part of the right to education**

The right to education has traditionally been associated with children and with (primary) school, even though the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) states that “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit” (Article 26).

Acknowledging and demanding ALE as a right implies working towards public information and mobilisation around such right. So far, the “four As” proposed to assess the right to education – availability, accessibility, adaptability and acceptability – (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966a<sup>42</sup>; Tomasevski, 2006) have centred on children and schooling, but they can and should be expanded to cover all levels, fields and modalities of education, including youth and adult education. In particular, they can be very helpful as criteria to define ‘good’, ‘best’ or ‘exemplary’ practice, taking into account learners’ perspectives and satisfaction, effective access, actual implementation, quality of provision, relevance and pertinence, and impact on the lives of learners, their families and communities (rather than just budget allocated or costs, student enrolment and completion figures, infrastructure, distribution of materials and equipment, innovative features, use of modern technologies, or application of tests) (see Box 8).

### **Box 8**

#### **Availability, accessibility, adaptability and acceptability as criteria for identifying ‘best practice’**

**Availability** refers to the existence of effective educational and cultural opportunities, including the basic conditions needed for the programme or centre to operate, such as infrastructure, furniture, equipment, trained educators, teaching and learning materials and media. Educational provision for youth and adults is often not available where it is most needed. Many programmes are small, cover only certain areas or groups, are one-shot actions or operate only during a certain period of time, and fail to reach hard-to-reach groups, especially in rural and remote areas.

**Accessibility** has various dimensions. Economic accessibility implies free education: no fees, learning materials available for free, subsidies to cover other costs associated with studying or learning (such as transportation and food). Physical accessibility includes adequate schedules as well as the means needed to actually reach the location where the activity takes place (such as distance from home or work, adequate roads, safety conditions and provision for physically challenged persons) or the media necessary if distance education is at stake (radio, television, computer). Curricular and pedagogical accessibility includes learners’ effective access to and understanding of the contents, methodologies, evaluation instruments and technologies used in the teaching and learning process.

**Adaptability** is important as not everything that is available and accessible is relevant or pertinent for the people it is supposed to reach. Educational supply must adapt to learners’ realities, expectations and possibilities, not the other way round. Schedules, contents, languages, media, teaching

<sup>42</sup> See: General comment on its implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(symbol\)/E.C.12.1999.10.En?OpenDocument](http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(symbol)/E.C.12.1999.10.En?OpenDocument)

methodologies, evaluation instruments and procedures must be adapted to specific conditions in each case: geographical zone, season of the year, weather, age, gender, ethnicity and culture, educational background, time availability, motivation, learning rhythms and styles, special needs and so on. This implies knowledge of local realities, capacity to anticipate and to rectify situations, empathy and consultation with the people, and their participation in decision-making.

Adaptability has to do with both *difference* and *inequality*. Responding to diversity implies flexibility and diversification in all spheres, accepting individual and social differences as a condition for the effectiveness of any intervention. Responding to inequality implies additionally the challenge of equity, which means giving more and better to those who have less, in order to compensate for their disadvantageous situation. Homogeneous and 'one-size-fits-all' policies, programmes, strategies and benchmarks reinforce inequality. The greatest adaptability challenges are to be faced in rural areas (dispersion of the population, large distances, frequent lack of basic services such as electricity, poverty, harsh work, tiredness), indigenous groups (non-hegemonic languages and cultures, women's subordination and isolation in many communities and cultures), errand populations (migrant workers, landless people, displaced because of, for example, conflict or natural disaster), highly heterogeneous groups (in terms of age, educational background, languages, cultures and so on) and groups with special needs, who require specific conditions, strategies and materials. Combinations of these characteristics makes differentiated attention all the more complicated.

**Acceptability** rests with learners and beneficiaries of programmes and is fundamentally related with their satisfaction. Here lies the final test of policies and programmes. Both relevance (what for) and pertinence (for whom) of educational provision are central aspects of quality education and of its transformative potential. Satisfaction is linked to many factors, not all of them directly related to learning, such as self-esteem, dignity, family and social respect, socialisation and interaction with peers, having fun, breaking with loneliness and isolation. For many women and housewives, class time means escaping from home and from daily routines. For many young people the education centre is a rehabilitating experience after a traumatic school experience. For many participants, especially men, it is not acceptable to go to a school to learn, since they feel treated like children and publicly exposed, and would rather learn at home or in less visible places.

Ideally, all programmes should incorporate reliable mechanisms to assess learners' satisfaction with the programme, beyond indicators such as retention and completion. High drop-out rates prevailing in many ALE programmes may be indicative of combined problems of accessibility, adaptability and acceptability, which do not succeed in overcoming the adverse conditions of those who enrol and who are willing to seize an educational opportunity.

Key aspects of both adaptability and acceptability of educational provision are the degree and quality of participation of potential "beneficiaries", who thus become effective partners in all aspects and phases of policy design and programming, including conception, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Rather than programmes *for*, it is essential to build programmes *from, with, and in*.

(Elaborated by R.M.Torres)

## **Overcoming the deficit approach to adult learners and adult learning**

The remedial and compensatory approach to ALE is intimately linked to the deficit approach to the population it serves. Thus there is a need for a renewed vision of youth and adults as ALE subjects: from the ignorant, poor, disadvantaged, vulnerable, at-risk, to the subject of rights, who possess and recreate knowledge that is essential for life and for the preservation of the planet. Peasant and indigenous knowledge and wisdom are in many ways related to survival, production, justice, community education, protecting the environment and 'good living' (*sumak kausay* in Quechua). "Among the most important contributions maybe we should consider their integral and integrating concept of education, the attention given to environmental protection, the democratization of classroom relationships, and the possibilities of applying knowledge to everyday life, starting from their own and assuming the new in a selective and propositional manner." (Moya, 2001:6. Translated from the original Spanish.) Millions of housewives and single mothers know how to make a family live with one dollar a day. Street and working adolescents have a more advanced practical knowledge in mathematics and 'life skills' than adolescents graduating from high school (Carragher *et al*, 1991). Indigenous peoples are often bilingual or multilingual, an intellectually and culturally

richer condition than monolingualism. All of these are just examples to argue that those “with no or with incipient formal education” must not be seen only as potential and needy learners but also as potential educators in and beyond their communities and cultures. This is in fact part of acknowledging the meaning and importance of ‘intercultural education’.

### **Equity effectively orienting policies, programmes and practices**

From the point of view of equity, there is the need to reverse present tendencies by giving priority and specificity to rural areas, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant groups. This is where no, low and poor education and schooling opportunities are concentrated in all countries and especially in those with high native populations such as Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru. Indigenous peoples are not necessarily ethnic minorities and they cannot be included in the usual list of ‘special groups’; many of them are nationalities with their own history, languages, cultures and territories, often crossing national boundaries and spreading through various countries; several are organised as strong social and political movements at national and regional level. In bilingual or multilingual contexts, their right to education includes the right to learn in their own languages and cultures, as well as in the official mainstream languages in each case. Many of them express and defend publicly their desire not to be ‘included’ or ‘integrated’, but rather to be respected in their diversity and autonomy.<sup>43</sup>

### **Gender parity faces new issues and challenges**

Gender parity is an issue for both women and men, thus requiring context-specific policies and programmes, and positive discrimination measures for boys and men in several countries and areas, from initial education to tertiary education and including ALE. Statistically, women’s educational discrimination remains linked to rural areas, indigenous populations and older ages. Defending women’s right to basic education is thus linked to defending this right within a broader picture that includes indigenous peoples, peasant organisations, adults and older people. Also, defending this right today implies going beyond usual quantitative education indicators and dealing with qualitative and rather ‘invisible’ issues as well as with the transition between education and work. On the other hand, while the need for positive discrimination policies and programmes for boys and men has long been claimed by the English-speaking Caribbean states, there are several countries where boys and men face disadvantageous situations in terms of access to and completion of school and out-of-school programmes, as well as in terms of achievement. As previously indicated, Brazil, the largest country in the region, has today more illiterate men than illiterate women.

### **Greater diversification of policies and programmes, not ‘one-size-fits-all’**

The tension between homogenisation and diversification often reflects the tension between the large- and small-scale, the governmental and the non-governmental. International organisations often push towards universal plans, ‘one-size-fits-all’ models, ‘what works and what does not work’ and ‘best practices’ in general and for any circumstance. The homogenisation of education and culture has been further enhanced and facilitated by the globalisation process. Recovering and building diversity and specificity within such globalising and homogenising trends is fundamental. The building of policies, priorities, strategies and benchmarks that assume and defend diversity and flexibility, is essential for both governmental and non-governmental action, a necessary dimension of equity, quality and effectiveness of policies and programmes. It is worth mentioning the creation in 2004 in

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<sup>43</sup> See, for example, *O Índio Brasileiro: o que você precisa saber sobre os povos indígenas no Brasil de hoje*, Coleção Educação para Todos, UNESCO-Secretaria de Educação Continuada, Alfabetização e Diversidade (SECAD)/Ministério da Educação, Brasília, 2006. Ecuador’s new Constitution (September 2008) acknowledges for the first time Ecuador as a *plurinational* country, not only pluricultural and multilingual, as stipulated in the previous Constitution (1998). In Bolivia, today, where the President of the Republic is a native *Aymara*, and where a two-year national literacy campaign (2006-2008) took place in Quechua, Aymara and Spanish, there are native Quechua- and Aymara-speaking people who argue that these are oral cultures and that literacy is an imposition (Torres, 2008b).

Brazil of the Secretariat of Continuing Education, Literacy and Diversity (SECAD) within which the Department of Adult Education was located. Here, “diversity expressed a strong concept, not just of educational inclusion but, above all, of respect and valorization of the multiple nuances of the Brazilian ethnic and racial, gender, social, environmental and regional diversities” (Ireland, 2007: 5).

### **Linking adult education and the school system**

Abundant research and evaluation continue to confirm the obvious inter-relationship between children’s and adult/parental education. The two-pronged approach to literacy – with youth/adults and with children at the same time – has long been acknowledged and recommended by UNESCO as the only way to achieve universal literacy and literate societies. However, children’s and adult literacy/education continue to be viewed as separate fields and goals within UNESCO itself. In fact, they are separate in the formulation of Education for All (EFA goals). The EFA *Global Monitoring Report* 2006, entitled ‘Literacy for Life’, focused on one particular goal, *adult* literacy (EFA Goal 4). Within the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012), *literacy* was initially conceived within a lifelong learning perspective. However, “to date, the focus has been largely on adults” (UNESCO, 2007:5). Building policy and practical bridges between children’s and adult literacy remains a major national and international challenge. The ‘battle against illiteracy’ will remain a never-ending battle unless efforts address children and adults simultaneously – that is, basic education for *all* (see Box 9).

#### **Box 9**

##### **Nicaragua’s two battles to ‘eradicate illiteracy’ over the last three decades (1980-2009)**

Nicaragua is, in this region, a paradigmatic case to learn from in terms of the ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’ in the field of literacy. In 1980, following the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), the National Literacy Crusade ‘Heroes and Martyrs for the Liberation of Nicaragua’ mobilised the entire nation for five months and reduced the national illiteracy rate from 50 per cent to 12 per cent in the country. Out-of-school children aged 10 years and over were accepted, as well as the elderly, with no age limit, thus providing all of them an opportunity and a right they had been denied for decades. For its undeniable merits, the Crusade won UNESCO’s Nadezdha Krupskaya international prize.

Two and a half decades later, and after 16 years of neo-liberal governments, illiteracy expanded again in an alarming manner, together with poverty, which affects half of the population. Nicaragua is today the second poorest country in Latin America and the Caribbean, after Haiti. It also has the highest proportion of external debt *per capita* in the world (Human Development Report 2007-2008). With the FSLN again in government, a new national campaign – ‘From Martí to Fidel’ was launched, this time using the Cuban audio-visual ‘Yo Sí Puedo’ system. The campaign’s goal is to teach 500,000 Nicaraguans to read and write, and to declare Nicaragua an ‘illiteracy-free territory’ on 19 July, 2009, commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution.

The Nicaraguan experience gives some of the major lessons learned in the field of literacy worldwide over the past decades. It is not possible to advance towards a literate society without: a long-term literacy policy that articulates school and out-of-school strategies, with children and with adults, that is conceived not as a single programme or campaign but as a sustained public policy; the creation of a literate environment that enables the continued development and use of literacy skills by the entire population in school, at home, in the community, in the workplace, through the media, and elsewhere; and an economic, social and political model that is committed not only to eradicating illiteracy but also to eradicating poverty.

On the 1980 Crusade see <http://www.sandinovive.org/cna/index.htm>

On the new literacy campaign see <http://www.cnanicaragua.org.ni/Campana-Nacional-de-Alfabetizacion.html>

(Elaborated by R.M.Torres)

Regional evaluations by LLECE, and international ones like PISA, consistently show better school results associated with two variables related to adults/parents: literate or educated parents; and parental participation in school matters. Both are issues that ALE needs to deal with, the latter rather ignored or under-estimated from an adult education perspective. Better educated parents, and an overall positive climate in the family and the community, make a difference not only to the lives of parents but also to their children's. The universal primary education (UPE) goal, prioritised in both EFA and MDGs, is inseparable from adult, family and community education and development. When faced with the option of children's education *versus* adult education, all parents would of course choose children. But no adult should be asked to choose; on the contrary, it should be explained that there is not such an option and that education is for parents both a right and a duty. All children should be entitled to educated parents.

### **Linking adult education and early childhood care, education and development**

There are some obvious linkages between early childhood care, education and development (ECCED) and adult education. ECCED is regularly about working with parents, especially mothers, to enhance their potential and actual performance as parents in given cultural and social contexts. Although such activities are usually viewed and catalogued from the children's perspective (protection, parental responsibility, child-rearing practices and creation of child-friendly environments), they are in fact and to a great extent adult-led and adult-oriented activities.<sup>44</sup> Both ECCED and ALE are marginalised within education policies and statistics (clearly so within EFA policies) because both are located on the extremes of 'school age' and because in both cases "the data are insufficiently standardized" (EFA *Global Monitoring Report* 2006, Summary: 4).

The need to build strong alliances between young children and adults within family and community learning policies and programmes is evident. The argument is not to favour ECCED in order to "reduce school failure" by poor children, as the World Bank puts it, but to ensure better family linkages, well-being and inter-generational learning, and to facilitate children's *success* in school (Torres, 2004, 2008a).

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<sup>44</sup> There are many interesting programmes dealing with parents (mothers)-children and family linkages. However, they cannot easily be captured as 'adult education' since they are inventoried as 'initial education', 'pre-school education' or 'early childhood development' and adult educators themselves often do not see or claim them as ALE. A clear example is Cuba's *Educa tu hijo* programme, included here in a box. The programme appears classified as an innovation in 'Curriculum Development' in UNESCO's *Red Innovemos* website <http://www.redinnovemos.org/content/view/364/70/lang.sp/> and under 'Initial Education' in OEI's website <http://www.oei.es/linea3/inicial/cubane.htm>

**Box 10****Linking parents and their young children through education: Three examples**

**Cuba:** '*Educa a tu hijo*' (Educate your child) is a national social programme coordinated by the Ministry of Education, launched on a massive scale in 1992-93, that aims to ensure educational attention children up to six years old who do not attend child circles or pre-school institutions. The strategy engages the family as the main educational agent, as well as the local community and various relevant social sectors and institutions. The programme operates on a voluntary basis, through Coordinating Groups at national, provincial, municipal and community levels. It is community-based, inter-sectoral, multidisciplinary and inter-institutional. Families are prepared and assisted to implement the programme in their own homes, including the fabrication of toys and educational materials with elements they can easily find or recycle. By 2008 nearly one million children aged up to six were served by the programme (70 per cent of the population in that age group in the country), 11,000 of them children with special needs, and a total of 876,216 families engaged. UNICEF contributes about 10 per cent of the funds; the rest is covered by the Cuban government. The '*Educa a tu hijo*' model has been adapted in Brazil (PIM, Río Grande do Sul), Ecuador ('Creciendo con Nuestros Hijos'– CNH), Mexico (San Luis Potosí, where books have been translated to the náhuatl language) and also Colombia, Guatemala and Venezuela (Siverio Gómez, 2008).

To learn more see <http://www.redinnovemos.org/content/view/364/70/lang.sp/> and <http://www.oei.es/linea3/inicial/cubane.htm>

**Ecuador:** The National Literacy Campaign 'Monsignor Leonidas Proaño' (1988-90) counted on high-school students as the main literacy facilitators and their teachers as student brigades coordinators. For the programme in Spanish, two types of school student brigades were organised: those (students from the last year of secondary school) in charge of actual literacy teaching, and those responsible for taking care of young children, in a nearby classroom or facility, while their mothers and fathers attended classes. Both types of brigades received specific training, were supervised and received official accreditation for their social work. In the sub-programme in the Quechua language, under the responsibility of the National Directorate for Intercultural Bilingual Education (DINEIB), community organisations themselves organised the provision for young children.

To learn more see [http://www.fronesis.org/ecuador\\_cna.htm](http://www.fronesis.org/ecuador_cna.htm)

**Bolivia:** *Yuyay Jap'ina* ("Making knowledge our own", in Quechua) is a programme implemented with UNICEF support since 1992 in rural areas of the Departments of Potosí and Cochabamba. The programme, inspired in the famous *Warisata* model that revolutionised indigenous education in Bolivia, offers bilingual intercultural primary education to parents, women in particular, aged 15 to 45. It is complemented by the *Kallpa Wawa* programme ("Strengthening Children", in Quechua), aimed at young children and under the responsibility of trained early childhood educators. Both programmes are viewed as part of a single strategy aimed at family and community development.

To learn more see <http://www.unicef.org/bolivia/>

(Elaborated by R.M.Torres)

**Learning to work and defending the right to (decent) work**

There are many lessons learned and systematised in the field of vocational and technical education and training that must be taken into account before improvising and going ahead with more of the same. Linking training to concrete job opportunities, incorporating personal and social skills in curricula alongside technical skills, accompanying youth in their entry-to-employment process, and recognising that work codes and rituals linked to work are learned in the actual process of working, are some of the many recommendations derived from analyses of concrete programmes in several countries in the region (Jacinto, 2007). In a global and regional context, unemployment has become 'natural' and decent work has become scarce and a right denied to millions of young people and adults – even to those who have formal schooling and a strong educational background. Defending the right to work is the necessary complement not only to defending children's and adolescents' right to relevant school education that prepares them for work and life, but also to defending workers' right to continuing education and training to be able to cope with changing demands in the world of work.

### **More and better use of traditional and modern technologies**

Radio, a pioneering and once-strong educational tool in the region for ALE purposes, has taken a rather low educational profile *vis-à-vis* audiovisual and digital technologies. However, radio continues to be the most widespread media in the region, reaching the most remote areas and the poorest sectors, even when electricity is not available. Thus there is a need to strengthen radio, finding its new role in current times and combining it with other technologies, as some institutions and programmes are already doing (for example, the Jesuits' *Fe y Alegría* Radio Institutes, IRFAs, operating for many years and in several countries).<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, available audio-visual and digital technologies are not being fully utilised. There are planning, distribution and implementation problems in countries and programmes that have invested in them for ALE purposes. It is essential to adopt more collective and community approaches to the use of ICTs, and to learn from the school experience with computers and the internet, which started about a decade ago, with many positive and negative lessons which adult education can benefit from in order to avoid the same illusions and mistakes. Also, cellular phones, widespread in the region and reaching some of the poorest sectors of society, have not been utilised yet in their information, communication and educational potential, especially among youth and for reading and writing purposes.<sup>46</sup>

### **More efforts for empowering the people rather than for lobbying**

'Influencing education policies' has become a major trend among actors from civil society. Efforts are generally address trying to influence national and international decision-makers through lobbying and advocacy, research evidence, participation at meetings, drafting and editing of documents and declarations. This reflects and reinforces the understanding of policy- and decision-making as an elitist, bureaucratic and technocratic task, rather than a process that needs and should be open to citizens' participation and consultation. It is essential to work and influence not only 'upwards' (policy-makers, authorities) but also and especially 'downwards' (grassroots organisations, social movements) so as to strengthen people's own capacities to participate in policy-making, actively demand their rights, with their own voices and without mediators, and shape their own programmes. Such informed and organised social mobilisation from below is not only more effective but is also a citizenship-building process in itself (Torres, 2007). The correlation found in this region between low education, low expectations, and over-satisfaction with poor quality education (Lora, 2008) calls precisely for enhanced efforts to ensure more and better education to the poor so that they are better able to discriminate bad from good education and assert their rights.

### **Revitalising the *Popular Education* spirit**

This means strengthening the alternative character of ALE and of the Popular Education movement in the region, acknowledging the political dimension of education for social transformation. It is clear that education in and by itself, and 'more of the same', will not bring the necessary economic and social changes required to build more equitable and just societies. Renewing the strategies implies renewing the vision and renewing the struggle. In the present regional context, Paraguay, under a new progressive government, has embarked on a participatory process trying to revive Popular Education in the country, from a governmental perspective, not only for adult and non-formal education but also for the entire education system, in and out of school.

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<sup>45</sup> *Radio Santa María*, in the Dominican Republic; *Instituto Radiofónico 'Fe y Alegría'* (IRFA) in several countries; and *Radio San Gabriel* in Bolivia, are some of the pioneering, most salient, lasting and ongoing examples of the use of radio for ALE purposes.

<sup>46</sup> According to recent data (2008), in Latin America there are over 400 million people who have a mobile phone. Over 80 per cent use them only to receive calls, which have no cost.

## Dealing with conceptual and terminological issues in the field

Conceptual and terminological problems have accompanied the adult education field from the start, and continue to be a challenge not only worldwide but also in this region in particular. The need for a common understanding of the concepts of '*functional literacy*' and '*development*' as well as for a Standardised Data Reporting System, were central concerns and problems in the planning and implementation of the World Experimental Literacy Programme in the mid-1960s (UNESCO, 1977). The proposal of an internationally-accepted glossary for ALE has been made several times in the past, and has been developed for countries in the North (for example for Europe: Federighi, 1999). But no informed debate and consensus have been reached in regions in the South, where terms and trends have generally been imported from the North without proper domestic discussion on relevance and adaptation to specific realities. UNESCO's ISCED 1997 definitions and classifications clearly continue to respond to realities, ideologies and aspirations of industrialised countries. The glossary provided in the last EFA *Global Monitoring Report* (2009) ignores the terms *learning* and *lifelong learning*, at the very heart of education and of educational transformation in current times.

The CONFINTEA VI process may provide an invaluable opportunity to deal with old and new terms, concepts and trends, and to agree on a common terminology (and translation into several relevant languages, including indigenous ones) that may fit the diverse realities of this region. The identity of the field is at stake, including the revision of categories such as *formal/non-formal/informal*, *out-of-school*, *alternative* and *popular*, and of *age* as a central category to identify the field.<sup>47</sup> Unless we develop a common understanding, a common language and common statistical methodologies, advances in all spheres will be limited and not comparable.

## From literacy to lifelong learning

"*From literacy to lifelong learning*" was the title of the preparatory Regional Conference (Mexico, 10-13 September 2008). This represents in fact a major challenge for this region, where adult literacy is currently over-emphasised, with a myriad of national and supranational initiatives and plans crossing the region and operating in a rather uncoordinated manner. Meanwhile the lifelong learning paradigm has not been embraced and continues to be associated with adults only. Although mentioned in policies and legal instruments, lifelong learning remains a distant concept, associated with the North, lacking relevance and contextualisation in the South. A wide, informed and contextualised debate on lifelong learning is still missing in the region, even in academic circles.

Assuming lifelong learning as a paradigm for education and learning systems would imply, among other things (Torres, 2004):

- asking, reflecting and debating about the meaning and implications of adopting/adapting this paradigm in the South and in this region in particular;
- understanding that *lifelong* embraces a continuum from early childhood to older age. Lifelong learning/education are not equivalent to adult learning/education – rather, ALE is a part of lifelong learning;
- shifting from the traditional focus on *teaching* and teachers to a focus on *learning* and learners, accepting that learners are the most important actors and that not all learning derives from teaching and from education, that learning is much wider than education;
- adopting *learning to learn* as a fundamental principle of education policies, cultures and practice, which implies a pedagogical revolution;
- breaking down the barriers between *education* and *training*. From the perspective of learning and learners, such differences are irrelevant and are perceived as a continuum,

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<sup>47</sup> The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) does not classify education levels by participants' age. Primary education (ISCED 1), lower secondary (ISCED 2) or upper secondary (ISCED 3) are classified as such even if learners are adults (See Annex A).

as is the alternation or simultaneity between *study* and *work*, both of them learning opportunities;

- reorganising the time and age parameters traditionally associated with education; reorganising and articulating spaces where learning takes place throughout life – home, community, school system, work, communications media, social participation, arts, sports, recreation, reading and writing, teaching, autonomous learning, use of ICTs and so on. This means articulating formal, non-formal, and informal learning;
- acknowledging, appreciating and validating learning that takes places in daily life, outside the school system and formal channels;
- addressing learners not as individual and isolated learners, organised by age – children, youth, adults, the elderly – but rather as *families* and *communities*, aiming to build “learning families” and “learning communities”;
- enhancing, rather than inhibiting, inter-generational learning in the family, the community, the workplace and the school system; and
- rethinking education as a trans-sectoral policy that crosses all other policies and sectors rather than maintaining education as a sector-specific policy.

# Some conclusions and recommendations

From the abundant information and documentation available and from our own knowledge and work experience in the field and on the ground, it is evident that the big quantitative and qualitative leap forward, long required by youth and adult education in the region, has not taken place and is yet to come. Perhaps the most significant and generalised change over the past decade is the trend towards increased institutionalisation of ALE – with its pros and cons – and, more specifically, the transition from initial literacy interventions to regular education programmes with equivalencies to the school system and formal accreditation of study, something that was rare, resisted and even unconceivable for many only a few years ago (especially for those who associated adult education with non-formal education and thus as non-structured and non-certified).

The *Agenda for the Future* approved at CONFINTEA V (1997), wide in its vision and extremely ambitious in its proposals for adult learning, has not been implemented in this region. Neither has the Regional Framework for Action for Youth and Adult Education 2000-2010 prepared by Latin American and Caribbean specialists and specialised bodies as a follow-up to CONFINTEA V. The shift from *education* to *learning* and the adoption of lifelong learning as a new paradigm for education and training are still far from regional realities.

National and international reports and studies describe lots of ALE-related activities taking place in the region over the past decade and especially in the past few years and months. However, 'lots of activities' do not necessarily mean advance and development. *Activism* has been characteristic of the ALE field, often related to weak planning and coordination, one-shot and isolated activities lacking continuity, monitoring, systematisation, evaluation and feedback. The fact that countries engage from time to time and over and over again in 'illiteracy eradication' or 'illiteracy reduction' initiatives, tells the story of this discontinuity and of policies unable to deal with literacy/basic education in a sustained and integral manner, linking school and out-of-school, children's and adults', education as part of one single strategy towards education for all.

In any case, for almost every advance that can be identified, there is a '*but*' to be added.

- Given the acknowledged distance between rhetoric/policies/laws and practice, the inclusion of ALE in recent policies, reforms and legislative frameworks on paper should not lead to assumptions about effective implementation.
- Quantitative gains – small as they are – are usually shadowed by quality and equity problems.
- Priority given to youth has ended up marginalising adults and the elderly, just as priority given to women ended up marginalising men in several countries and programmes.
- The acknowledgement of the importance of literacy has traditionally placed it at the heart of ALE efforts, and is currently being over-emphasised in many countries with too many programmes running in parallel and poor targeting of effort.
- Literacy achievements are rarely sustained and complemented with policies and strategies aimed at making reading and writing accessible to the entire population, paying attention to their specific needs, languages and cultures.
- Many vocational and technical training programmes continue to ignore the complex issues involved in the transition between education and work, and in the world of work.
- The important impulse towards completion of primary/secondary education and the accreditation of study needs to be accompanied by the necessary efforts to ensure effective, meaningful and useful *learning*.
- Many hands involved often do not generate genuine 'partnerships' but rather increased lack of coordination, competitiveness, duplication of efforts and misuse of resources.
- Experience indicates that decentralisation and outsourcing do not necessarily bring the advantages promised.

- Expansion of ICTs for ALE purposes is counter-balanced by improvisation, poor use of the technologies, poorly-defined criteria to decide on the best combination to use in each specific case, and – most importantly – neglect of the essential interpersonal pedagogical relationship.
- Cost-efficiency applied to ALE is often understood and translated as ‘cheaper and quicker’, thus leading to an amplified vicious circle of low quality and poor results.

Many practices selected as ‘good’ or ‘best’ practices are outdated, based on documents, experts’ opinions or self-evaluation by their own actors, and lack empirical evidence on their implementation, results and actual perceptions by participants. Few of them would pass the test of the “four As” – availability, accessibility, adaptability and acceptability. On the other hand, many relevant experiences remain unsystematised and unknown because of chronic lack of time and resources in the field, the commitment to action and many urgencies.

Overall, innovative, transformative and alternative proposals and actions are linked to social movements and other organised social actors, rather than on the governmental side. However, it is also important to remember that ‘innovative’ is not necessarily ‘effective’ or generalisable. Innovations are specific, generally local and small-scale, they grow under given conditions, and cannot be expanded easily on a massive scale or replicated in other contexts.

At the same time, inertia afflicts not only on the side of governments but also civil society and the international agencies linked to education and to the ALE field in particular. The Education for All (EFA) movement, coordinated worldwide by UNESCO, has always sidelined the learning needs of youth and adults, despite their inclusion in the Education for All (EFA) agenda, first in 1990 (Jomtien) and later in 2000 (Dakar). EFA, every year since 2003, have acknowledged this neglect. However, acknowledging it has not changed the situation. The 2009 EFA *Global Monitoring Report*, launched in November 2008, and its world dissemination coinciding with the year of the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI), continues to ignore ALE, not considering it of strategic importance to the achievement of EFA by 2015 (EFA *GMR*, 2009).<sup>48</sup>

Two important myths must be revisited: that in order to get deserved attention for ALE more evidence and more financial resources are needed. In fact, there has been plenty of theoretical and empirical evidence, for several decades now, indicating what should already be considered common sense and a clear guide for decision-making and for action: ALE has direct and positive effects on the self-esteem and life opportunities of adult learners themselves as well as on their children’s well-being (as expressed by indicators related to child mortality and morbidity, childbirth, rearing practices, access to school, student outcomes and so on), their families and communities. Those who have first hand knowledge of education, of the ALE field and of the political culture in this region know that lack of attention to ALE is not because of insufficient data, evidence or conceptual clarity, as inconsistently argued in the EFA *Global Monitoring Report* 2009.<sup>49</sup> What is known about ALE – theoretically and empirically, regionally and internationally – is more than enough to know what needs to be done and to do it well. The main deficit relates to action, not to information and knowledge.

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<sup>48</sup> See “Comments of ICAE on the UNESCO 2009 GMR EFA Report” (ICAE, 2008)

<sup>49</sup> “There is little agreement about how to define the notions of ‘adult learning’ and ‘life skills’, and which learning activities to include.” ‘Life skills’ and ‘livelihood skills’, both aspects of adult learning, have taken on different meanings in different countries.” Also, “the fact that no clear quantitative targets were established at Dakar, apart from the main literacy target, may have contributed to a lack of urgency. In addition, the language of the commitment is ambiguous. Some read goal 3 as calling for universal access to learning and life-skills programmes, but others, including the drafters of the Dakar Framework, understand no such intent.” (EFA *GMR* 2009, 2008: 91).

On one hand, as evaluations in the field of school education reiterate, there is no direct and necessary connection between more financial resources and better education. What is needed is not only *more* – the only aspect usually highlighted – but *better use* of available resources, precisely because they are scarce. Parameters of what is ‘good spending’ and ‘good international co-operation’ in ALE must be devised.

On the other hand, the *financial deficit*, usually placed at the centre of both obstacles and possibilities in the field of education and of ALE in particular, is only a manifestation of a much greater and more complicated deficit, the *political deficit*, namely the continued lack of political will to make quality education and learning for all a national priority and a commitment with people’s empowerment and well-being, social justice, and national development. The outburst of the major recent world financial crisis showed very clearly what political will can do: billions of dollars were immediately ready to rescue banks and financial markets, those billions that are never available to solve the structural problems of the people, of the most needed and vulnerable. The real priority is thus addressing the political deficit, not only that of national governments but also that of the ‘international community’ and the international agencies that take global decisions and help shape international and national agendas.

Anyhow, whatever the problems identified, they cannot be attributed solely to ALE as a field but to the political, social and economic contexts in which it operates. ALE deals with the most disadvantageous situations and with the most vulnerable segments of society, those most affected by poverty, exclusion, and subordination in many aspects: whether political, economic, social, cultural or linguistic. It also deals with the subordination associated to the conditions of its main target population, which results in low national and international attention and prioritisation in terms of budget and otherwise. How much more or better could be done under the concrete circumstances in each case is an open question with at least one clear answer: unless there are important economic and social changes in the overall conditions of the population served by ALE, ALE will not be able to fulfil its mission. It is time to rethink the equation: education by itself cannot fight poverty and exclusion, unless specific and intended economic and social policies – not just compensatory programmes – are in place to deal with them in a radical manner.

Despite advances in terms of cross-sectoral policies and collaboration with other government actors, ALE continues to be perceived as pertaining to the ‘education sector’, and the ‘education sector’ continues to be perceived in isolation. The transversal nature of ALE, its linkages with a wide range of economic and social areas and activities, remains invisible inasmuch as the field continues to be identified primarily as ‘*adult*’ and as ‘*education*’, losing sight of the various dimensions and the various identities of young and adult learners: family and community members, parents, neighbours, workers, producers, learners, educators, social and cultural agents, consumers and citizens. Also, the increasing specificity of ‘youth’ as separate and different from ‘adult’, and the increasing visibility of a specific agenda for youth in multiple areas, at national, regional and international levels, calls for a thorough rethinking of all these categories *vis-à-vis* a lifelong learning framework and agenda.

We are facing especially difficult times worldwide. Survival challenges are bigger not only for the people but for the planet. All of them are linked to education and to ALE in a specific and critical way because it is not only the future but also the present that is at stake.

This is not time for more paradigm shifts; it is time to recuperate, make sense and cope with the many ‘expanded’ and ‘renewed’ visions foreseen in the past for basic education (1990), adult education and learning (1997), technical and vocational education and training (1999), literacy (2003), and education in general, not yet appropriated and translated into practice.

This is not time for unsubstantial or repetitive research to provide additional evidence to convince those who take decisions and define policies on paper. It is time for *action*, for better and more refined action based, in the first place, on what we already know. It is time to

invest in people, in the capacities and qualities of those engaged in ALE at all levels, not only facilitators and not only those working on the ground, but also those in planning, organising and managing positions.

This is an opportunity to reflect, discuss and agree on a common language, common concepts and terminologies that allow us to communicate better, exchange our ideas, compare our practices, and continue learning.

It is time to revisit the real objectives and goals, and distinguish between priorities and fundamental requisites. Beyond indicators of enrolment, retention, completion and accreditation, the mission of education is to promote personal and social change through learning, awareness-raising, critical and creative thinking, informed and committed action. ALE has a fundamental transformative mission that has been lost and must be recovered, requiring not only pedagogical but social and political action, wider, stronger and more meaningful social participation in the discussion, definition, follow up and evaluation of policies and programmes.

The new threats posed today by the many combined world crises – food, energy, environmental and financial – aggravate the regional scenario and the situation of the poor in particular, thus placing new and more urgent demands and challenges on ALE. Information, communication, education and learning can make today the difference between life and death, hope and despair, for millions of young people and adults in Latin America and the Caribbean who continue to be denied the most basic human rights, including the right to free, relevant and quality education and learning throughout life as a means for personal, family, community and social emancipation and transformation.

# Acronyms

- ALADIN: Adult Learning Documentation and Information Network  
<http://www.unesco.org/education/aladin/>
- CARICOM: Caribbean Community <http://www.caricom.org/>
- CEAAL: *Consejo de Educación de Adultos de América Latina* [Latin American Adult Education Council] <http://www.ceaal.org/>
- CONFINTEA VI: Sixth International Conference on Adult Education  
<http://www.unesco.org/en/confintea/>
- CREFAL: *Centro de Cooperación Regional para la Educación de Adultos en América Latina y el Caribe* [Regional Co-operation Centre for Adult Education in Latin America and the Caribbean] <http://www.crefal.edu.mx/>
- ECLAC: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean <http://www.eclac.org/>
- EFA GMR: Education for All Global Monitoring Reports  
<http://www.unesco.org/en/education/efareport/>
- EU: European Union <http://europa.eu/>
- FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations <http://www.fao.org/>
- GCE: Global Campaign for Education <http://www.campaignforeducation.org/>
- ICAE: International Council for Adult Education <http://www.icae2.org/>  
<http://www.icae.org.uy/>
- IDB: Inter-American Development Bank <http://www.iadb.org/>
- IPE-UNESCO Buenos Aires: International Institute for Educational Planning <http://www.iipe-buenosaires.org.ar/>
- ILO: International Labour Organization <http://www.ilo.org/global/lang--en/index.htm>
- INEA: *Instituto Nacional para la Educación de los Adultos*, Mexico <http://www.inea.gob.mx/>
- IPLAC: *Instituto Pedagógico Latinoamericano y Caribeño* – Cuba, Latin American and Caribbean Pedagogical Institute of the Republic of Cuba <http://www.cubagob.cu/>  
<http://www.iplac.rimed.cu/>
- ISCED: International Standard Classification of Education  
[http://www.unesco.org/education/information/nfsunesco/doc/isced\\_1997.htm](http://www.unesco.org/education/information/nfsunesco/doc/isced_1997.htm)
- LLECE: Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education  
<http://llece.unesco.cl/ing/>
- LAMP: Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme  
[http://www.uis.unesco.org/ev.php?URL\\_ID=6409&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201](http://www.uis.unesco.org/ev.php?URL_ID=6409&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201)
- OAS: Organization of American States <http://www.oas.org/>
- OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development  
[http://www.oecd.org/home/0,3305,en\\_2649\\_201185\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/home/0,3305,en_2649_201185_1_1_1_1_1,00.html)
- OECS: Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States <http://www.oecs.org/>
- OEI: *Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos* [Organization of Ibero-American States]  
<http://www.oei.es/>
- OREALC: UNESCO Regional Bureau of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean  
<http://www.unesco.org/santiago>
- PIA: *Plan Iberoamericano de Alfabetización y Educación Básica de Personas Jóvenes y Adultas* [Ibero-American Plan for Youth and Adult Literacy and Basic Education]  
[http://www.oei.es/alfabetizacion\\_pia.htm](http://www.oei.es/alfabetizacion_pia.htm)
- PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment <http://www.pisa.oecd.org/>
- PREALC: *Proyecto Regional de Educación para América Latina y el Caribe* Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean  
[http://portal.unesco.org/geography/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=7464&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/geography/en/ev.php-URL_ID=7464&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)
- PRIE: Regional Education Indicators Project  
[http://www.prie.oas.org/english/cpo\\_indicadores.asp](http://www.prie.oas.org/english/cpo_indicadores.asp)
- SEGIB: *Secretaría General Iberoamericana* [Ibero-American General Secretariat]  
<http://www.segib.org/>

SITEAL: *Sistema de Información de Tendencias en Educación de América Latina*  
[Information System on Educational Trends in Latin America] <http://www.siteal.iipe-oei.org/>

UIL: UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning <http://www.unesco.org/uil/>

UIS: UNESCO Institute for Statistics <http://www.uis.unesco.org/>

LIFE: Literacy Initiative for Empowerment, UNESCO  
<http://www.unesco.org/uil/en/focus/litinforemp.htm>

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme <http://www.undp.org/>

UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund <http://www.unfpa.org/>

UNLD: United Nations Literacy Decade <http://www.unesco.org/education/litdecade/>

USAID: U.S. Agency for International Development <http://www.usaid.gov/>

WB: World Bank <http://go.worldbank.org/2F6VWCXNJ0>

## Abbreviations

ALE: Adult Learning and Education

ECCED: Early Childhood Care, Education and Development

EFA: Education for All

EDI: EFA Development Index

EPJA: *Educación de Personas Jóvenes y Adultas* [Youth and Adult Education]

GNP: Gross National Product

HDI: Human Development Index

LLL: Lifelong Learning

MDGs: Millennium Development Goals

MOE: Ministry of Education

NFE: Non-Formal Education

UPE: Universal Primary Education

USE: Universal Secondary Education

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# Annexes

## Annex A

### Glossary: Some definitions in the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 1997)

**Adult education** (or continuing or recurrent education): “The entire body of organized educational processes, whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong, improve their technical or professional qualifications, further develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge with the purpose: (a) to complete a level of formal education; (b) to acquire knowledge and skills in a new field; (c) to refresh or update their knowledge in a particular field.”

**Formal education:** “Education provided in the system of schools, colleges, universities and other formal educational institutions that normally constitutes a continuous ‘ladder’ of full-time education for children and young people, generally beginning at age five to seven and continuing up to 20 or 25 years old. In some countries, the upper parts of this ‘ladder’ are constituted by organized programmes of joint part-time employment and part-time participation in the regular school and university system: such programmes have come to be known as the ‘dual system’ or equivalent terms in these countries.”

**Non-formal education:** “Any organized and sustained educational activities that do not correspond exactly to the above definition of formal education. Non-formal education may therefore take place both within and outside educational institutions, and cater to persons of all ages. Depending on country contexts, it may cover educational programmes to impart adult literacy, basic education for out-of-school children, life-skills, work-skills, and general culture. Non-formal education programmes do not necessarily follow the ‘ladder’ system, and may have differing duration.”

**Special needs education:** “Educational intervention and support designed to address special education needs. The term ‘special needs education’ has come into use as a replacement for the term ‘special education’. The older term was mainly understood to refer to the education of children with disabilities that takes place in special schools or institutions distinct from, and outside of, the institutions of the regular school and university system. In many countries today a large proportion of disabled children are in fact educated in institutions of the regular system. Moreover, the concept of ‘children with special educational needs’ extends beyond those who may be included in handicapped categories to cover those who are failing in school for a wide variety of other reasons that are known to be likely to impede a child’s optimal progress. Whether or not this more broadly defined group of children are in need of additional support depends on the extent to which schools need to adapt their curriculum, teaching and organization and/or to provide additional human or material resources so as to stimulate efficient and effective learning for these pupils.”

**Pre-vocational or pre-technical education:** “Education which is mainly designed to introduce participants to the world of work and to prepare them for entry into vocational or technical education programmes. Successful completion of such programmes does not yet lead to a labour-market relevant vocational or technical qualification. For a programme to be considered as pre-vocational or pre-technical education, at least 25% of its content has to be vocational or technical. This minimum is necessary to ensure that the vocational subject or the technical subject is not only one among many others.”

**Vocational or technical education:** “Education which is mainly designed to lead participants to acquire the practical skills, know-how and understanding necessary for *employment* in a particular occupation or trade or class of occupations or trades. Successful completion of such programmes lead to a labour-market relevant vocational qualification recognized by the competent authorities in the country in which it is obtained (e.g. Ministry of Education, employers’ associations, etc.).”

Source: ISCED 1997 [http://www.unesco.org/education/information/nfsunesco/doc/isced\\_1997.htm](http://www.unesco.org/education/information/nfsunesco/doc/isced_1997.htm)

## Annex B

### Education for All (EFA) goals

<b>1990-2000: Jomtien</b>	<b>2000-2015: Dakar</b>
1. Expansion of early childhood care and development activities, including family and community interventions, especially for poor, disadvantaged and disabled children.	1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
2. Universal access to, and completion of, primary education (or whatever higher level of education is considered as "basic") by the year 2000.	2. Ensuring 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.
3. Improvement in learning achievement such that an agreed percentage of an appropriate age cohort (e.g. 80% 14 year-olds) attains or surpasses a defined level of necessary learning achievement.	3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.
4. Reduction in the adult illiteracy rate (the appropriate age cohort to be determined in each country) to, say, one-half its 1990 level by the year 2000, with sufficient emphasis on female literacy to significantly reduce the current disparity between the male and female illiteracy rates.	4. Achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
5. Expansion of provision of basic education and training in other essential skills required by youth and adults, with programme effectiveness assessed in terms of behavioural changes and impacts on health, employment and productivity.	5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.
6. Increased acquisition by individuals and families of the knowledge, skills and values required for better living and sound and sustainable development, made available through all educational channels including the mass media, other forms of modern and traditional communication, and social action, with effectiveness assessed in terms of behavioural change.	6. Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

# Annex C

## Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2000-2015

<p><b>Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger</b></p> <p>Target 1a: Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.1 Proportion of population below \$1 (PPP) per day</li><li>1.2 Poverty gap ratio</li><li>1.3 Share of poorest quintile in national consumption</li></ul> <p>Target 1b: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and youth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.4 Growth rate of GDP per person employed</li><li>1.5 Employment-to-population ratio</li><li>1.6 Proportion of employed people living below \$1 (PPP) per day</li><li>1.7 Proportion of own-account and contributing family workers in total employment</li></ul> <p>Target 1c: Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.8 Prevalence of underweight children under-five years of age</li><li>1.9 Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption</li></ul>
<p><b>Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education</b></p> <p>Target 2a: Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2.1 Net enrolment ratio in primary education</li><li>2.2 Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary</li><li>2.3 Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds, women and men</li></ul>
<p><b>Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women</b></p> <p>Target 3a: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>3.1 Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education</li><li>3.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector</li><li>3.3 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament</li></ul>
<p><b>Goal 4: Reduce child mortality</b></p> <p>Target 4a: Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>4.1 Under-five mortality rate</li><li>4.2 Infant mortality rate</li><li>4.3 Proportion of 1 year-old children immunized against measles</li></ul>
<p><b>Goal 5: Improve maternal health</b></p> <p>Target 5a: Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>5.1 Maternal mortality ratio</li><li>5.2 Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel</li></ul> <p>Target 5b: Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>5.3 Contraceptive prevalence rate</li><li>5.4 Adolescent birth rate</li><li>5.5 Antenatal care coverage (at least one visit and at least four visits)</li><li>5.6 Unmet need for family planning</li></ul>
<p><b>Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases</b></p> <p>Target 6a: Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>6.1 HIV prevalence among population aged 15-24 years</li></ul>

- 6.2 Condom use at last high-risk sex
- 6.3 Proportion of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS
- 6.4 Ratio of school attendance of orphans to school attendance of non-orphans aged 10-14 years

Target 6b: Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it.

- 6.5 Proportion of population with advanced HIV infection with access to antiretroviral drugs

Target 6c: Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.

- 6.6 Incidence and death rates associated with malaria
- 6.7 Proportion of children under 5 sleeping under insecticide-treated bednets
- 6.8 Proportion of children under 5 with fever who are treated with appropriate anti-malarial drugs
- 6.9 Incidence, prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis
- 6.10 Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured under directly observed treatment short course

### **Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability**

Target 7a: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources.

Target 7b: Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss.

- 7.1 Proportion of land area covered by forest.
- 7.2 CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, total, per capita and per \$1 GDP (PPP)
- 7.3 Consumption of ozone-depleting substances
- 7.4 Proportion of fish stocks within safe biological limits
- 7.5 Proportion of total water resources used
- 7.6 Proportion of terrestrial and marine areas protected
- 7.7 Proportion of species threatened with extinction

Target 7c: Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

- 7.8 Proportion of population using an improved drinking water source
- 7.9 Proportion of population using an improved sanitation facility

Target 7d: Achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020.

- 7.10 Proportion of urban population living in slums

### **Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development**

Target 8a: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system. Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction – nationally and internationally.

Target 8b: Address the special needs of LDCs. Includes: tariff and quota free access for the least developed countries' exports; enhanced programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction.

Target 8c: Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly).

Target 8d: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term.

Some of the indicators listed below are monitored separately for the LDCs, Africa, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states.

Official development assistance (ODA)

- 8.1 Net ODA, total and to the LDCs, as percentage of OECD/DAC donors' gross national income
- 8.2 Proportion of total bilateral, sector-allocable ODA of OECD/DAC donors to basic social services (basic education, primary health care, nutrition, safe water and sanitation)
- 8.3 Proportion of bilateral official development assistance of OECD/DAC donors that is untied
- 8.4 ODA received in landlocked developing countries as a proportion of their gross national incomes
- 8.5 ODA received in small island developing states as a proportion of their gross national incomes

Market access

- 8.6 Proportion of total developed country imports (by value and excluding arms) from developing countries and least developed countries, admitted free of duty
- 8.7 Average tariffs imposed by developed countries on agricultural products, textiles and clothing from developing countries
- 8.8 Agricultural support estimate for OECD countries as a percentage of their gross domestic product
- 8.9 Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity

Debt sustainability

- 8.10 Total number of countries that have reached their HIPC decision points and number that have reached their HIPC completion points (cumulative)
- 8.11 Debt relief committed under HIPC and MDRI Initiatives
- 8.12 Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services

Target 8e: In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries.

- 8.13 Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis

Target 8f: In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications.

- 8.14 Telephone lines per 100 population
- 8.15 Cellular subscribers per 100 population
- 8.16 Internet users per 100 population

Source: <http://www.undp.org/mdg/basics.shtml>

## About the Author

**Rosa María Torres del Castillo** (Ecuador). Educationist and linguist. Researcher and international adviser with vast experience in basic education. Specialised in youth and adult education, literacy, learning communities and lifelong learning. Pedagogical Director of the National Literacy Campaign 'Monsignor Leonidas Proaño' (1988-1990) and Minister of Education in Ecuador (2003). Senior Education Adviser at UNICEF's Education Cluster in New York and editor of *Education News* (1990-96). Programme Director for Latin America and the Caribbean for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (1996-98). Researcher at IPEE-UNESCO Buenos Aires (1998-2000). Institutional adviser to CREFAL in Mexico (2006-2009). Together with a group of experts convened by UNESCO, she was in charge of drafting the Base Document for the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012) discussed and approved at a special session during the World Education Forum in Dakar (2000). Co-organiser and coordinator of the Latin American Statement for Education for All (since 2000). Author of numerous publications and moderator of various virtual communities and networks. For more information see <http://www.fronesis.org>