

UNESCO's Contributions to the Development of Education in Latin American Countries: Brazil and Bolivia

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Abstract-Since the 21st century, Latin America has gone through several transformations most notably politically and economically. Inequality and illiteracy in the region are one of the main issues, and the economic growth in the region has encouraged the governments to acknowledge the need to transform their educational structures. Investments were made in the region after the end of World War II with the creation of organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF to boost the quality of education and promote scientific development, especially in the lower developed regions in the area. This article aims to analyze these aspects, mainly, their development and the educational regulation in Brazil and Bolivia that today are working to eradicate poverty through delivering quality education for all.

Keywords-Latin America, Brazil, Bolivia, education, UNESCO

I. INTRODUCTION

In November 1945, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was launched and one year later, in December 1946, The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) was established. These organizations are specialized agencies of the United Nations mission. Both UNESCO and UNICEF work to end poverty and consolidate peace by using education, science and culture as a tool. In 2010, the "Finishing School. A Right for Children's Development: A Joint Effort" program a Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children promoted by UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, was established to perform studies of nations in order to mobilize resources for equity in different countries worldwide. As a result, this initiated studies on the exclusion of individuals from receiving education in countries like Brazil, and Bolivia, aiming to improve quality and equity in the educational system in order to eradicate poverty and inequality through social inclusion. Latin American and Caribbean educational systems have broadened to cover over 100 million children and adolescents in elementary, fundamental and pre-school. According to the UNESCO database, there are over 15 million children and adolescents in school carrying the burden of failure and around 6 million of them do not attend school at all.

Variations in competence levels, styles in learning, and ways of resolving problems, as well as individual motivations should be considered in making educational plans and programs. In accordance to the abovementioned factors, four pillars of learning have been established: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together. Learning to live together in different regions throughout Latin America was more challenging in the latter part of the 21st century. Violence and the influx of new cultures are a few examples why. Latin Americans have had to adapt to these changes so that they could further develop educationally. To aid the Latin American Region in April 2000 the World Education Forum held in Dakar addressed the need to act towards the development of basic education, as a result, a framework that provides a basic guide for the work carried out by UNESCO in education was presented [1]. Latin America and the Caribbean have been doing their part in implementing this framework through their new educational reforms. In November 2002, the Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean (PRELAC) was initiated by the ministers of education themselves to identify the basic principles and strategies in order to guide public action in education [2].

II. LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN IN EDUCATION

Education is a basic need in today's society. Education's importance is vital and with that in mind several countries have decided to work together in order to create a more efficient program that would help children from developing countries to attend school and have an education of quality. Latin America which consists of 33 countries created a program called Education for All (EFA) which together with Regional Education Project (PRELAC) aimed to help the eradication of illiteracy in the region. PRELAC works as a fuel to understand and create strategies thus helping in the development of adolescents and children in the region.

High dropout and repetition rates, compounded by inadequate levels of learning prove the high levels of the educational system's inefficiency. According to the UNESCO's database of 2000, only few countries in the region had children in pre-primary schools. Cuba and

Guiana were the only countries to reach as high as 80% of its children studying in pre-primary schools. Dreadfully on the other side countries such as Honduras, Paraguay and The Dominican had an average of 29,4 percent. With the aid provided in the region, by 2015, Barbados, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Jamaica, Peru and Uruguay had more than 80% of children enrolled in pre-primary education, and no country rated less than 30 percent. Since 2002, Antigua, Colombia and Bolivia have shown the largest increases in children enrolled at schools. Countries with enrolment rates below 30 percent have also shown remarkable improvements with an increase of 15 percentage points over the past decade and a half. [3]

Some LAC countries (Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia and Jamaica) realized that in order to create a more efficient educational program it was necessary to develop a National Educational Strategy with targets for the next five years, a model that would serve not only internally, but would be seen as an example for other countries in the region to follow. Nowadays there are few countries that have a long-term strategy plan that set goals, benchmarks and possess a national database to collect data on the development of its educational system. Brazil and Colombia are amongst the strongest countries to offer a complete educational plan. [4]

Brazil counts with the Observatory of the National Education Plan (Observatório do Plano Nacional de Educação in Portuguese) funded by private institutions and organizations with the goal to analyze and follow the process of education in the country to track the progress of the twenty goals set under the ten-year plan. Unfortunately, not all countries in the region have such programs. For example, Antigua and Barbuda do not have an online database of its national strategy plan on Education. Without public accountability of what is happening in the country governments are less pressured to improve its infrastructure. Across Latin America we still can find some countries (Bolivia, Granada, St. Kitts and Nevis, Suriname, and Venezuela) that do not possess an assessment test to evaluate its students in certain subjects each year. [6] Paraguay for example since 1996 do not offer a national policy that regulates how education should be assessed in the country therefore making any national evaluation on the development of education harder. [8] Panama also needs a nationalized system of education to project, regulate and administrate the quality of education delivered for its citizens. [9] It is important to highlight that a lot has been implemented in order to develop the educational system in the region; however, a lot of work has yet to be done.

III. BRAZIL

There are perceived inequalities in the conditions of access to education and in the educational outcomes of Brazilian children, young people, and adults. Many perceive this in Ethnic-racial groups, underprivileged, and the rural population, both young and elderly who have not completed compulsory education in Brazil. Major racial

and ethnic inequalities continue to exist in Brazilian society (especially in relation to minorities, like the quilombolas and Afro-descendants.) It is seen that there is a strong correlation between ethnic origin and educational opportunities. Regional inequalities affect the lives of boys, girls and adults every year, leading them to educational exclusion in the country. In Brazil, new ideas of how to deal with cultural diversity are being implemented in schools with the help of different thematic areas. History and geography is seen as dealing with immigration throughout the country's history. Portuguese, working with the linguistic variety of the country as an instrument to disseminate racial, ethnic, or class values and prejudices. Creative diversity is seen and taught in arts and folklore. Lastly, mathematics through statistical analysis of the percentage of inhabitants by their ethnic origins.

The Human Rights Committee is responsible for articulating and promoting activities to promote human rights values at all levels of education. The discrepancy also is visible in the fact that, despite the economic growth and with Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's administration, Brazil begins the 21st century with 9.6% adult illiteracy, which covers 14.533 million Brazilians who are not able to read or write [10]. Thus, despite reforms we still see struggles in favor of eradicating illiteracy and promote education. As a result of these policies in the educational area, data was collected and showed that the Brazilian average, in the Brazilian Development Basic Education (IDEB), is below four on a scale of one to ten. That 55 percent of children in the 4th grade do not have the mastery of reading. Emphasized in 2004, the failure rate in elementary education was 13 percent. Today, a student who has finished school possesses the same knowledge as an 8th grader in 1995. Lastly, the average expenditure per student in elementary school is US\$500, (five hundred dollars) per year; while the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), suggests US\$4,800 is the threshold many countries a lot for the same schooling. According to the School Census in 2013, 21.5% of teachers in Brazil, taught classes in the final years of elementary education, did not have a college degree and 35.4% were not qualified. This shows that 1/5 (one fifth) of teachers working in this stage of basic education did not have a higher-degree. The difficulty of finding teachers with adequate training is also caused by the low attractiveness of the profession. Brazilian education is not among the best on the planet, however, it has gradually overcome its deficiencies and consequently is improving its quality. [11]

In January 1st, 2003, the leader of the Workers' Party (PT) Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was sworn as the new president of Brazil. After disputing and being defeated in three previous election campaigns, one against Fernando Collor de Mello and, two by Fernando Henrique Cardoso. One of Lula's measures of greatest socio-educational impact was to expand the Development and Maintenance of Education Fundamental and Valorization of the Magisterium (FUNDEF). Created under the government of

Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the program allocates funds to the elementary education, as well as the Development and Maintenance of Basic Education and Valorization of the Magisterium program (FUNDEB), which covers Early Childhood, Elementary, and High School education. [12] In addition the State started to invest more in basic education with the objective of improving its quality. Lula's administration also invested more in higher education, especially regarding its access, with a strategy of inclusion for lower-classes. As a result, 14 federal public university authorities, in several Brazilian regions, implemented the Support Program for Plans for Restructuring and Expansion of Federal Universities (REUNI) in 2007. This aimed to enable and increase the access and permanence of young lower-class students in higher education in private institutions. University for All Project (ProUni) [12], is a program that still gives integral or partial scholarships for studies in private institutions, additionally, a program of quotas was implemented to get African American and indigenous people into higher education. This set of measures changed the profile of primary, secondary, and higher education in the country.

IV. BOLIVIA

Bolivia in recent years changed its view towards education and implemented new methods to reduce illiteracy. According to a Census from 2002 the access to primary education has increased significantly and the net enrollment ratio was 82 percent amongst children and adolescents. Literacy rate has also reached a higher rate (90 percent) among teenagers if compared to 80 percent in 1992. Education quality in Bolivia usually depends on factors such as gender, ethnicity, and economic wealth. In order to improve the gross completion in the country, the Ministry of Education created a program known as the Juancito Pinto Bonus that aimed to aid students financially with the goal to keep them at school as well as to improve the attendance rates which was as low as 56 percent in 2001. [14] As well with the implementation of the alphabetization program "I can" (Yo si Puedo) the literacy plan is aimed for adult students who did not have access to basic education. [15]

One of the main challenges of Bolivia's educational system is to integrate its 37 ethnic groups. In 2010, a new educational law (Avelino Siñani-Elizardo Pérez) came into force in order to help the creation of a new plurinational curricula that would incorporate the usage of local languages along with Spanish, cultural interests along with educational materials and most importantly the creation of a program known as the Complementary Training for Teachers Program (PROFOCOM in Spanish) which focused on training teachers to work with students despite of their language, ethnic group and/or beliefs. However, the regionalized curricula that respond to the needs and interests of the different indigenous pupils still have to be implemented. As it is analyzed, Bolivia has a lot to implement in order to impact the way education is promoted in the country and how it reaches excluded-

groups. [17] Bolivia has begun to strengthen its capacity to assess educational quality through various lines of action. It has received valuable technical support from the Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE) of OREALC/UNESCO Santiago. This action has caused a robust implementation training program for the Ministry of Education and Plurinational Observatory of Educational Quality (OPCE) staff since 2016. [18]

Bolivia generated the legal, institutional, financial, and curricular conditions for transforming the Plurinational Educational System — implementing the Productive, Socio-Community, Educational Model. Bolivia joined the LLECE in May 2016, which is the main scope for monitoring and follow-up mechanism in the region. Nineteen other countries in the region are apart of this. It is the fourth of the Regional Comparative and Explanatory Studies implemented by LLECE. It is participating in a large-scale study that will measure the learning achievements of elementary students and the associated factors that influence such outcomes like family, teachers, and principals. The results of the Comparative and Explanatory Study (ERCE) will be delivered in a preliminary way in the year 2020. The ERCE will provide highly reliable results to improve the quality of educational policies in the Plurinational Educational System. [19]

In order to achieve those goals and change how education is implemented in Bolivia and other Latin American countries UNICEF became part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the Gender Action Plan (GAP). The world is changing and so is the government's' views on how to deliver the basic needs its population needs. Thus, new approaches were implemented such as the Integral State Planning System (SPIE) and the Economic Development Plan (PDES). Nowadays Bolivia aims to deliver its 2025 agenda also known as the Patriotic Agenda (Agenda Patriótica in Spanish) which consists on 13 important principles that fight against poverty and inequality. Its main target is to resolve these problems through education. Although Bolivia's 2025 agenda goals sounds promising an execution plan of its goals has yet to be implemented which forces Bolivia to work with different planning instruments such as the Integral State Planning System (SPIE) that focus on the concept of "Living Well" with over 68 social programs being implemented. According to recent studies the government has an ambitious plan to reduce poverty rated at 17 percent to 10 percent from 2016 to 2020 as well as maintain a 5 percent economic growth. To this end the Central Bank of Bolivia (CBC) has been aiding the government with loans and giving financial support to new investors. [20]

It is necessary to spotlight that the Social and Economic Development Plan (PDES) has as its main challenges to aid and protect children, women and adolescents by increasing Early Childhood Development

services and by eliminating the exploitation of children and adolescents ensuring that they are able to attend primary and secondary schools. The government of Bolivia is working so that these targets are met and in accordance to the UNESCO's and the Sustainable Development Goals.

V. CONCLUSION

Education is a fundamental pillar for the development of any country. Some countries in Latin America have made improvements to reach this goal in the past years. UNESCO and UNICEF play an important and vital role in the region regarding the development and protection of human life by investing in the educational field through science and culture.

Latin American countries are fighting against poverty and the best way to face it is with an education of quality. The education reform in LAC is being developed. The establishment of the Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean (PRELAC) is a testament to that, which is based on four basic principles: Learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together which is key. Also, five strategic principles in order to regulate and improve the public education within the region.

In both countries, Brazil and Bolivia, we can analyze and assert that education is not accessible yet for all equally. Mostly for indigenous and ethnic groups are the ones that are left out. Brazil, still has to work towards a more equal and fair educational system for every race, gender and class. Bolivia's, cultural and ethnic integration is one of the most important goals for the new Bolivian educational law. Due to the demands and needs of 37 ethnic groups living inside the country. When accomplished it will pay great dividends to their overall education process. Comprehensive investments along with new regulations have to be implemented in both countries to get them to prosper in education, but great strides have been made to make education a right to everyone.

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