INTERCULTURAL AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA

Trajectories, Perspectives and Challenges

Edited by Silvia Romero-Contreras, Ismael García-Cedillo and Luz María Moreno-Medrano

Series Editor Chris Forlin

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

VOLUME 24

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Series Editor: Chris Forlin

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INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION VOLUME 24

INTERCULTURAL AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA: TRAJECTORIES, PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES

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Corrigendum: It has come to the attention of the publisher that the chapter del Valle, S.S. (2024), "The Implications of Epistemic Justice for Intercultural and Inclusive Education", Romero-Contreras, S., Garcìa-Cedillo, I. and Moreno-Medrano, L.M. (Ed.) Intercultural and Inclusive Education in Latin America (International Perspectives on Inclusive Education, Vol. 24), Emerald Publishing Limited, Leeds, pp. 227–240. https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-363620240000024015, incorrectly listed the author Sylvia Schmelkes del Valle as del Valle, S.S.; the correct author information is as follows: Schmelkes, S. This has been amended in both the published version and metadata. The author sincerely apologizes for this mistake.

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SERIES EDITOR PREFACE

The adoption internationally of inclusive practice as the most equitable and all-encompassing approach to education and its relation to compliance with various international Declarations and Conventions underpins the importance of this series for people working at all levels of education and schooling in both developed and less developed countries. There is little doubt that inclusive education is complex and diverse and that there are enormous disparities in understanding and application at both inter- and intra-country levels. A broad perspective on inclusive education throughout this series is taken, encompassing a wide range of contemporary viewpoints, ideas and research for enabling the development of more inclusive schools, education systems and communities.

Volumes in this series on *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education* contribute to the academic and professional discourse by providing a collection of philosophies and practices that can be reviewed by considering local, contextual and cultural situations to assist governments, educators, peripatetic staffs and other professionals to provide the best education for all children. Each volume in the series focuses on a key aspect of inclusive education and provides critical chapters by contributing leaders in the field who discuss theoretical positions, quality research and impacts on school and classroom practice. Different volumes address issues relating to the diversity of student need within heterogeneous classrooms and the preparation of teachers and other staffs to work in inclusive schools. Systemic changes and practice in schools encompass a wide perspective of learners to provide ideas on reframing education to ensure that it is inclusive of all. Evidence-based research practices underpin a plethora of suggestions for decision-makers and practitioners, incorporating current ways of thinking about and implementing inclusive education.

While many barriers have been identified that may potentially constrain the implementation of effective inclusive practices, this series aims to identify such key concerns and offer practical and best practice approaches to overcoming them. Adopting a thematic approach for each volume, readers will be able to quickly locate a collection of research and practice related to a topic of interest. By transforming schools into inclusive communities of practice all children can have the opportunity to access and participate in quality and equitable education to enable them to obtain the skills to become contributory global citizens. This series, therefore, is highly recommended to support education decision-makers, practitioners, researchers and academics, who have a professional interest in the inclusion of children and youth who are potentially marginalising in inclusive schools and classrooms.

Volume 24 in the *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education* series offers a unique opportunity to explore different aspects of intercultural inclusive education, specifically within the Latin America region. This is the first book in the IPIE series to focus on one region and in addition, to publish the book both in English and in Spanish. This convergence of perspectives provides an exclusive chance to delve in greater depth across the Latin America region. Being bilingual, it also gives access to this information in the local language, thus allowing a greater number of people to benefit from the shared research and perspectives about inclusion across eight countries.

The collection of distinguished authors has presented detailed information on their countries' context and status regarding implementing inclusive educational practices. These highlight the enormous variety in how inclusion is enacted within the region and some of the distinctive issues and challenges that they face. While all countries are aiming for equity in education, the additional challenges encountered by indigenous populations, large numbers of immigrants, those living in rural areas, culturally diverse families and those who experience disadvantage results in different opportunities for establishing effective inclusive schools. Many countries are aiming to better include families in partnership in education decision-making, to support more inclusive communities. Teacher training is also considered critical as a mediator of change towards inclusion across all jurisdictions, with an emphasis on ensuring teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills to translate policy into practice.

Advances in education and the use of technology are evidenced across all regions. The authors report that many countries have implemented inclusive legislation or policy, but that competences to promote and implement effective inclusive practices are still underdeveloped. The authors all provide a realistic critique of how their countries have sought to adopt a more inclusive approach, often within difficult political changes, with many providing effective examples of how this is occurring. Although these positive outcomes allow for other countries to reflect on whether these findings can help them to better facilitate inclusion in their own region, examples of highly effective practices are still seen to be in the minority.

Though this book focuses on a specific region, there are few similarities in how individual countries are working towards implementing inclusion in practice. Education across the region is highly complex, very diverse and manifold. What each country has in common though, is a clear understanding of what needs to be done with a strong focus on equity. To do this the challenges vary both across and within nations, but by providing examples of how each country is meeting some of these challenges enables the astute reader to gain insights into practices that may be appropriate for responding to some of their own challenges.

I strongly recommend Volume 24 in the *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education* series as essential reading for anyone interested in reflecting upon how the unique regions across Latin America are moving towards establishing sustainable inclusive educational practices. The editors are to be commended on being able to bring together such an eclectic group of authors able to provide detailed and considerate information about such diverse countries; and the

chapter authors on their sincerity in reporting practices that aim to enhance an equitable educational approach for all. So many pertinent issues are raised and treated with genuineness, thoughtfulness and integrity. This gives readers a range of perspectives to utilise to reflect upon their own regions, with a critical review of how these ideas may help them in their own goals to achieve effective, equitable and sustainable intercultural inclusive educational practices.

Chris Forlin
Series Editor

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PREFACE

In the panorama of inclusion and interculturality in 21st century Latin America, political, economic, social and epistemological tensions and conditions converge and interact at different levels and in different educational spaces in complex ways. The study of these manifestations is the subject of this volume in which renowned researchers participate to offer an overview of these processes – inclusion and interculturality – necessarily imbricated in education with a human rights perspective in the Latin American region.

This book is composed of 15 chapters written by 30 authors, who present different facets of inclusive education and intercultural education in Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru.

The first chapter is an initial approach offered by two of the editors, Silvia Romero-Contreras and Ismael García-Cedillo, regarding the current contexts and determinants of inclusive and intercultural education in Latin America. Next, regarding inclusive education, issues related to its implementation at the basic and higher education levels and teacher education and training for inclusion are addressed; the relationship between families and schools is also analysed from the perspective of inclusion and the role of explanation in science education in promoting equity. In relation to intercultural education, the evolution of interculturality in Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Peru and Ecuador is presented. In addition, the implementation of the rural education model with escuela nueva in Colombia and the study of lessons through learning communities in rural Mexico are discussed. The final chapter is on the promotion of epistemic justice and intercultural learning communities.

In relation to the chapters related to inclusive education, Ernesto Treviño Villarreal and Eugenia Victoriano Villouta analyse educational opportunities at higher education level for students with special educational needs associated with disabilities in Chile. Through the educational trajectories in higher education of students with disabilities, they report on the barriers they face in transition (low expectations and insufficient guidance in their entry process), access (they are not selected through an exam, like other applicants) and permanence (they face physical, social and academic barriers).

Dianne Chambers and Rodrigo Hübner Mendes analyse the situation of persons with disabilities and the inclusive education process in Brazil. They highlight advances in legislation to promote inclusion. The authors analyse the progress and challenges facing inclusive education in the country, particularly in relation to students with disabilities and the provision of technological support.

Paula Tapia Silva, Patricia Soto de la Cruz and Yarela Muñoz López describe the experience of the ANADIME-CEA Educational Centre, located in a

disadvantaged neighbourhood of Santiago, Chile, which aimed to provide quality learning spaces for all its students. It was ensured that 12% of its enrolment was made up of students with disabilities, although the space was also opened to immigrant students and students from different sociocultural backgrounds, and a transdisciplinary work team was formed. The community participated very actively.

Chris Forlin, Luis Adolfo Machicado Pizarro and Gisselle Gallego describe how, despite advances in education in Bolivia, persons with disabilities face many challenges. Five-year-old children with disabilities start school in regular schools, but without accessibility and inclusion-oriented training for their teachers, who lack the fundamentals to implement inclusive education.

Gloria Calvo reports how, despite the fact that inclusive education has a solid legal basis in Colombia, teacher training needs to be improved, because although topics related to diversity and inclusion are reviewed, competencies to promote inclusive education are not developed. However, she documents several valuable experiences in her chapter: the experience of a teacher training school (Escuela Normal) where, among others, Braille and sign language strategies to manage indiscipline and pedagogy for peace are taught; a school that seeks to recover students who have dropped out of school and; a higher level pedagogical proposal that addresses initial teacher training with an innovative perspective and high social commitment.

Also, in the context of teacher training, Lady Meléndez Rodríguez, Rocio Deliyore Vega and Mario Segura Castillo describe successful experiences of teacher training for inclusion in Costa Rica. They identify the features of an inclusive school and its curricular dimesion, and describe research conducted by the National Observatory for Inclusive Education to identify good practices in training for implementing inclusive education.

Cristina Perales Franco presents research on the role of families in the inclusion of their children in Mexico. She analyses the school–family relationship under an inclusion approach, i.e. the possibilities and barriers for the participation of all families. She reviews the three main practices linking school and families: firstly related to participation in parents' associations; secondly related to cultures, for example in the construction of gender roles; and thirdly related to families' contributions: economic and cooperative through manual work or food preparation.

Valeria M. Cabello and David Geelan report a study in which they analyse the ways in which science is taught, particularly in relation to the explanations of teachers in Australia, Canada and Chile. The explanations offered in class can be emancipatory when they are done as intentional teaching, which requires a deep knowledge of the students and not just a focus on correct answers. They found that there is a relationship between the type of explanations and socio-economic status.

In relation to intercultural education, the chapter by Stefano Claudio Sartorello and Alexandre Ferraz Herbetta provides the context in which intercultural education has evolved in Mexico and Brazil. They consider the substitution of the paradigm of critical interculturalism for that of inclusive education to be harmful for

the indigenous population, given the deficient nature of the population served by the latter. They consider that it remains to be seen whether recent political changes in these countries will lead to the development of intercultural and inclusive policies that are also critical and decolonial.

Laura Alicia Valdiviezo, Rukmini Becerra Lubies and Dayna Andrea Moya Sepulveda point out that the Peruvian state has dismantled intercultural bilingual education and describe how the Chilean state has failed to implement the legislative framework that protects the rights of minority groups. In their work, they address the experience of the Quechua and Mapuche populations.

Pilar Samaniego-Santillán, Verónica Gabriela Maldonado-Garcés and Mónica Delgado-Quilismal mention that, especially in higher education, there is still a long way to go to achieve the goals set years ago, as Indigenous and Afro-descendant populations show interrupted educational trajectories and much higher poverty rates than the general population.

Diego Juárez Bolaños analyses rural higher education in Colombia. He specifically describes the experience of implementing the Rural Education Model with Escuela Nueva in Caldas, Colombia, through the testimonies of graduates of the Universidad en el Campo; given the good results, he points out some recommendations for replicating the experience in other regions.

Luz María Moreno-Medrano, co-editor of this volume, points out, based on the framework of critical interculturality, that teachers must know their students in depth, so that they can perceive the dynamics of exclusion produced by differences of class, ethnicity, gender and disability in order to offer them a relevant education. In order to make these differences visible and overcome them, she proposes lesson study, a pedagogical approach that allows teaching collectives to reflect on how they learn, how to improve the classroom climate and how to promote collaborative learning not only among students, but also among teachers themselves, and presents an experience in which the proposal to create schools as learning communities is successfully implemented in a rural teacher training college on the southern border of Mexico.

For Sylvia Schmelkes del Valle, one of the strands of interculturality proposes that inclusive education should include minorities through an environment free of discrimination and prejudice and offer culturally and linguistically relevant educational content. She advocates for an education for indigenous peoples characterised by epistemic justice, i.e. that their knowledge and ways of constructing it should be given on an equal footing with Western knowledge and the scientific way of producing it, in order to achieve a more complete understanding of the world. She analyses some contributions of indigenous knowledge: the relationship with nature and the understanding of the cosmos, the conception of community, governance and the style of democracy, the containment of inequality and the conceptions of educating and learning.

Education in Latin America has made substantial progress, but major challenges remain related to inequality, poverty and, in some cases, the unwillingness of some governments to address and overcome them. The implementation of intercultural and inclusive education will allow the education offered to all students to be of progressively higher quality. When ‘all’ is mentioned, it means that

the personal, social, family and school conditions in which children live should not be used as an excuse to avoid offering them a quality education, as this is precisely what they need most to transcend these conditions. For indigenous children, moreover, an intercultural and critical education is required.

As can be seen, the contributions presented in this book reflect a multifaceted picture of inclusive education and critical interculturality in Latin America. In all the texts, the difficulties of Latin American students are made visible and successful experiences or strategies for overcoming difficulties are outlined.

We are grateful for the enthusiastic and generous collaboration of all the authors. We believe that reading these works will bring about changes that will benefit the people of the region, particularly those living in vulnerable conditions.

Silvia Romero-Contreras
Ismael García-Cedillo
Luz María Moreno-Medrano
Mexico, 2024

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All chapters in the text have been peer reviewed by two academics or practitioners in the field of intercultural and inclusive education. The reviewers formed the editorial board of this text.

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CONTEXT AND SOCIOCULTURAL DETERMINANTS OF INCLUSION AND INTERCULTURALITY IN LATIN AMERICA

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents an overview of the main structural challenges facing the Latin American region, as well as the characteristics of its education systems, to provide a contextual framework for the theme of this book, intercultural and inclusive education.

Keywords: Inclusive education; intercultural education; Latin America; human rights; Indigenous people; people with disabilities

INTRODUCTION

Latin America is a region consisting of the following countries: Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay and Venezuela (Liferder, 2022); depending on the source, there may be differences in this list.

The official languages in the region are derived from Latin, and are Spanish, Portuguese and French, which is related to the fact that the countries were conquered mainly by Spain, Portugal and France (Enciclopedia Humanidades, n.d.). The cultural and natural heritage of Latin America is of enormous richness (UNESCO, n.d.a). The region has a great biological diversity, although in recent years it is being lost due to changes in land use, which is being devoted to food production. This situation is representing 'a very high cost for the well-being of the planet and humanity' (Troya, 2020, n. p.).

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Its total population is 665 million people, of which 30.5% live in poverty and 11.3% live in extreme poverty (CEPALSTAT, 2021). One out of every three inhabitants does not have access to adequate food, which has repercussions on the development of overweight and obesity problems. In rural areas, children are stunted (FAO et al., 2020). The population grows annually by 0.8%, currently 81.5% live in urban areas (CEPALSTAT, 2021).

In 2021, life expectancy for the inhabitants of Latin America was 72 years; in the same year, 273,494 people migrated mainly from Central America and Mexico to the United States (World Bank, n. d.). Particularly complex is the situation in Venezuela; according to the World Bank (4 April 2023), from 2015 to date, due to economic and political issues, seven and a half million Venezuelans have emigrated, mostly to countries in the region (Colombia, Peru, Chile and Ecuador, but also to the United States) (United Nations Refugee Agency [UNHCR] and the Universidad Católica Andrés Bello [UCAB], n.d.). The World Bank (4 April 2023) considers that Latin America is going through the worst migration crisis in its history.

The unemployment rate in 2022 was 7% (World Bank, n. d.). According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2019): 'Latin America is sadly known as the most unequal region in the world' (p. 21). UNESCO (2020) reiterates what ECLAC says, and notes that in Latin America 'the Gini coefficient of income inequality fell from 0.527 in 2003 to 0.456 in 2018, but remains the highest in the world.[1] The richest 10% have 30% of total income, while the poorest 20% have only 6%' (p. 3).

According to 2015 figures, there is a large number of young people in Latin America, almost 166 million between the ages of 10 and 24 (Pan American Health Organization [PAHO], 2018); of these, 30 million were not studying, not working and not receiving training, most of them women (76%). Girls and women face a further problem: their future employment does not depend to a large extent on their education, with only 20% of those with an education managing to get a job (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2019).

Ten percent of the total population of Latin America is indigenous (UNESCO, 2023b). In recent years, the situation of this indigenous population has improved. In Peru and Bolivia, the percentage living in poverty has decreased; in Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador and Peru, extreme poverty has also decreased. There has been progress in education (for example in primary education, the gender gap has been reduced in some countries), and access to electricity, water and sanitation services has improved. However, these improvements have been differentiated. A child born into an indigenous household will be more likely to be poor, regardless of other variables such as parental education (World Bank Group, 2015).

The countries with the largest populations of indigenous people are Mexico, Guatemala, Peru and Bolivia. Almost half of this indigenous population lives in rural areas. Those who have migrated to urban areas face slightly less difficult conditions than those in rural areas: a higher percentage have access to electricity

and water; they are 1.6% more likely to complete primary school, 3.6% secondary school and 7.7% tertiary school; however, this population living in an urban environment is highly vulnerable compared to the non-indigenous population. For example a higher proportion has less access to electricity and drinking water, their houses have dirt floors and they live in unsafe places (World Bank Group, 2015).

EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA

The Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (TERCE) (UNESCO-OREALC, 2015a) assessed the academic level of Latin America students in the third and sixth grades of primary school in the areas of Mathematics, Reading, Writing and Science, for which tests were applied to measure learning achievements and, in addition, questionnaires were applied to provide context to these achievements. More than 67,000 students from 15 countries in the region participated. It was found that, with respect to the Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (conducted in 2006), average achievement in TERCE improved in all grades and subject areas, but students continued to perform at levels considered low. Students at a higher level are in the minority.

Grouping the regional scores into three groups (significantly above average, at average and significantly below average), the countries were placed as follows: above average on all measures, Chile, Costa Rica and Mexico; above average on most measures, Argentina and Uruguay; below average on most measures: Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay and Dominican Republic; and on average, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Perú.

In the case of reading, 61% of third graders and 70% of sixth graders reach performance levels I and II (of the four levels considered), which are the lowest. In mathematics, 71% of third graders and 83% of sixth graders are in the same levels. In science, 80% of students score at the same levels I and II. In writing (assessed in a different way), it was found that students are able to write coherent texts, although there is much room for improvement in the production of texts to make them suitable for communicative purposes.

In terms of factors associated with the level of student performance, it was found that there is a close relationship between learning achievement and the socio-economic level of families, parental support, the encouragement of reading at home and having attended pre-school. The achievement of indigenous students is lower than that of non-indigenous students.

In relation to classrooms, the factors associated with learning achievement are good teacher practice, in addition to high attendance and punctuality, and the availability of school materials (notebooks and books). In relation to schools, learning is influenced by school violence, poor infrastructure and low inclusiveness (UNESCO-OREALC, 2015b).

In the 2018 edition of the Programme for International Student Assessment, known as PISA, 10 Latin American countries participated in the assessment (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2019).

In that year, reading was predominantly assessed, while mathematics and science were assessed in a more cursory manner. Half of the Latin America countries were found to have improved in reading literacy, although growth was slowing in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Uruguay. Half of the students tested showed that they have not developed basic reading skills (they have difficulties in identifying the main idea in a medium-length text or difficulties in connecting information from different sources). Meanwhile, young people in Brazil, Mexico and Panama show no significant improvement, and those in Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic have shown setbacks. All countries in the region ranked in the bottom half of the table. The best-ranked Latin America countries in PISA were Chile (43rd place), Uruguay (48th place) and Costa Rica (49th place). The worst performers were Panama (71st) and the Dominican Republic (76th). All countries in the region ranked at least one year of schooling below the OECD countries; Costa Rica, Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Argentina and Peru were two years below. The Dominican Republic was at four years below (Bos et al., 2008).

In 2019, a new assessment of student learning was conducted in Latin America (Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study; UNESCO, 2021). Around 160,000 students in third and sixth grades of primary school in 16 countries participated (Bolivia and Chile did not participate, as they did not have the conditions to do so). The results indicate that student learning achievement in Latin America is stagnating. In reading and mathematics, in 16 countries in the region, 40% of third grade students and 60% of sixth grade students 'do not reach the minimum level of fundamental competencies' (UNESCO, 2023a, n. p.). In reading, in grade 6, only 17% of students reach level III; the highest scores are achieved by Peru, Mexico and Uruguay. In science, only 20% of students reach level III; Cuba and Costa Rica have the highest scores (UNESCO, 2021a).

In reading, girls generally score higher than boys, with the exception of Honduras, Peru, Nicaragua and Guatemala. In mathematics, there are no differences in girls' and boys' scores (with the exception of the Dominican Republic). In science, in seven of the 16 countries there are differences between girls' and boys' scores in favour of girls, although not significant (UNESCO, 2021a).

The socio-economic factors that most positively influence school trajectories are pre-school attendance, high parental expectations of future school performance, parental involvement in learning activities at home and time spent studying outside school. Grade repetition, school absenteeism and belonging to indigenous peoples have a negative influence.

With respect to teachers, their positive expectations, interest in students' well-being, pedagogical support and teaching organisation are associated with good results. On the other hand, classroom disruptions are associated with negative results (UNESCO, 2021a).

According to UNESCO (2020), among the educational challenges facing Latin America are the difficulties in accessing 'quality education, which are still too high for persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendent populations, affecting girls from these population groups the most' (p. vi).

In the region, 12% of the school population has a disability, as assessed by the questions developed by the Washington Group (the six questions relate to different functions considered critical: hearing, vision, mobility, cognition, self-care and communication (UNESCO, 2020)). Students with disabilities are more likely to be out of school, particularly in Ecuador, Mexico and Trinidad and Tobago (p. 11). Another group living in unequal conditions is ethnic minority groups. The educational outcomes of indigenous language speakers are often worse than those of self-identified indigenous people who speak only Spanish (UNESCO, 2020).

Bolivia is the country that invests the highest percentage of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in education (more than 8%), while Haiti invests the least (less than 2%). The region has high literacy rates (over 98% among men and women), high primary (over 96%) and secondary enrolment rates (77.9% for men and 80.4% for women) (CEPALSTAT, n.d.).

As a result of the pandemic, the educational situation of students in Latin America worsened, with two-thirds of school days lost, equivalent to the loss of 1.5 years of learning, which is likely to translate into the loss of 12% of people's lifetime earnings (World Bank, 2023). In fact, it is estimated that globally, one in three countries that closed their schools did nothing to support students (UNESCO, 2021b).

On the other hand, ECLAC reports show that in Latin America there have been important educational achievements in terms of coverage, completion of studies, as well as a decrease in school dropout and backwardness; but there are many pending issues, for example those concerning the attention of the poorest young people (ECLAC, 2019). Another very important achievement is investment in education: in 2000 it was 3.9 of GDP, while in 2015 it reached 5.6 (UNESCO, 2020).

In conclusion, the region faces major educational challenges, particularly those related to offering quality and equitable education to disadvantaged groups. These challenges were exacerbated by school closures, which undeniably caused severe setbacks in student learning.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

In the words of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2016), there are differences between exclusion, segregation, integration and inclusion, which correspond to the welfare, medical, interactive and social models of disability/diversity care. Exclusion corresponds to the stage when children with disabilities and other conditions were relegated to institutional care. Segregation implies that students with disabilities study in different spaces from their non-disabled peers, i.e. in special schools. Educational integration is a process of educational care in mainstream schools for students with special educational needs (not only those with disabilities), based on the interactive model, while inclusion involves educational care for all students in mainstream schools, based on the social model.

Integration implies the attention of students with special educational needs (SEN) in regular schools, for which a psycho-pedagogical evaluation is carried out to identify their SEN and the individual curricular adaptations they need to learn according to their learning potential are designed and put into practice. Strictly speaking, then, their entry or permanence in school does not modify it; it is the student who has to adapt to school conditions. Inclusion, on the other hand, implies the acceptance of all students, regardless of their personal, family or social characteristics; it requires an analysis of the barriers that could hinder the learning process of students, as well as the search for their elimination. It implies the possibility of identifying the reasonable adjustments that some students need in order to access school and the curriculum. Thus, it is the school that is modified; it is the school that must be transformed to accommodate all students (García, 2018).

Education systems around the world have responded to the challenge of providing quality education for all through inclusive education, which is why its implementation is considered the greatest challenge for education systems (Lewis & Norwich, 2015).

Inclusive education has been defined in different ways. For example, for UNESCO (2008), inclusion is: (a) a process; (b) seeks to identify barriers to learning and participation (BAP); (c) involves not only the presence but also the participation of all learners; and (d) requires specific attention to groups of learners considered to be at risk of exclusion, marginalisation or underachievement.

UNESCO (2017) notes that a hallmark of inclusion is the pursuit of equity, understood as 'ensuring that there is a concern for fairness, so that the education of all learners is considered of equal importance'. (p. 13). He points out that the main message of inclusion is that 'all learners count and count equally' (p. 12). Moreover, it must be recognised that students' difficulties arise from the education system itself (the way it is organised, the way it promotes teaching and the way students are supported and assessed). UNESCO (2017) mentions the principles of inclusive and equitable education:

- to value all students positively;
- to value diversity favourably;
- identify the BAPs faced by pupils, particularly those at risk of exclusion;
- to build consensus among participants on the notion that inclusive education systems improve education by promoting gender equality, enhancing teacher preparation and reducing inequalities;
- mobilising key actors to create the conditions for inclusive learning; and
- implement and evaluate actions in favour of inclusion.

In UNESCO (2020), the terms equality and equity have been sought to be defined more precisely. Equality is considered to be a *state of affairs* (what), i.e. an outcome that can be observed in resources, outputs or results, such as achieving gender equality. On the other hand, equity is a *process* (how), i.e. the

actions that aim to ensure equality. Inclusion is more difficult to define. As used in the Education for All Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2020), it reflects equity, which is a process made up of 'actions and practices that take into account diversity and create a sense of belonging, based on the belief that each person is valuable. . .' (p. 15). In addition, inclusion should also be seen as an 'outcome, with a multifaceted nature that makes it difficult to pin down' (p. 15).

UNESCO (n.d.b) also mentions that inclusive education aims to enable all learners, especially those who are excluded or belong to vulnerable groups, to access, participate and succeed.

One of the difficulties facing the implementation of inclusive education, according to UNESCO (2020), has to do with the fact that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities did not define it precisely, so the term remains controversial; nor does it have a strict conceptual approach. An example of the latter is the lack of clarity regarding the role of special schools. 'Ultimately, the Convention gave governments carte blanche to shape inclusive education, which can be seen as an implicit recognition of the dilemmas and tensions in overcoming barriers to full inclusion' (UNESCO, 2020, p. 16). In other words, when defining where students should study, two positions emerge: one that advocates for increased interaction between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers (all children study under the same roof), and one that defines that they should study in spaces that enhance their learning potential, even if they do not interact with everyone (placing them where they learn best) (Norwich, 2014).

On the other hand, insistence on mainstreaming children in regular schools those are under-resourced or unprepared to serve the whole student body 'can increase exclusion and hinder efforts to make schools and education systems more inclusive' (UNESCO, 2020, p. 16). Or, as Cigman (2007) points out, forcing children with disabilities to study in regular schools that do not have sufficient resources to serve them may constitute a violation of their human rights.

Dyson (2001) argues that inclusion was undoubtedly a real breakthrough for special education, but the insistence that all students must learn in the same school generates strong tensions not only at the practical level (not all teachers are prepared to cater for everyone, for example or there are pressures for schools to limit inclusion), but also at the theoretical level. In other words, as opposed to what some authors call radical or universal inclusive education (Florian, 2010), Dyson proposes to continue to cater for the individual needs of some students, while caring for the progress of the whole class, which he called responsible inclusive education (other authors, for example García (2018), call this moderate inclusive education). It will be evident, then, that the concept of radical inclusion constitutes an ideal of inclusion that is very difficult to achieve.

The aforementioned difficulties forced the CRPD (2016) to clarify that, despite the fact that inclusion is considered to seek the profound transformation of education systems, i.e. making very serious curricular changes in the content addressed, forms of teaching and assessment, approaches and strategies, which would allow 'overcoming barriers with the vision that all learners in relevant age groups have an equitable and participatory learning experience and in the

environment that best corresponds to their needs and preferences' (p. 4), when students with disabilities are incorporated into mainstream schools, without the changes mentioned above, it cannot be considered as a process of inclusion, but of integration.

The different ways in which inclusion is conceptualised in different regions makes it difficult to assess its progress. As mentioned by different authors (e.g. Ainscow & Miles, 2008), each region, each country and even each school assumes inclusion according to its particularities, i.e. in a situated way. Therefore, the progress of inclusion has to be assessed in relation to each school, each country and each region. For example, according to UNESCO (2020), while 60% of countries have a definition of inclusive education in their laws, policies and practices, only 64% of them include multiple marginalised groups in their definitions. In 26% of countries, the definition of inclusive education only refers to persons with disabilities or special needs.

According to the CRPD (2016), some of the constraints that Latin America faces in promoting inclusive education include:

- The difficulty of understanding inclusive education from a human rights perspective.
- Insufficient budgets for education systems.
- Lack of accessibility of schools (which should also be in the place where the students live), facilities, classrooms, curricula, educational materials, etc.
- The difficulty in understanding that the implementation of Universal Design for Learning does not preclude making reasonable adjustments to support individual learners.
- Little understanding that reasonable accommodation relates to measures to ensure accessibility, but can also affect the curriculum, in that it can 'use alternative assessment methods and substitute an alternative for an element of the curriculum' (p. 10).
- The difficulty in considering that individualised curricula should be offered to learners who require it, indicating reasonable adjustments as well as technical and professional supports
- Curricula developed taking into account the European perspective and downplaying non-European knowledge.
- Emphasis on academic performance as measured by standardised PISA-type assessments
- The idea that inclusive education is necessary and appropriate for all.
- The fact that inclusive education is still at a very early stage of development in higher education.
- Lack of training for teachers with disabilities.
- Lack of comprehensive teacher training to implement inclusive education in their classrooms.