PANEL 1

Why we talk of a learning crisis in the region

Panelists

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Socio-economic inequalities and their impact on education

By Mariana Huepe

Over the last few decades, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have significantly increased their educational coverage, partly as a result of compulsory schooling being expanded. However, progress in several education indicators has slowed down since the mid-2010, which can be seen in hard cores of exclusion at the intersection of the structural axes of the social inequality matrix. This matrix is expressed, for example, in unequal attendance and completion rates per income level, gender, geographic area, and ethnic-racial status, among other variables.

Although education is a fundamental human right and a key pillar to advance towards the Sustainable Development Goals, in practice, it is not always effective in reducing the deep social and economic inequalities that characterize the region. This can be seen, for instance, in how students are segmented into differentiated educational circuits as a result of institutional diversification, which aims to sustain the expansion of the secondary level, and in parallel educational trajectories, which are separated by institutional and/or curricular barriers and by differences in students’ social background.
To ensure the right to inclusive, quality education; promote the central role of education for sustainable development, and support a transformative recovery from the pandemic, the region must urgently secure greater investment in education and strengthen the inter-sectoral articulation of education policies.

**BIOGRAPHY**

Mariana Huepe has a bachelor's degree in Economics (University of Chile), a master's degree in Development Studies (London School of Economics, United Kingdom), and a PhD in Development Planning (University College London, United Kingdom). She currently works as Social Affairs Officer in the Social Development Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Her main areas of research centre on issues regarding education and the labour market, with a focus on inclusion, gender, and social protection.
Primary level according to ERCE tests

By Carlos Henríquez

This presentation covers the results of the Fourth Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (ERCE 2019) of the Latin American Laboratory for the Assessment of Quality in Education (LLECE) of UNESCO/OREALC Santiago.

Firstly, it provides an overview of the state of education in the region prior to the pandemic. This overview shows the progress, gaps, debts, and challenges in terms of educational achievement, as well as the main factors associated with learning outcomes in the region.

Secondly, the presentation analyses the current learning crises – in particular, threats and improvement elements that offer a glimpse into how to face educational recovery and transformation in the region. The most recent results of ERCE 2019 reinforce a general outlook of low performance, inequity, and lack of access to quality education in Latin America and the Caribbean. In summary, most of the countries that participated in ERCE 2019 have more than half of their students performing at the lowest level.

This scenario puts the region in a state of utmost urgency. The high proportion of students performing at the lowest level is a wake-up call for education systems across the region, especially considering these results reflect a pre-pandemic situation.
While officials expect to see student learning losses, the percentage will likely be higher than expected. For this reason, there is an urgent need not only for country-specific agendas but also for a regional agenda. These efforts will help to chart a path for collective action to prioritize the learning and well-being of every student.

**BIOGRAPHY**

Carlos Henríquez Calderón holds a master’s degree in Management and Public Policy (University of Chile) and has a degree in Engineering (University of Santiago de Chile). He is currently the Coordinator of the Latin American Laboratory for the Assessment of Quality in Education (LLECE) of OREALC/UNESCO Santiago. For more than two decades, he has held high-level roles at universities and in the public sector. He has served as a general manager of the MideUC Measurement Centre of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, as the Education Director of the public schools of Maipu (one of the largest communes in Chile), and as an executive secretary of the Education Quality Agency of the Chilean Ministry of Education (2014–2019). He has also served as a civil service expert for selecting high-level officials.
PISA is the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment. It measures 15-year-olds’ ability to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges. At the commencement of PISA in 2000, five countries in the Latin American region joined the assessment. By 2018, more than 15 countries and economies had joined the programme. It is worth taking the time to look back and ask what we have learned from the past PISA cycles about the education landscape in the region.

The purposes of the presentation are 1) to give an overview of the performance of the LATAM region from PISA 2000 to PISA 2018, 2) to discuss some factors about the challenges in enhancing equity in education in the region, and 3) to present an example of how teachers can use international comparative data to inform their practices in the classroom through the PISA for Schools project.

The presentation intends to send three messages. First, some countries in the region have managed to improve their performance in PISA while extending the participation of the 15-year-old population in the education system. Second, it is important to continue to strengthen the efforts to provide more equitable learning to more students in the region. Third, policy-makers and teachers can use PISA data as well as its framework to make data-driven decisions in order to improve teaching and learning, not only at the national level but also in the classroom.
**BIOGRAPHY**

**Chi Sum TSE** is currently studying for an MSc in Educational Assessment at the University of Oxford (United Kingdom). He was an Alexandre Yersin scholarship recipient at Sciences Po Paris (France), where he completed an MA in International Development. He also pursued master-level courses on Mercosur at the University of Buenos Aires (Argentina). Chi Sum works as an Analyst for the PISA for Schools project at the OECD. He provides technical assistance to countries looking to implement the project, assists policy-makers and school leaders in understanding their school results, and offers international examples to transform data into action. He leads the work on the development of an educator-driven international peer-learning community, which aims to facilitate sharing solutions for common challenges. Previously, Chi Sum gained experience in social policy at UNESCO (France) and in local community development with TECHO (Argentina) and a local NGO in Peru.