



Educational Reforms in the Americas: What can Canada Contribute?

Includes summaries of panels and workshops
held at the FOCAL conference in Toronto,
November 1998.



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Introduction

Many Canadians are concerned about the quality of education and its role in making Canada competitive in the global economy. As a result, the education systems in many provinces are undergoing major changes. These concerns are shared by many citizens in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Many countries are in the process of implementing a wide range of educational reforms, some of which are similar to reforms in Canada. In some cases, Canadian organizations and institutions are involved in the process through partnership agreements.

The importance of education and the urgency of educational challenges were stressed in the Plan of Action for Education adopted by all countries in the hemisphere (except for Cuba) at the Santiago Summit of the Americas in April, 1998. The political debate and the initiatives included in the Plan of Action are part of a larger context of reforms sweeping the Americas. A vigorous debate on these reforms is now underway, and many initiatives are proving to be highly controversial.

In view of this, the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) held a conference – Educational Reforms in the Americas and What Can Canada Contribute? – in November 1998 in Toronto, Canada. Among the 150 participants were representatives from Canadian provincial ministries of Education, ministries of Education of Argentina and Chile, the World Bank, the Canadian International Development Agency, teachers' unions, professors, students and experts in education from across the Americas.

The main objectives of the conference were to discuss key educational reforms taking place throughout the hemisphere, and to bring forward the debate on the future of education. Another objective was to examine the Canadian experience at implementing the Plan of Action for Education, adopted by the 34 Heads of State at the Santiago Summit of the Americas in April 1998, and to explore how Canada can best support educational reform efforts in the LAC countries. The FOCAL conference also provided representatives of various organizations with an opportunity to meet and assess progress since the summit. This was the first such meeting in Canada.

Three panel discussions engaged participants in examining current challenges facing education in LAC countries, case studies from Chile and Argentina, and the *Escuela Nueva* program in Colombia. The problems of quality of education, insufficiency of funds, inequitable distribution of resources, and poor working conditions, were among the main concerns highlighted. Education experts from Argentina and

Chile pondered the sweeping reforms being implemented in their countries through processes of decentralization, privatization, extension of the school day, and the use of assessment and evaluation techniques. The *Escuela Nueva* program, originally from Colombia and now replicated across the world, began as a bottom-up strategy to improve the quality of rural primary education. It is notable for its multi-grade approach and stress on community involvement, as well as for its striking gains in students' increased self-esteem and democratic behaviour.

Other topics at the conference included indigenous education, reforms in Canada, the role of civil society and of major multilateral banks in promoting and executing reforms. The work of the Partnership for Education Revitalization in Latin America (PREAL), an initiative led by the Inter-American Dialogue aimed at placing educational reforms at the top of the policy agenda of both national governments and inter-American institutions, was also reviewed.

The panels were followed by five moderated workshops and a working session during which participants discussed Canada's contribution to hemispheric cooperation in education and, more specifically, its role in implementing the Education Plan of Action. The workshops focussed on specific areas where Canada has expertise that could be shared with its regional counterparts, such as evaluation of reforms; professional development for teachers and administrators; distance education; and technical educational and vocational training. Each workshop produced a list of recommendations that are included in this report. Finally, conference delegates attending the final working session discussed a draft document on education programming in the hemisphere developed by the Canadian International Development Agency.

Introduction

De nombreux Canadiens se soucient de la qualité de l'éducation et du rôle qu'elle tient dans la compétitivité du Canada au sein de l'économie globale. C'est la raison pour laquelle de nombreuses provinces ont entrepris d'importants changements. Ce souci est partagé par les habitants d'Amérique latine et des Caraïbes. Là également, nombre de pays préparent actuellement une vaste gamme de réformes de leur système d'éducation, certaines d'entre elles étant similaires à celles entreprises au Canada. Dans certains cas, des accords de partenariat ont été conclus avec des organismes et institutions canadiens.

L'importance de l'éducation et l'urgence des défis posés en matière d'éducation ont été soulignées dans le Plan d'action en éducation adopté par tous les dirigeants politiques du continent (sauf Cuba) au Sommet des Amériques de Santiago en avril 1998. Le débat politique et les initiatives contenus dans le Plan d'action font cependant partie d'un mouvement plus grand de réformes qui balaye les Amériques. Un important débat a actuellement cours au sujet de ces changements et beaucoup d'initiatives suscitent la controverse.

C'est pour ces raisons que la Fondation canadienne pour les Amériques (FOCAL) a tenu une conférence – Les réformes éducationnelles dans les Amériques et la contribution canadienne – en novembre 1998, à Toronto. Parmi les 150 participants se trouvaient des représentants des ministères provinciaux de l'Éducation, des ministères de l'Éducation argentin et chilien, de la Banque mondiale, de l'Agence canadienne de développement international (ACDI), de ministères fédéraux, des syndicats d'enseignants, de professeurs, d'étudiants et d'experts en éducation de toutes les Amériques.

Les objectifs principaux de la conférences étaient de discuter des différentes réformes en vigueur dans l'hémisphère et de raviver le débat sur le futur de l'éducation. Un autre objectif était l'examen de l'expérience canadienne dans la mise en oeuvre du Plan d'action en éducation qui a été adopté par 34 autres pays au Sommet des Amériques qui s'est tenu à Santiago en avril 1998. De plus, la conférence visait à explorer comment et dans quelle mesure le Canada peut supporter les efforts de réforme de l'éducation dans les pays latino-américains. La conférence de FOCAL a également réuni les représentants de nombreuses organisations qui ont pu discuter des progrès réalisés depuis le sommet. Il s'agissait de la première réunion de la sorte au Canada.

Trois discussions dirigées ont permis aux participants d'examiner les défis actuels relatifs à l'éducation dans les pays de l'Amérique latine, d'étudier les dossiers du Chili et de l'Argentine et le programme *Escuela Nueva* en Colombie. Les problèmes de la qualité de l'éducation, de l'insuffisance de fonds, de la distribution inéquitable des ressources et des mauvaises conditions de travail ont été les sujets qui ont suscité le plus de commentaires. Les experts en éducation de l'Argentine et du Chili ont réfléchi sur les réformes de leur pays respectif réalisées à travers des processus de décentralisation, de privatisation, d'extension des heures d'école le jour et d'utilisation de techniques d'évaluation. Le programme *Escuela Nueva* qui a d'abord été développé en Colombie et reproduit à travers le monde, est la base d'une stratégie d'amélioration de l'éducation primaire rurale. Ce programme est reconnu pour son approche multi-niveaux, mettant l'accent sur l'engagement des communautés ainsi que sur la façon de développer l'estime des étudiants et la démocratie.

Les autres sujets qui ont été abordés comprenaient

l'éducation dans les communautés autochtones, les réformes canadiennes, le rôle de la société et des grandes banques dans la promotion et la mise en application des réformes. Le combat que mène le Programme de relations politiques et de coopération Euro-Amérique Latine (PREAL), une initiative du Inter-American Dialogue, qui presse les gouvernements de mettre à la première page de leur ordre du jour le débat des réformes de l'éducation, a également été étudié.

Les discussions ont été suivies de cinq ateliers et d'une session de travail durant lesquels les participants ont discuté de la contribution du Canada en matière de coopération en éducation dans l'hémisphère, et plus particulièrement, du rôle du Canada dans l'implantation du Plan d'action sur l'éducation. Lors de la session de travail, les participants se sont intéressés aux domaines spécifiques dans lesquels le Canada possède l'expertise pouvant être partagée telle que l'évaluation des réformes, la formation des enseignants et des administrateurs, l'enseignement par correspondance, l'éducation technique et la formation professionnelle. Chaque atelier a produit une liste de recommandations qui sont comprises dans ce rapport. Finalement, les délégués qui ont assisté à la dernière session, ont évalué les résultats de la conférence et ont livré leurs impressions sur une version préliminaire d'un document de l'ACDI qui porte sur sa programmation en matière d'éducation dans l'hémisphère.

Introducción

Muchos canadienses están preocupados por la calidad de la educación y el papel que esta juega en la competitividad de la economía canadiense. Como resultado, los sistemas de educación en muchas provincias están experimentando grandes cambios. Estas inquietudes son compartidas por muchos ciudadanos de América Latina y el Caribe (ALC). La mayoría de los países están en el proceso de implementar una gran cantidad de reformas educativas, algunas de las cuales son similares a las reformas canadienses. En algunos casos, organizaciones e instituciones canadienses están involucradas en este proceso a través de acuerdos de cooperación y asociación.

La importancia de la educación y la urgencia de los retos educativos fueron resaltados en el Plan de Acción para la Educación, adoptado por todos los países del hemisferio (exceptuando a Cuba), en la Cumbre de las Américas celebrada en Santiago de Chile en abril de 1998. El debate político y las iniciativas incluidas en el Plan de Acción son parte de un contexto de reformas más amplio que se está llevando a cabo en ALC. Se ha generado un fuerte debate sobre estas reformas, y muchas de las iniciativas han resultado ser bastante polémicas.

En vista de esto, en noviembre de 1998 la Fundación Canadiense para las Américas (FOCAL) ofreció una conferencia en Toronto titulada: Reformas Educativas

en las Américas y Cuál puede ser la contribución de Canadá. Entre los 150 participantes, se encontraban delegados de varios ministerios de educación de las provincias canadienses, y de los ministerios de educación de Argentina y Chile, representantes del Banco Mundial, de la Agencia Canadiense de Desarrollo Internacional (ACDI) y de los departamentos federales, sindicatos de maestros, profesores, estudiantes, y expertos en educación provenientes de distintas partes de la región.

Los principales objetivos de la conferencia fueron discutir las reformas educativas clave que se están llevando a cabo en la región, y promover el debate sobre el futuro de la educación. Otro de los objetivos fue examinar la experiencia canadiense de implementación del Plan de Acción para la Educación adoptado en la cumbre de Santiago, y explorar de qué manera Canadá podría apoyar los esfuerzos latinoamericanos para reformar sus sistemas educativos. La conferencia de FOCAL también le brindó a los representantes de varias organizaciones la posibilidad de conocer y evaluar el progreso logrado desde la Cumbre. Esta fue la primera reunión de su tipo efectuada en Canadá.

Los participantes, agrupados en tres paneles de discusión, evaluaron los retos actuales que enfrenta la educación en los países de ALC, así como los estudios de caso de Chile y Argentina y el programa “Escuela Nueva” en Colombia. Los problemas de la calidad de la educación, la insuficiencia de fondos, la desigual distribución de los ingresos, y las duras condiciones de trabajo, fueron entre otras, las principales inquietudes resaltadas durante la conferencia. Los expertos en educación de Chile y Argentina ponderaron las profundas reformas que están siendo implementadas en sus países a través de procesos de descentralización, privatización, extensión del día escolar, y la utilización de técnicas de revisión y evaluación. El programa Escuela Nueva,

originado en Colombia y ahora replicado a través del mundo, comenzó como una estrategia de base para mejorar la calidad de la escuela rural primaria. Este programa es notable por su enfoque integral, por su énfasis en la participación de la comunidad, así como por sus llamativos logros en el aumento de la autoestima y el comportamiento democrático de los estudiantes.

Otros tópicos discutidos en la conferencia incluyeron la educación indígena, las reformas en Canadá, y el papel de la sociedad civil y de los principales bancos multilaterales en promover y ejecutar las reformas. También se discutió el trabajo del Programa de Promoción de la Reforma Educativa en América Latina y el Caribe (PREAL), una iniciativa encabezada por el Diálogo Interamericano que propone colocar las reformas educativas a la cabeza de la agenda política tanto de los gobiernos nacionales como de las instituciones interamericanas.

La discusión iniciada en los paneles continuó en cinco talleres moderados y en una sesión de trabajo final en la cual los participantes debatieron las posibilidades de cooperación canadiense en el ámbito educativo y, más específicamente, el papel de Canadá en la implementación del Plan de Acción para la Educación. Los talleres se concentraron en temas donde Canadá tiene experiencia que puede ser compartida con sus homólogos regionales, tales como evaluación de las reformas; capacitación profesional para profesores y administradores; educación a distancia; educación técnica y vocacional. Cada taller generó una lista de recomendaciones que se incluyen en este reporte. Durante la sesión de trabajo final, los participantes debatieron un documento provisional de programación educativa para el hemisferio, preparado por la ACDI.

August 31, 1999

Panel 1: The Challenges for Education in the Americas

Key challenges for education in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)

Maria de Ibarrola, Professor, Centre for Research and Advanced Studies, Mexico

Maria de Ibarrola focused on the issue of unequal access to education, a major problem facing many LAC countries. The educational system in countries

of the region is highly segmented. While very good private schools have been available to the few for many years, most children, on average 80%, can only afford the low quality education of public schools. A large percentage of the education budget in some countries goes to free post-secondary education for those with socioeconomic advantages. Multilateral organizations recommend that governments focus their resources on free basic education, leaving the post-secondary level to market forces. Low quality of education is another problem in LAC countries.

It shows in high repetition rates, low completion rates, and low scores when participating in international evaluations. While the overall amount spent on education has increased in recent decades, levels of educational spending relative to national budgets has not changed, or has even dropped.

Issues that are and will remain central to the debate are: the state's responsibility for public education and the move towards privatization; the impact of decentralization on equity; financing public education and the use of non-state funding; individual schools' autonomy; teachers' unions and their resistance to many reforms; lack of continuity in educational policies; the focus on basic education despite the need to consolidate all levels of education; and the unresolved tension between quantity and quality.

Two points were made in closing, showing the way ahead:

- The emphasis on basic education is positive. Indeed, most governments have increased the number of years of compulsory free education to 9 or 10 years.
- The larger community must be involved in any changes, and the new actors need better defined responsibilities. Also, the reforms will succeed only if they include active and full participation from teachers and their unions.

Challenges faced by teachers in LAC

Marta Maffei, Regional President for Latin America, Internacional de la Educación

Marta Maffei endorsed calls for change in the education system, underscoring that teachers must participate in orienting these changes. They must quickly appropriate scientific and technological knowledge to formulate progressive alternatives that value plurality, inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary, leading to new pedagogical strategies. However, the working conditions that teachers face have a direct negative impact on their capacity to do this, as well as on the quality of education: low salaries, stress, increasing number of students, unstable work, and social problems at school. Reformers often boast that the crisis in education can be solved through better management. This dilutes the school's pedagogical function and its social role, making it a waiting station for children before society excludes them.

In Argentina, the number of students has doubled since 1985, while the investment in education as a percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP) has remained the same. Sometimes teachers' salaries are not paid, and some need to combine two or more

jobs to make ends meet. Teachers have more and more work to do. Educational staff do not have enough access to knowledge, and are subject to strong authoritative bureaucracies.

Key challenges in Canada and parallels with LAC

Joseph Farrell, Professor, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Joseph Farrell maintains that we have lost sight of our objectives when education is linked with economic competitiveness, and with acquiring skills for the labour market. The formal education system cannot address the labour market's changing needs because of the time required to reform the former while the latter constantly undergoes change. Other tools are needed, including job training and adult education, to respond to labour market needs. The need for highly skilled workers has not been analyzed effectively. Contrary to common wisdom, projections do not indicate a surging need for highly skilled workers but, rather, an increase in low skill jobs.

A strategic objective would be to focus on learning, rather than on curriculum content. What students learn cannot be controlled, only what they want educators to think they are learning. All that can be done is enable them to learn what they need to learn in their own judgement, and provide them with tools and circumstances to do that. Research on innovative learning programs has shown that those programs that seem to be effective in enabling active learning, particularly for children in disadvantaged circumstances, often share these characteristics:

- child-centred rather than teacher-driven pedagogy;
- active rather than passive learning;
- multi-grade classrooms with continuous progress learning;
- a combination of fully- and partially-trained teachers, and community resource people;
- parents and other community people deeply involved in the children's learning and the school's management;
- peer tutoring, whereby older and/or faster learning children assist younger and/or slower learning children;
- carefully developed self-guided material which children can work through themselves at their own pace either alone or in small groups;
- active student involvement in the school's government and management;
- use of radio, correspondence lessons, TV and computers;
- ongoing and regular in-service training and peer mentoring for teachers;
- ongoing monitoring and feedback procedures allowing teachers to learn from their own experience;

- free flows of children and adults in and out of the school;
- community involvement, including attention to children's health and nutrition;
- local school day and school cycle adapted to the conditions of the family and of children; and
- the focus is on learning, not teaching.

Keynote Address: The Politics of Educational Reforms in LAC

José Octavio Bordón, Senior Visiting Fellow at the Inter-American Dialogue in Washington, Co-Chair of the Task Force on Education, Equity and Economic Competitiveness in Latin America and the Caribbean

José Octavio Bordón explained how schools in LAC reinforce poverty, inequality and poor economic performance. Most public school students perform dismally. While access to education has improved, the quality of what is taught has declined. Most children attend weak, underfunded public schools. Latin America is falling behind, and its poor results in international testing programs proves this. On average, Latin American workers have two years less schooling than those in other countries with similar incomes. Nearly one-third of primary students repeat their grades; these repetition rates cost \$3.3 billion per year. Half of all students in LAC do not complete the sixth grade, and are left lacking the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in modern economies. A large gap exists between private and public schools in quality of education, hours of teaching, and investment per student. Education in LAC today exacerbates inequality, instead of acting as a democratic instrument to promote social justice.

This educational crisis in LAC has to do with inadequate evaluations of student learning and school performance; limited school authority and

accountability; a lack of investment in primary and secondary education; and poor quality teaching in public schools. These are discussed in the report of the Task Force on Education, Equity and Economic Competitiveness in LAC, entitled “The Future at Stake”—produced by the Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Americas (PREAL). PREAL is directed by the Washington-based Inter-American Dialogue and the Corporation of Research for Development (CINDE), based in Santiago. The report's key recommendations are:

1. Set standards for the educational system, and measure progress toward meeting them. Introduce national tests, and use the results to revise programs and reallocate resources. Publicize the results and ensure that governments maintain minimal levels of quality.
2. Give schools and local communities more control over, and responsibility for, education.
3. Strengthen the teaching profession by raising salaries, reforming training, and making teachers more accountable to the communities they serve. Training should help teachers to integrate problem-solving skills, critical thinking abilities and cooperative learning in their classroom. Teachers should also have more authority and autonomy to determine what to teach and how.
4. More money per student needs to be invested in preschool, primary and secondary education.

Bordón noted existing obstacles to reform. Leaders acknowledge that education is a central priority, but there is a “false consensus” about education. The state and its institutions resist change. Political tensions distort the issues, and decentralization can lead to more politics at the local level. Politicians tend to opt for “quick fix” solutions to complex problems. The lack of resources is linked to macroeconomic realities and fiscal policies, and to absent political leadership. Teachers' unions must go beyond opposition to reform and become co-participants.

Panel II: Key Educational Reforms in the Americas

Case Studies: Educational reforms in Chile and Argentina

Reforms in Chile:

Juan Enrique Froemel, Professor and Researcher, UNESCO, Chile

Cristian Cox, Director, MECE Project, Ministry of Education, Chile

The Eighties

The presentation focused on Chilean reforms at the basic and middle levels in the 1980s. The three components of these reforms were the administration of the educational system, the curriculum, and the system's evaluation.

Possibly the most profound change, and the most controversial one at the time, was the administrative decentralization of the educational system and the adoption of incentives to establish an important

number of privately managed, publicly funded schools. School administration was effectively transferred from the Ministry of Education to municipalities, and in the case of technical/professional teaching, to private corporations. An increase in the grants to private schools also took place. These schools were already in existence and belonged mainly to religious congregations.

These reforms expanded the private provision of education from 25% of enrolment in 1982 to 40% in 1990 (this includes strictly private schools and state subsidised ones). Cox holds that while the 1980s delivered good results in terms of efficiency and access—repetition rates dropped, primary completion rates improved, and secondary enrolment expanded—no improvements and even negative results took place in terms of quality and equity issues. Comparisons of the results of national tests at the beginning and end of the decade show that learning results did not improve but probably declined. As for equity, no measures were taken to support poorer municipalities. State subsidies to private schools and their increased number also had a negative impact on equity in that schools could exclude pupils with lower grades, who often came from poorer families. The Chilean government did not adopt measures to compensate for the impact of the competition between private subsidised schools and municipal schools.

The Nineties

Reforms during the 1990s built on the changes in the eighties, with some new directions. The new Chilean government of 1990 identified the improvement of quality and equity as its educational priorities. Cox held that the equity goal referred to a significant improvement in the social distribution of educational outcomes, which in 1990 reflected the country's socioeconomic stratification. Measures favouring more disadvantaged schools and students needed to be adopted. The four broad policy measures found in the 1990-1997 period were the financing of education, regulation of the teaching profession, improvement programs, and changes to the school day's length and the curriculum.

Financing

Actual expenditures by the Education Ministry in Chile increased in 1990-1997, following a decrease in the eighties, but the educational budget as a percentage of the state's total budget increased only slightly. The monthly per student expenditure increased significantly, as did the subsidy for rural schools and adult education centres. A co-funding formula implemented in 1993 permitted subsidised private elementary and secondary schools to charge families a fee to top up the state subsidy. This formula attracted private resources for education, but it led to increased segmentation in public education, and to social

segregation by excluding those unable to pay. To counteract the effects of co-funding, a school based scholarship fund was created to support students of poorer backgrounds. New income tax incentives were also introduced for private sector donations to schools.

Teaching profession

A controversial 1991 Teachers' Statute dealt with many issues relevant to education. This law increased protection from arbitrary dismissal, but still placed higher value on years of experience than on merit, limiting incentives for teachers achieving better results. The 1995 Teachers' Statute increased teachers' mobility and linked wages to performance. It increased teachers' salaries, so earnings in real terms doubled from 1990 to 1997. The best performing 25% of each region's schools now receive an extra subsidy per pupil, which is entirely transferred into teachers' wages.

Programs of improvement of quality and equity

Over the 1990-1997 period, several programs addressed quality and equity, concentrating first on the 10% of poorest primary schools (the 900 Schools Program), then the whole state supported primary education (*MECE Basica*). Subsequently, two programs have dealt with the secondary level (*MECE Media* and *Project Montegrande*), and one has focused on the teaching profession.

Froemel holds that these programs have had the most positive impact on the quality of education. The 900 Schools Program was conceived as an intensive care program for schools with the poorest performance. It combined the provision of new teaching methods for literacy and maths (e. g. hiring young community members to tutor slow learners), and a strong injection of new textbooks and instructional materials.

Both *MECE* programs include significant material investments: improved infrastructures, new libraries, textbooks, teaching materials and equipment, and computer requirements for a nationwide network between schools, called the *Enlaces* program. *Enlaces* connects students and teachers in schools with other Chilean schools and universities (which provide training and support), and with the world via the Internet.

The impact of all these measures to address equity and quality since 1990 has been a sustained increase in the learning achievements of the primary education system. Even so, inequalities remain strong. While it is decreasing, the gap between municipal schools (enrolling students from the lower socio economic groups) and the others remains substantial.

The main challenge that remains is the need to address the effects of competition—purely private and state subsidized private schools exclude students with real or potential low achievement, increasing social segmentation and inequity—without disrupting its positive affects on quality. Despite the 900 Schools and MECE programs, the resources allocated to weaker schools have not neutralized the disadvantages resulting from poverty. Stronger action is needed to address these equity issues, and to counterbalance the effects of shared funding. The reforms also face vertical, closed and bureaucratic legal and administrative frameworks that regulate schools and teachers. So, in a sense, the need is to facilitate modernizing and reforming the Chilean state.

The reform process also has not led to active participation and consultation mechanisms involving parents and community members to foster accountability by schools to society at large. There is poor understanding and dialogue between the Ministry's approach and the teachers' unions' vision. An asymmetry exists between teachers' and government officials' idea of participation. While the latter believe that teachers can get involved by improving quality and learning (through educational improvement projects, a more flexible curriculum, etc.), teachers would like greater involvement in the reforms, and to discuss education's larger aims.

Cox concluded that the key factors which will influence the implementation of educational changes will not be policy decisions from above as much as learning by individuals and institutions from below. In the longer term, a wider social and political consensus about the centrality of education should ensure that the school system will have the time required to change and satisfactorily address the challenges ahead.

Reforms in Argentina

Inés Aguerrondo, Undersecretary, Education Planning, Ministry of Education, Argentina

Daniel Filmus, Director, Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), Argentina

Inés Aguerrondo focused her presentation on educational change in Argentina in the 1990s. A new educational paradigm must be defined and implemented, she argued, to adapt to a new global environment and meet future challenges. There is a need to redefine the concepts of knowledge and learning, which in turn determine organizational models and daily routines. These redefinitions must factor in learners' active participation in an attempt to change the external environment. A learner is involved in the active process of formulating

hypotheses and exploring them with the teacher. A truly structural reform will mean fundamental changes to both the curriculum and to the organization and management of the educational system. Its ultimate objectives are to develop the capacity of students to:

- evaluate alternatives, realize personal choices and be self-motivated;
- take part in building a democracy with increasing political and social involvement; and
- insert oneself in the workplace, characterized by increasing levels of creativity and productivity.

The educational reform in Argentina is based on a few key principles:

- decentralization and participation, promoting the school's autonomy;
- academic quality;
- equity;
- an alternative organization and management model.

The "New School for the year 2000" program, launched in 1994, focuses on fundamental changes in the classroom, including more group work; new distributions of time and space; more individualized work; and integration of subject areas. It also calls for changes in schools, including: teams of teachers; fewer bureaucratic tasks; planning institutional projects; democratic management using success indicators; etc. Finally, changes in the supervision process are involved: support for teacher training, light and transparent information management; group work; and personalized help by supervisors. The intent was not to begin with a pilot project but, rather, to encourage all the schools to adhere to the program. Information about the 100 most innovative and replicable experiences was gathered and disseminated.

According to Daniel Filmus, decentralization is at the core of the reforms, and it has been one of the key transformations in the educational system in years. The idea has various meanings: transferring responsibilities from the State to other levels; responding to fiscal crises by tapping private resources; and educational strategies adapted to local realities, in combination with increased public investment and technical support. Thus, widely differing actions can be implemented in the name of educational decentralization.

In Argentina, decentralization was completed in the mid-1990s. In some cases, the process led to increased quality, efficiency, equity and participation. In others, greater inequity, lower quality, and more bureaucracy resulted. The results depended on two key factors: the policies or rationales underlying decentralization, and the capacity of the State, provinces, local governments and institutions to assume their new roles.

Four identifiable rationales can be used to support the decentralization policy:

- The economic rationale holds that decentralization costs less. It transfers responsibilities to the local level and to families, who will contribute more to the education system. This rationale endorses including market forces to stimulate competition between institutions, and it includes the strategy of funding the “demand” rather than the “supply.”
- The technocratic rationale considers that eliminating intermediate levels of bureaucracy will make the decision-making process more efficient.
- The pedagogical rationale holds that decentralization will improve educational quality through national policies that are better adapted to local realities.
- The democratic participation rationale considers that decentralization leads to more autonomy, power and resources for the local level. The community gains democratic control of education, leading to an increase in citizen participation and decision making.

In Chile, the first two rationales held sway in the 1980s, while in the 1990s the focus shifted to the latter two. In Argentina, the first two are much more prevalent than the others, contrary to official policy. Many jurisdictions have tried to increase quality and community participation, but few have succeeded. In practice, the implementation of the Federal Law of Education (1993) collided with accelerated schedules of decentralization and a very serious fiscal crisis; many provinces decreased their level of public

spending on education, leading to declines in quality. The Argentine case bears out a report from the Inter-American Bank, which argues that the benefits of decentralization can be cancelled by reduced education budgets and inadequate technical assistance at the local level. This can result in increased inequity for poorer areas, which have less resources for education than wealthier ones.

Another key factor directly affecting the outcome of decentralization is the redistribution of responsibilities among those involved, who need to develop new capacities in order to meet their responsibilities. While these new capacities should be developed before the decentralization process is implemented, this was not the case in Argentina. However, some steps have since been taken by the State to help develop these capacities.

Local jurisdictions must also develop new capacities to meet the challenges of decentralization. They experience an increase of administrative and professional work in the context of few qualified human resources and very strict budgetary restrictions. They must break with their own centralist traditions, efficiently manage a growing demand, and generate conditions that will encourage increased participation by community members.

Filmus explained that, in practice, many Argentine schools enjoy considerable autonomy, but in ways that are marginalized and not linked to the national project; this means that their innovations are difficult to replicate. Real and effective school autonomy means more freedom from bureaucratic mechanisms, but higher levels of compromise regarding the whole educational system and the community, and a higher degree of accountability.

Panel II: Part 2: Other reforms and processes

The difficult task of choosing from among a long list of educational reforms and processes led to the decision that this panel would focus on PREAL, a major inter-American partnership program in education, and on *Escuela Nueva*, a very successful initiative that has been replicated around the world. The aim was to draw a parallel with current reforms in Canada, and to explore a relatively new area where Canada’s contribution is widely acknowledged, namely, indigenous education.

Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Americas (PREAL)

Jeffrey M. Puryear, Director, PREAL, Inter-American Dialogue, Washington

PREAL is a joint project of the Inter-American Dialogue in Washington and the Santiago-based Corporation for Development Research (CINDE). This large inter-American program, which began in 1995, fosters educational reforms with both inter-American institutions and governments. It is involved in research and dissemination, policy advocacy, evaluation and

monitoring, and training programs. PREAL builds public and private sector support for reform, and does this through civic groups, parents, NGOs and with multilateral, national and regional governments. It stresses the need for private or non-government actors (representing the demand side) to understand educational systems, develop their priorities and make them known to governments. PREAL also supports the capacity of private and public organizations to plan and implement reforms.

PREAL has set up a multinational task force on Education, Equity and Economic Competitiveness in Latin America and the Caribbean. It established a network of 22 expert centres in 14 countries, and developed a set of recommendations for the Santiago Summit of the Americas, April 1998. In addition, it formulated recommendations on how the Plan of Action for Education could be implemented after the Summit. PREAL has also organized four sub-regional conferences on decentralization, standards and assessment, finance and business education partnerships. It has set up three region-wide working groups on standards and evaluation, teachers' unions and political obstacles to reform.

Puryear holds, that there are several political obstacles to reform. Ministries of Education are reluctant to give up decision making powers to parents and communities. University students are used to free higher education, and protest efforts to impose tuition fees. Implementing these fees would free up resources for primary education and have an impact on the poorer segments of society. However, the poor, especially those in rural areas, do not protest publicly for higher primary education budgets. So political support for free university education restricts reform. Also, teachers' unions resist efforts to evaluate teacher performance quality and deny local communities power over teachers, such as through hiring, firing and having a say on performance. Indeed, the main obstacles to reform are political, not technical.

The *Escuela Nueva* in Colombia

Vicky Colbert, Director, *Fundación Volvamos a la Gente*

Vicky Colbert is the main architect of the *Escuela Nueva* (or "New School"), originally a Colombian program for primary rural education which is now replicated around the world. The program evolved from a local innovation to a national program for most Colombian rural schools and is now being introduced in urban schools. It originated as a bottom-up strategy to improve the effectiveness and quality of impoverished rural schools. *Escuela Nueva* confirms the validity of modern learning theories, that traditional, passive, teacher-oriented practices can

be transformed, with very positive results, to a more child-centred, active, participatory, and personalized learning approach. It reflects a move from the transmission of knowledge to the model of the social construction of knowledge. The *Escuela Nueva* experience started 23 years ago and pioneered defining the new school for the 21st century.

Escuela Nueva allows for a multi-grade approach, which is often required in isolated rural schools. The program's self-instructional learning guides promote child-centred active learning, forging links with family and community experiences. Students complete academic units (in language, mathematics, science and social sciences) at their own pace and advance through flexible promotions. Those who must leave school to help with the harvest need not start the year again. The methodology facilitates individual and small group work, and tutorial child-to-child strategies, i.e., older children teaching the younger ones. Other curriculum elements include learning centres, classroom libraries and school government. Students learn democratic attitudes through school committees and group decision making. They develop their capacity to cooperate and gain a sense of solidarity.

The program promotes an active and participatory learning process, helping students develop the capacity to think creatively and analytically; the ability to apply acquired knowledge to new situations; an improved self-concept; democratic attitudes; and basic skills in language, mathematics, sciences and social studies.

Community involvement is an important aspect of the *Escuela Nueva*, which promotes collaboration between teachers, students, parents, relatives and the community at large. Community members are encouraged to participate in school activities and debates, to learn with students and to become involved in school projects. *Escuela Nueva* includes training teachers to use and apply its curriculum elements and methodology, and to adapt student guides to the child's level and local environment.

Several evaluations of the *Escuela Nueva* program have been conducted using national standards assessment programs, and both quantitative and qualitative types of evaluation. Evaluation of the achievement of students attending the schools demonstrate higher scores in language and mathematics. The most striking gains are made in the affective area, with higher self-esteem, creativity, self-concept and democratic behaviour.

Finally, *Escuela Nueva* has been adopted in such countries as Guatemala, Brazil, Paraguay and Egypt.

Overview of Reforms in Canada

Heather-Jane Robertson, Director, Professional Development Services, Canadian Teachers' Federation

Heather-Jane Robertson argues that an increasingly homogeneous model of educational reform is being implemented in Canada and elsewhere in the hemisphere. The trend is worrisome, as the model was not chosen by teachers or the public. Reforms are being implemented in the name of globalization: schools are being reorganized to look like businesses; students and their parents have become consumers; and the focus is on satisfying short-term needs. Schools are encouraged to compete for students and to attract corporate sponsorships. Arts and literature, subjects that correspond less to the needs of a market economy, get less emphasis in the curriculum and enjoy less prestige in classrooms. Standardized tests reinforce the status of subjects such as math and science, which are easier to test. Services for students who need more attention, are being reduced. In the name of parent empowerment, parent councils are asked to make important decisions and manage schools, while they are neither elected nor accountable.

Overreliance on technology is another trend in the educational reform. The race for the most up-to-date computers is expensive, hurting other parts of the educational budget, while computers are seldom used to their full capacity. Federal transfer payments to the provinces have been reduced, and the post-secondary sector has been particularly hurt. At the post-secondary level, tuition fees are being deregulated and private sector partnerships are being sought by colleges and universities. Public education, in competition with health care, is losing the bid for a greater share of public spending.

Robertson holds that, during the postwar years, teachers unions spearheaded key innovations in Canadian education, such as bilingualism, integrating children with special needs, and universal access. Canadian teachers were once the intellectual leaders of many social movements, resulting in the establishment of a modern model of education in

Canada. Today, the situation has changed. Teachers are now subject to a relentless change. The current attack on public education has made it hard for the profession to do more than defend itself and public education. To lay an expectation of vision, reform, innovation and energy on teachers may be asking too much.

Robertson said that the future of the teaching profession in Canada is at stake, since aging teachers will be replaced rapidly by new teachers, and there are reasons to question the professional autonomy of these new teachers. The battle over public education may be lost by exhausted opponents battling short-term, politically motivated reforms.

Indigenous education

Del Anaquod, Professor, Saskatchewan Indian Federated College

The Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC) is the only indigenous controlled post-secondary institution in Canada. An important component of the SIFC's work is its international program, which began in the mid-1980s. It is currently involved in 17 international agreements worldwide. The SIFC has worked with indigenous groups and institutions in Chile, Bolivia, Guatemala and Mexico, to name a few.

The College currently manages a partnership project with the Autonomous University of Chiapas (UNACH). This project is largely funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) through a program managed by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. The five year project supports capacity build-up to develop a Bachelor of Indigenous Studies and Masters of Indigenous Education at UNACH and a specialization in International Indigenous Studies and Masters of Indian Education at SIFC. The UNACH Indigenous Studies and Education Program will address the higher education needs of the most impoverished and marginalized group of Chiapas, its indigenous communities. It will also increase the capacity of UNACH to recruit indigenous students by offering a culturally sensitive and relevant curriculum.

Panel III: Hemispheric Cooperation in Education: After the Santiago Summit

The hemispheric leaders who met in Santiago for the Second Summit of the Americas in April of 1998 adopted a Plan of Action for Education reflecting many of the concerns and reforms currently being analyzed, discussed and adopted across the hemisphere. Civil

society groups across the Americas are beginning to work on the Plan of Action, and the Civil Society Network for Public Education in the Americas is now emerging. The Inter-American Development Bank has an important role to play in implementing this Plan

of Action. Finally, the World Bank is and will continue to be involved in education, and to fund large educational reform projects.

Implementation of the Education Basket's Plan of Action

Darren Schemmer, Canadian Mission to the Organization of American States

Elaine Freeland, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education of Quebec, representing the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada

Education was one of the four key Baskets on the agenda of the Santiago Summit of the Americas—which, in turn, is part of a wider process of integration of the Americas. The state leaders' endorsement in April, 1998 of the Plan of Action for Education expressed a conviction that citizens in the Americas must be well-educated to gain from the opportunities offered by democracies and open markets.

While the high profile given to education at the Summit is politically vital, implementing this collective desire for educational cooperation is not so easy. Being a domestic issue, and closely tied to national identity, values and social mobility, the development challenges for education vary from one country to another. This partly explains that the Plan of Action for Education includes a broad range of actors and initiatives. Many of these will be difficult to track and report on. However, Schemmer views the increasing number of meetings between Education Ministers and their representatives as a positive sign.

In Canada, the provincial jurisdiction over education complicates the capacity to intervene internationally. Schemmer noted that its hemispheric partners are interested in Canada's expertise in multicultural education, distance education, the use of Internet technology, indigenous education and second language education.

Elaine Freeland represented the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada (CMEC) at the Summit and at subsequent hemispheric meetings on education. Mexico is the country responsible for the Education Basket, along with Argentina and Chile. Mexico now chairs the subgroup of 11 countries, including Canada, that is coordinating the implementation of the Plan of Action for Education. Freeland believes Canada can gain a good deed from this hemispheric initiative, in terms of a global vision, wider horizons and language learning.

Two major outcomes emerged from the Summit and the subsequent hemispheric meetings on education; the Political Declaration on the importance of education and its key role in development, and the

resulting Education Plan. The latter involves seven lines of action about primary and secondary education:

- compensatory programs for vulnerable populations;
- education quality assessment systems;
- educational management, institutional capacity and decentralization;
- education for the work place;
- professionalization of teachers ;
- intercultural bilingual basic education; and
- information and communication technologies.

These seven lines of action define the framework for various regional and multilateral collaboration projects. The last three are of special interest to Canadian officials. The lines of action need to be understood within specific national contexts. Decentralization or the professionalization of teachers mean very different things in different countries, leading to different results. Freeland stressed the limits of multilateral collaborations on education. Summit related projects are limited in time and scope, dealing with topics identified by political consensus. Their impact needs to be put into perspective: while they can act as catalysts, they cannot resolve the issues facing national education systems.

At the hemispheric level, the Inter-American Program for Education of the Organization of American States (OAS) is funding a series of projects, and a second set of regional projects will be presented to the multilateral banks. In Canada, the CMEC has sought funds from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade to allow CMEC to fulfil Canada's commitment to the Education Plan. The CMEC is now asking provincial Ministers of Education to indicate their interest in specific lines of action, and to draft plans for involvement on a provincial or a pan-Canadian basis.

Civil society and the Plan of Action

Steve Stewart, Coordinator, Co-Development Canada

Steve Stewart spoke on behalf of Co-Development Canada, a Vancouver-based NGO that works on development issues with Latin American partners. Co-Development Canada began a project to explore how teachers and other stakeholders in education assess the state of public education in the hemisphere, and what they think of the Plan of Action for Education and the Inter-American Plan of Education. The latter is a parallel Plan developed by the Social Development and Education Unit of the OAS.

The first meeting of representatives of teachers' organizations, women's groups and NGOs took place in Mexico City in early November 1998. Participants

agreed on the dismal state of public education in the Americas, and that decentralization and the increased use of testing and evaluation mechanisms have had a negative impact. Teachers work longer hours with larger classes. Many of these changes result from the transformations caused by multilateral institutions or regional trade agreements that see education as a marketable commodity.

Participants agreed with the emphasis on early and ongoing involvement of civil society in developing and implementing education programs. Participants also believed that decisions must be made by a broadly based and informed sector of education stakeholders, and not by a few experts claiming to represent civil society. In order to facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences and the analysis of Summit education initiatives, participants at the Mexico City meeting decided to create the Civil Society Network for Public Education in the Americas. A web site will be accessible in 1999, with information on the Inter-American Program of Education and the Summit Plan of Action, as well educational reforms in the Americas.

The role of the Inter-American Development Bank

George Shannon, Senior Counsellor to the Executive Director for Canada, Inter-American Development Bank

The consensus among the 26 LAC members of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) on the need to reform education is growing due to concerns about growth, productivity, competitiveness and social equity. Key problems in education are crippling development: low learning, inadequate curricula, weak preparation for the workplace and low performance of post-secondary schools on international tests. A debate is underway which questions if market forces should be such a strong element of change, and if these forces are not distorting the educational agenda. Groups of citizens, teachers, businesses, universities and education administrators are demanding more resources and comprehensive reforms, and that reforms of the educational system become a political priority. This double-headed crisis is taking place in educational reform and in investment, so the role of an institution such as the IDB takes on great importance.

The IDB's focus is shifting from infrastructure (i. e. building schools) and access to primary education, to policy issues related to pedagogy, management, information and evaluation systems, training, and strengthening central institutions. Its challenge is to advocate for best practices and provide technical expertise. More integrated, self-reinforcing activities need to be designed to address several intersecting themes: institutions and finance, curricula and training, technology, and information. Providing better delivery and accountability to community members

and policy makers and increasing decentralization and local autonomy are vital. The IDB is developing incentive mechanisms to promote innovation, efficient management and transparency, and working to modernize curricula and train teachers on best practices. Recognizing that 'technological fluency' is becoming essential, it funds the acquisition and updating of informatics equipment, especially for distance education. The IDB is also funding data collection systems that measure inputs, outputs, processes and costs to enhance accountability, and promoting the practice of serious and ongoing evaluation of projects.

The IDB has developed a new Higher Education Strategy that focuses on Internationalization, Academic Leadership, Professional Programs and Technical Training. Most of the projects funded since 1992 have been at the secondary and vocational levels (prior to 1996, all educational loans were for the primary level). The Bank is increasing its lending in education, and is committed to doubling its funding in education in LAC during the next 3 to 4 years.

The World Bank's education strategy for LAC

Madalena dos Santos, Senior General Educator, World Bank

Access to education has increased significantly. Enrolment now approaches universal rates at the primary level, and secondary schooling rates are rising quickly. The key challenge is to raise access to this last, since research shows it has direct links to democratization.

Another challenge in education is to reduce the achievement gap between LAC and OECD countries in order to increase the labour force's competitiveness. A need exists to reduce persistent inequalities, to improve the quality of education and to increase the relevance of education. The new role of the state and the decentralization process also require increased management capacity locally, and reforms at the Ministry level.

Six priorities that the World Bank has identified for the next decade are:

1. Raising the quality of schooling, especially for the poor, emphasizing teaching improvements. Better students must be attracted to the profession, and pre-service training needs to be improved.
2. Ensuring that all children complete basic schooling. This is likely to require large investments in early childhood programs, and improvements in school quality targeted at poor kids.
3. Assisting countries in providing relevant learning opportunities for youth. To achieve the Summit goal for secondary enrolment of 75% by the year 2010 (in 1996, enrolment was at 36%) requires

significant investment in new schools, new teachers, and the greater use of distance education. Secondary school programs need to be redesigned to link schools to the workplace.

4. Reforming higher education so that it attracts students from more diverse backgrounds. Private institutions must be strengthened, the quality of teaching must be improved, and graduate education must also be strengthened.

5. Strengthening educational institutions by implementing decentralization programs and empowering local participants.
6. Making more effective use of computers and the Internet, with their great potential to improve access and quality. The Bank wants to help countries design and evaluate pilot projects before making massive investments in technology. The impact of technology on education still needs to be investigated.

Workshops

Following the three panel discussions, five concurrent workshops were held. The themes corresponded to elements of the Santiago Summit Plan of Action, representing key components of hemispheric cooperation in the field of education. Canadian institutions and organizations are already involved with these issues, and Canada clearly has a contribution to make. Workshop participants addressed this question: What should Canada's role and future contribution be in implementing the Plan of Action for Education? A summary of key results and recommendations for each workshop is provided below.

Workshop I: Monitoring Educational Reforms: Assessment and Indicators

Facilitator: Darryl Hunter, Director of Assessment and Evaluation, Ministry of Education of Saskatchewan

1. Canada should encourage participation, interchange and involvement by civic groups to reach international consensus on assessment and indicator programs.
2. Assessment and indicator systems must be comprehensive, efficient, practical, user-oriented and not drain resources needed to improve curriculum and instruction.
3. Monitoring systems must be sensitive to local needs, purposes of local programs, and multiple realities. Assessment regimes must distinguish between assessment, program evaluation, student evaluation, teacher evaluation and teacher education.
4. The Canadian Council of Ministers of Education should draw up a list of names of provincial assessment and indicators specialists, and collect provincial indicators/assessment reports and provide these to the OAS.
5. The Canadian Educational Statistics Council should meet with CIDA to establish the purposes, plans

and progress in developing a Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program.

Workshop II: Professional Development for Teachers and Administrators

Facilitator: John Berry, Consultant

1. The diversity of Canadian experiences and models (Education Ministries in each province/territory, two official languages, First Nations education) is a particular source of expertise that can be shared. It is especially relevant to regional cooperation between Education Ministries and work by regional education mechanisms supporting the pooling of efforts, resources and programs, and articulating and harmonizing programs, qualifications and credentials between distinct jurisdictions.
2. Canada can contribute on two levels:
 - Helping to develop formal mechanisms in areas such as accreditation. There is a danger of exporting Canadian solutions, so the emphasis should instead be on sharing and exchanging experiences and lessons learned from our models and approaches.
 - Facilitating the exchange of expertise and ideas. This may include approaches that are structured (study tours and personnel exchanges) and less formal (Internet tools: listservers, web sites).

Cooperation in these kinds of activities can contribute valuably to:

- strengthening regional cooperation and understanding, including greater harmonization of education systems of different countries or jurisdictions;
- building capacity in individual systems, where required; and
- reducing individual educators' isolation as well as increasing their access to information, resources and sources of expertise.

Workshop III: Distance Education

Facilitator: *Ethel Thayer, Director of International School Programs, Office of International Partnerships, Industry Canada*

- Distance education does not have to be “high tech” to be effective. It must be flexible and available for elementary and secondary education, as well as at the university level.
- Technology is seen as the most asynchronous delivery mechanism allowing for flexibility in curriculum for students and access to courses over differentiated time frames. Programs in technological literacy, skills development and workplace training and retraining are also needed.
- In liaison with the private sector, Canada should provide a thorough database about all areas of Information and Communications Technology and Distance Education.
- Canadians and Latin American countries must collaborate on drafting a framework and guidelines for joint ventures.
- Local solutions are needed to accommodate local issues.

Workshop IV: Financing Educational Reforms: The Role of Multilateral Institutions and the Private Sector

Facilitator: *César Guerrero, Consultant*

Educational reforms can effectively improve the quality and the provision of education in different countries, states and provinces to a point. They often produce side effects in the political, economic and social arenas. Agreement is needed about how far reforms must go and how appropriate the different tools and measures are for solving the key issues, depending on a particular country's conditions.

Financing reforms is, therefore, a risky investment for a country and for multilateral institutions, which may participate through loans or technical assistance. One advantage to this kind of conference is ‘horizontal’ cooperation: exchanges of experiences from one country to another, and from one province to another. Analogously, international institutions should provide extensive comparative data and research on educational changes, thereby reducing the costs and risks of a country's involvement in major reform.

Special attention should be given to financing key parts of reforms by the private sector and civil society as a whole. This cooperation can effectively reduce public investment, and usefully enlist large portions of the community and the private sector. Their material input and contribution are vital to securing successful results.

The workshop identified several issues:

- What is the timing of the financing? How can financing be made more timely?
- What are LAC countries' priorities in education, given that the distribution of income has been deteriorating over the past two decades?
- What proportion of the funding from multilateral organizations actually reaches the schools, students and teachers, to solve the identified problems?
- How past experiences be evaluated so that lessons can be learned and knowledge be gained for the benefit of new projects?

Workshop V: Technical Education and Vocational Training Reform

Facilitator: *Paul Brennan, Program Manager, Association of Canadian Community Colleges*

Technical/vocational reforms are needed to develop job and entrepreneurial skills, reduce poverty and inequity, develop economies and contribute to responsible and active citizens. Canada's potential contributions in this area are:

- Helping to revive an apprenticeship system as part of a seamless, recognized education and training system.
- Developing a competency-based approach to curriculum development which includes various techniques to ensure that curricula corresponds to job needs and employment potential.
- Encouraging the development of a ‘culture,’ of continuous and continuing education among the population.
- Enabling people—especially those with literacy or general education deficiencies—to gain access to vocational and technical studies, as well as to be fit to undertake it.
- Facilitating the co-management of educational institutions with business, community groups and institution constituents.
- Helping to set up mechanisms that ensure that technical/vocational institutions serve the actual and eventual needs of the business community in their environment.
- Using new information technologies in managing educational institutions, and delivering training through distance learning.
- Developing a Prior-Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) system to recognize and credit the existing competencies that adult learners have previously acquired, to thereby reduce the time they must spend at an educational institution.

Working Session

Following the panels and workshops, there was an additional working session. At this session, participants had the opportunity to pursue issues raised during the conference. In addition, participants discussed the “Draft Educational Programming and Strategy Framework for the Americas;” a document from the Canadian International Development Agency.

General points about educational reforms

- Reforms should not be viewed in a technical way but, rather, the focus should be on the process. Key elements are to involve teachers at the beginning and to focus on follow-up.
 - Decentralization and testing are tools, the means to an end, not an end in themselves. Latin America is adapting these tools to develop innovative policies and a “new school”. The emphasis should be creating the new school, rather than being tied to the processes of decentralization and evaluation.
 - Priorities should be to support the interchange of teachers, popularize quality education and define what schools require to produce quality education.
 - In educational planning, a balance is needed between cultural organizational and market needs. The private sector will contribute to ensure that what is taught has relevance.
 - A key question is to determine who sets the education agenda. Traditionally, it has been set by government and labour unions, but this has been changing. As well, it has been determined that \$40 billion per year is needed to improve education in LAC. Sources of funding at this magnitude have yet to be found.
 - Many speakers and delegates agreed on the need to listen closely to what stakeholders are saying, and to enlist extensive community participation in planning and implementing education projects and programs. Canadians involved in cooperation projects should respect local realities and involve teachers at the outset of any reform process.
 - The approach should be to share and adapt, rather than to apply Canadian solutions. Both Canadians and Latin Americans need to learn from the experience of successful programs.
- Both decentralization processes and the establishment of evaluation systems are needed to improve education, since they increase local decision making power and accountability. However, there is no proof that decentralization and evaluation mechanisms have a positive impact on learning. Also, there is a potential risk of losing what makes each education system unique, since a uniform model applied to all is blind to the diversity of national and regional educational contexts.

Canada’s contribution and comparative advantage

- Canada’s advantage is its variety of educational systems and reform efforts, and an awareness of local differences across the country. However, these solutions cannot be exported. They need to be shared and exchanged.
- Canada’s continued collaboration on joint curriculum development, adult education and indigenous education may have great relevance for other countries.

Cooperation in education and the role of the Canadian International Development Agency

Delegates looked at the “Draft Educational Programming and Strategy Framework for the Americas” and the consultation process. Comments were made about the need to define certain terms; the need to refer to the Summit; the inclusion of a ‘Women in Development’ perspective, and the need to clarify wording. CIDA’s Americas Branch indicated that consultations around the draft framework would continue.

Looking at CIDA funding, delegates suggested that the Agency should provide funds where education is primarily a domestic issue and the Canadian expertise is not transferable. CIDA needs to coordinate its efforts with organizations such as PREAL, which is already working on education in the region. CIDA may also benefit by focusing on bringing together individuals and institutions to facilitate sharing and ‘horizontal’ learning.

Conclusions

There is a need to refocus resources in basic education on the post-secondary level, where the needs are greatest, rather than the current allocation of official development assistance in education for Latin America and the Caribbean is concentrated.

There is a need to involve teachers at the outset of any reform process. There is also a need to enlist extensive community participation in planning and implementing education projects. The approach

should be to share and adapt rather than apply Canadian solutions.

Canadian policy makers should work to increase awareness and public understanding of the Summit of the Americas process, the implementation of the Plan of Action for Education, and the role of the Canadian Council of Ministers of Education, a key national organization involved in the inter-American initiative.