
**Country Analysis
Education**

Guatemala



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1. General educational situation

1.1 Educational history

Background

The Republic of Guatemala is one of seven countries located in Central America. Bordered by Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, and the Pacific Ocean, Guatemala has a land area of 108,430 square kilometers (41,865 square miles or approximately the size of Tennessee) and a population of 13 million, representing over one third of Central America's entire population. The climate of Guatemala is primarily tropical, although it contains cool highlands in the north and tropical jungles in the south. The central terrain is largely mountainous, while the coastal region is bordered by plains. There are many active volcanoes in the country, and the area is also subject to hurricanes and earthquakes.

Approximately 40 percent of the population of Guatemala is urban. The most populated area is the country's capital, Guatemala City, which boasts a metropolitan population of over two million people. Guatemala is a leader in Central American's commerce and manufacturing. It produces and exports petroleum, minerals, tobacco, electrical goods, pharmaceuticals, food, and textiles. Tourism in Guatemala also thrives, particularly in Antigua, which is a major cultural center of Guatemala City. Agriculture represents about 25 percent of the Guatemala's income, and farming accounts for nearly half of the nation's workforce. Approximately 36 percent of the country's exports go to the United States, which in turn comprises about 40 percent of Guatemala's imports. Guatemala also exports to other Central American countries, as well as to Japan and Germany.

Culturally distinctive history

Guatemala has a rich and culturally distinctive history. More than 50 percent of Guatemala's population descended from Mayan ancestry. Historians believe that the region, which now comprises Guatemala, contained a series of small kingdoms and city-states during whose existence architectural accomplishments, many representations of which can still be found in Guatemala, flourished. In 1521, the area was claimed by Spain, under whose rule the Mayan Indians were suppressed. During the 300 year period which followed, the Mayan Culture diminished, although today it is a celebrated part of Guatemala's heritage. People of Mayan-Spanish descent today are referred to as *Ladinos*.

Independence

After winning its independence from Spain in 1821, Guatemala briefly became part of Mexico and later a member of the United Provinces of Central America. From that time until 1944, it was governed by a series of dictatorships until its first civilian president, Juan José Arevalo, was elected and promised to bring democratic political reform. The new form of government, however, was short-lived; many of Arevalo's successors returned the country to a series of dictatorships, military rule, and civil wars until 1985 when Vinicio Cerezo was elected to the presidency. Under Cerezo's leadership, the new 1985 Constitution (which was temporarily suspended and amended in 1993) provided for the separation of governmental powers and included provisions for the protection of human rights. Entering the twenty-first century, Guatemala enjoyed a progressive, human rights-oriented government that sought to provide for the protection, education, and cultural advancements of its people. Among the country's agendas in 2000 were the perpetuation of human rights within its

borders, the modernization of its schools, and its diplomatic relations with other world governments.

1.2 Formal education

Similar to the United States, the educational system in Guatemala is divided into three levels: primary (elementary), secondary (high school), and university. Education in Guatemala is free and compulsory through sixth grade, or between the ages of 7 and 14. Because public schools are often located sparsely in the rural areas of the country, there is an abundance of private schools in Guatemala. Many of these institutions are Marist or Jesuit. In total, there are approximately 9,300 primary schools, which are attended by 1.3 million students. More than 290,000 students attend private secondary schools, and the total university enrollment in Guatemala is approximately 88,000.

Language of Instruction

Although Spanish is the official language spoken in Guatemala, not all of its citizens are fluent in Spanish. Spoken among the nation's high Indian population are over 20 indigenous Mayan Indian languages, including *K'iche'*, *Kakchiquel*, *K'ekchi*, *Mam*, and *Quiche*, which are used primarily in the rural areas of the country. In fact, only 60 percent of Guatemala's population speaks Spanish; the remaining 40 percent speak indigenous Mayan languages. These dialects are spoken in many of the country's rural schools. One of Guatemala's educational goals is to become uni-lingual, which means that ideally all Guatemalans would be able to speak Spanish. However, students who complete all 6 years of primary school and all 5 years of secondary may have as many as 11 years of English instruction, a trend which began around the time of Guatemala's break from dictatorship in the late 1940s. Since that time, school children, at least in the larger cities, may have also received training in other languages, especially French, German, and Italian.

Instructional Technology (Computers)

Lack of adequate educational technology remains a problem for the Guatemalan classroom, especially in the mountainous, rural areas. Absence of funding, limited technical access, and lack of operator expertise prevent all schools from being equipped with state-of-the-art computers and distance learning technology. However, these commodities are making their entrance into the universities, particularly the University of San Carlos, which boasts a fully updated website, student access to the Internet, and other interactive features. Students who can afford the required technology and tuition may participate in online education courses offered outside of the country.

Curriculum development

The Guatemalan Ministry of Education supports a progressive, globalized curriculum. One of the country's major educational achievements is its focus on globalization and multicultural affairs. Starting in secondary school, students learn about other cultures and nations, including their Latin American neighbors, other Western-hemisphere countries, and countries all over the world. This attention to multiculturalism aids in Guatemala's presence in international affairs, global commerce, and social development. Curriculum in Guatemala also gives attention to the social issues the country faces and encourages its students to be active in helping solve these problems.

Overview

	<i>Primary</i>	<i>Basic secondary</i>	<i>Diversified secondary</i>	<i>Technical secondary</i>
<i>Type of school providing</i>	Primary school		Ciclo	Technical

<i>this education</i>			Diversificado	Secondary School
<i>Length of program in years</i>	6	3	2	3
<i>Age level</i>	7 to 13	13 to 16	16 to 18	15 to 19
<i>Certificate/diploma awarded</i>		Diploma de Estudios	Bachillerato de Ciencias y Letras	Perito Comercial, Industrial, Agrícola, Técnico

1.3 Government education policy

Government branches

Like the United States, Guatemala's government is comprised of three branches: the *Congreso de la Republica* or Legislative Branch, a unicameral national congress made up of 110 deputies who serve 4 year terms; the Executive Branch, comprised of the president, vice president, and the Council of Ministers, who are appointed by the president; and the Judicial Branch, a hierarchical series of upper and lower courts over which the 13 member *Corte Surpema de Justicia* (Supreme Court) presides. Members of the Supreme Court serve five-year terms, and the president, who acts as both chief of state and as head of government, serves a four-year term.

Departamentos

Guatemala is divided into 22 states or *departamentos*, under which 331 *municipios* (townships) handle local affairs. Each *departemento* is headed by a governor. Under the current constitution, the president and vice president are elected by national vote and may serve only one term. Voting is compulsory for citizens 18 years or older.

Minister of education

National policies related to education in Guatemala are handled through the *Ministerio de Educacion* (the Ministry of Education), presided over by the national Minister of Education. The ministry's sphere of influence covers predominantly, but not exclusively, primary (compulsory) schools. The Minister is responsible for such matters as developing proficiency examinations that students are required to pass in order to move from one grade level to the next; ensuring that state curriculum is observed fully in public schools and at least partially in private schools; and managing finances allocated to education, which is approximately 1.8 percent of the country's GDP (Gross Domestic Product). All diplomas are issued to students by the Ministry, not by the individual schools or programs of study. Additionally, programs for non-traditional (older) learners are offered, especially for semi-qualified workers in the agricultural and health sectors.

PRONADE

The Ministry of Education has made a promising start in decentralizing its operations by establishing departmental directorates in each of Guatemala's departments or provinces. The establishment of PRONADE (National Program for Self-Managed Education), which actively involves local communities in the decision-making process, was another step in the right direction. PRONADE advocates a voucher-style system for areas not served by the centralized education bureaucracy. In most models, school boards made up of parents hire the teachers and are responsible for the school's administration. Most boards appear to be functioning adequately, although further work is needed to instill an entrepreneurial vision and develop innovative strategies.

Academic research

Educational research in Guatemala covers a spectrum of academic disciplines, including agriculture, business, arts and sciences, social work, engineering, law, and medicine. Each university maintains active research programs in many of these areas, and there are several Guatemalan organizations that support faculty research, including the *Centro de Estudios de Guatemala* (The Center for the Study of Guatemala), the *Centro de Investigaciones Económicas Nacionales* (The Center for Economic Investigation), and *Facultad Lationamericana de Ciencias Sociales* (Latin American Faculty of Science and Society). Each university also contains a host of institutes which support different research projects, such as *la Universidad de Valle's Centro de Estudios en Salud* (Center for Health Studies), *Centro de Investigaciones en Ingeniería Civil y Ciencias de la Tierra* (Center for Research in Civil Engineering and Earth Sciences), and *Centro de Investigaciones Arqueológicas y Antropológicas* (Center for Archeological and Anthropological Research) to name a few. Additionally, many institutions in other countries work jointly with counterparts in Guatemala to conduct academic research, including the Kaqchikel Resource Center at the University of Kansas, the *Programa Cooperativo para el Desarrollo Sostenible de los Recursos Naturales y la Conservación del Medio Ambiente* (the Cooperative Program for the Continued Development of Natural Resources and the Conservation of the Atmosphere) between the Universidad del Valle and Texas A & M University and the *Instituto de Nutrición de Centro America y Panama* (Central America and Panama Institute for Nutrition). As the effects of globalization continue to impact Guatemala and the surrounding area, the number of collaborative projects will likely increase.

Each university in Guatemala offers a series of conferences, symposia, or other events that allow scholars from within and outside of the country to share insights on problems affecting the region. Seminars related to matters of health, medicine, technology, and natural disasters (particularly earthquakes) can be found at the universities. Moreover, the country's rich Mayan heritage allows for many research projects related to anthropology, archaeology, and cultural studies, which attract researchers from all over the world. The Office of the Ministry of Education also works with institutions from other countries to offer different types of teaching and research exchange programs through its *Departamento de Coordinación con Organismos Internacionales* (Department of Coordination with International Organizations).

Spanish language-intensive schools

In addition to research and teaching programs which exist primarily for the benefit of citizens in Guatemala, many Spanish language-intensive schools exist, particularly in the capital city. Adult students from the United States, Europe, Asia, and other countries find Guatemala an excellent place to learn or refine their Spanish language skills. Most of these schools, some of which are coordinated through programs in other countries, provide students with immersion in Latin American culture, the opportunity to live with a Guatemalan family, and an excellent way to learn conversational and business Spanish. As of 2000 there were at least five such programs located in Guatemala.

Constitution articles

- Article 71. [Right to education]
The freedom of education and educational standards is guaranteed. It is the obligation of the State to provide and facilitate education to its inhabitants without any discrimination whatever. The foundation and maintenance of cultural educational centers and museums is declared to be of public utility and necessity.
- Article 72 [Goals of education]
Education has as its primary end the integral development of the human person,

the knowledge of reality, and national and universal culture.

Education, instruction, social development, and the systematic teaching of the Constitution of the Republic and of human rights are declared to be of national interest.

- Article 73 [Freedom of Education and State Economic Assistance]
The family is the source of education and parents are entitled to choose what is to be taught to their minor children. The State will be able to subsidize free private educational centers and the law will regulate issues relating to this matter. Private educational centers will operate under the inspection of the State. They are obliged to fill, at least, official study plans and programs. As cultural centers they will be exempted from all types of taxes and customs duties.
The State will contribute to the maintenance of religious education without any discrimination.
- Article 74 [Obligatory Education]
The inhabitants have the right and obligation to receive early, pre-primary, primary and basic education within the age limits set by the law.
Education provided by the State is free.
The State will provide and promote scholarships and educational credits.
Scientific education, technology, and the humanities represent goals that State will have to guide and develop on a permanent basis.
The State will promote special education, diversified education and education outside of school.
- Article 75 [Improved Literacy]
Improved literacy is declared to be of national urgency and it is a social obligation to contribute to it. The State will organize it and promote it with all necessary resources.
- Article 76 [educational system and Bilingual Education]
The administration of the educational system will have to be decentralized and regionalized.
In the schools established in regions with a predominantly indigenous population, education will have to be provided preferentially in bilingual form.
- Article 77 [Obligation of business owners]
The owners of industrial, agricultural, livestock, and commercial businesses are obliged to establish and maintain, in accordance with the law, schools, day care centers, and cultural centers for their workers and school population.
- Article 78 [Teaching faculty]
The State will promote the economic, social and cultural improvement of teaching faculty, including a right to a pension that makes possible their effective dignification [dignificación]. The rights acquired by the national teaching faculty are minimal and cannot be renounced. The law will regulate these matters.
- Article 79 [Agricultural Education]
Agricultural education, apprenticeship, exploitation, marketing, and industrialization of agricultural and livestock processing is declared to be a national interest. The National Central School of Agriculture is created as an autonomous decentralized entity with a juridical personality and its own customs; it should organize, direct, and develop plans of agricultural, livestock, and forestry study of the nation at the intermediate level; and it will be regulated by its own organic law, an amount no less than five percent of the regular budget of the Ministry of Agriculture to be allocated to it.
- Article 81 [Titles and Diplomas]
Titles and diplomas whose issuance is the responsibility of the State will have full legal validity. The rights acquired for the exercise of the occupations accredited

by said titles must be respected, and no provisions of any kind may be issued limiting or restricting these rights.

1.4 Education providers

The private education sector in Guatemala is growing at all levels. In 2006 there was 39% of private enrolment in pre-primary education, 19% enrolment in private primary education and 24% of private enrolment in secondary education.

Private primary education and secondary education are subsidized by the government. However there is little or no supervision, oversight or information on private schools. Private schools have resisted publishing information on their performance. There are tight official controls on tuition increases.

Primary schools that fall under the PRONADE program are publicly financed but are run by NGO's and communities.

1.5 The quality of education

As UNESCO points out, quality is expressed in a variety of ways and is associated with a wide range of explanatory factors. Accordingly, quality can be said to be a multidimensional phenomenon involving the relationship between material and human resources, what happens at school and in the classroom, curricula and learning expectations as compared with actual learning experience, among other aspects.

With the support of USAID-Guatemala and the Universidad del Valle, MINEDUC has managed to consolidate a national evaluation system which since 1998 has applied a set of tests with scores for Spanish and mathematics. It is also important to note that Guatemala has participated in the international Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (SERCE) test organized by the Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE) and UNESCO, which will provide information about the situation in the Guatemalan education system and yield lessons from the other countries participating in this evaluation.

In 2005, MINEDUC conducted language and mathematics tests for the sixth grade of primary, the third year of lower secondary and the final year of upper secondary, and found that "most students have difficulty mastering the content they are taught in the areas of language and mathematics. In the case of the sixth grade, students have greater difficulties with language than with mathematics, whereas by the third year of lower secondary and the final year of upper secondary the situation is reversed."

Percentage of students failing to reach the required level of proficiency or achievement (2005)

Grade/Area of evaluation	Sixth primary	Third lower secondary	Final upper secondary
Language	52.1	47.2	51.8
Mathematics	44.7	58.3	55.3

Using a correlation analysis, Porta and Laguna find that "there is a positive linear correlation between per capita GDP and the average number of correct answers", i.e., that the mere fact of having higher incomes could have a positive effect on children's educational attainments. Closer analysis by these authors shows that the variables with the greatest negative impact on academic performance are: illiterate

parents, ethnic group and area of residence. For instance, the effect on the Spanish results of having illiterate parents accounts for more than 14% of the test total. Considering the high levels of violence in the country, furthermore, it is important to note that students' performance also suffers when they are subjected to frequent physical ill-treatment at school.

1.6 Teacher education

Teaching profession

Like the United States and most other progressive countries, Guatemala recognizes the importance of preparing good teachers for the classroom. However, because teachers' salaries in the country are not good, and since teaching conditions are often difficult due to lack of physical resources, the teaching profession does not always attract enough well qualified educators. This problem is also exacerbated by the linguistic differences found in the far northern and southern areas of the country. Recent research by USAID-Guatemala indicates that teachers' average capabilities are low for Spanish reading and very low for mathematics.

Teachers' salaries however have increased significantly from 2000 to 2005, with the annual salary at pay grade A rising by 4,900 quetzals (22%). Every time teachers move up a grade in the pay scale they receive an additional 25% over the basic salary. In terms of GDP per capita, teachers' annual salaries range, depending on their pay grade, from 1.4 times this at the lowest grade to 3.2 at the highest. On average, therefore, teachers earn 1.8 times Guatemala's per capita GDP a year.

Qualification

All prospective teachers must obtain the *bacherilloto*, with an emphasis on teaching, to enter the classroom. Teachers in Guatemala are referred to as *profesors*. Guatemalan teachers have at least a full secondary education.

School heads

Extra pay and a training programme is not established for teachers acting as school heads. At present they are not trained for this role, and because it is not remunerated many regard it as a punishment to be assigned to it, as they usually continue to take classes and have to work harder to run the school without receiving any additional reward.

1.7 Curriculum reform

In Guatemala, MINEDUC is pursuing educational reform as a matter of policy. The objective is to strengthen the national education system so that it can meet national and international education quality standards. The primary goals of this policy are to raise education quality and reduce student repetition and drop-out rates, and to implement the new pupil-centred curriculum based on capabilities, skills, capacities and knowledge by grade. The new curriculum encompasses a transformation of learning methods and an emphasis on the relevance of education, with students planning their own schooling within the national curriculum, and enhanced capabilities in reading and writing, mathematics, and physical and artistic expression.

Pupil-centred

Its main thrust was the implementation of the new pupil-centred primary school curriculum with its focus on capacities, skills, capabilities and knowledge by grade. The chief emphasis was on:

- transforming learning methods;
- educational relevance;

- enhancing capabilities in reading, writing and mathematics;
 - enhancing the components of physical and artistic expression;
 - approving textbooks that matched the new orientation of the curriculum.
- In the last two years, this policy has been reinforced by the “Save First Grade” programme, which is improving education quality through teacher training and awareness-raising measures and whose primary goal is to increase the promotion rate. No impact evaluation has yet been carried out for this programme, however.

New national basic curriculum

In 2005, the new national basic curriculum was applied. This is an important component of the revised national education system curriculum, the aim of which is to improve education quality in pre-primary and primary schools and create the conditions for all sections of society to become involved in improving education and learning processes, as well as adapting education to the country’s real needs on the basis of grade-contextualized capabilities, skills and knowledge. The new curriculum was brought in at the pre-primary level.

1.8 Conclusions

The Guatemalan education system consists of primary school, secondary school and university. Spanish is the language of instruction and next to the public schools there are also a lot of private schools.

All policies about education are handled by the ministry of education and Guatemala has clear constitution policies on education.

The quality of the education in Guatemala leaves a lot to be desired, with high percentages of students who are failing to reach the required level of proficiency or achievement. Teacher qualifications are however very clear with certain diploma’s that need to be obtained in order to teach.

In 2005 Guatemala implemented a new national curriculum with pupil-centred approach to learning.

2. Primary education

2.1 School attendance

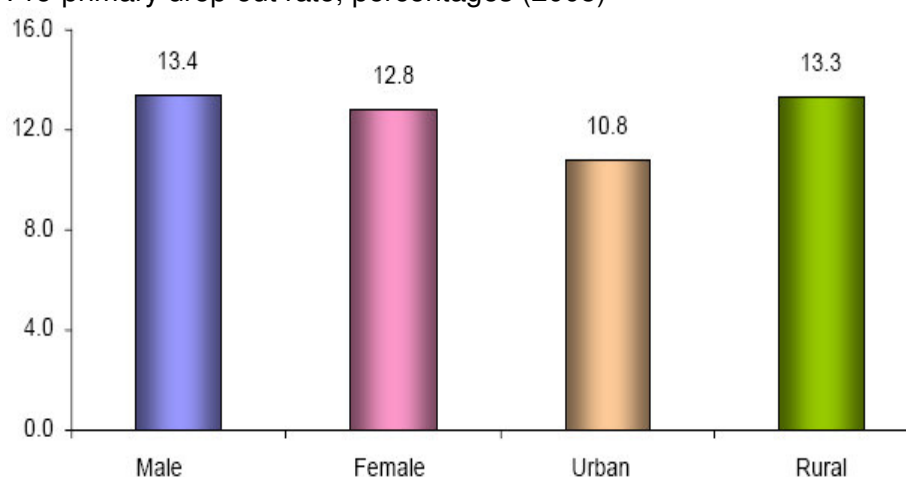
Pre-primary school attendance

In the 2000-2005 period, the net enrolment ratio (NER) at the pre-primary level rose by a little over 6 percentage points, from 28.2% to 34.6%. Despite this substantial increase, it should be noted that pre-primary education coverage is considered low by comparison with other Central American countries.

It is also important to note that the regional trend was mixed over the period. While the departments of Zacapa and Retalhuleu saw an increase of more than 10 points in their coverage, in a department like Sololá the rise was a mere 1.4 points. The situation in Alta Verapaz and Huehuetenango is also a cause for concern, with just one in four children receiving education at this level. These are more rural departments with lower per capita GDP.

It is worth noting the substantial progress made in bringing down the school drop-out rate, as this fell from 25.7% in 2000 to 13.1% in 2005. The latter figure is still considered high, however, and it particularly affects boys and residents of rural areas.

Pre-primary drop-out rate, percentages (2005)



Primary school attendance

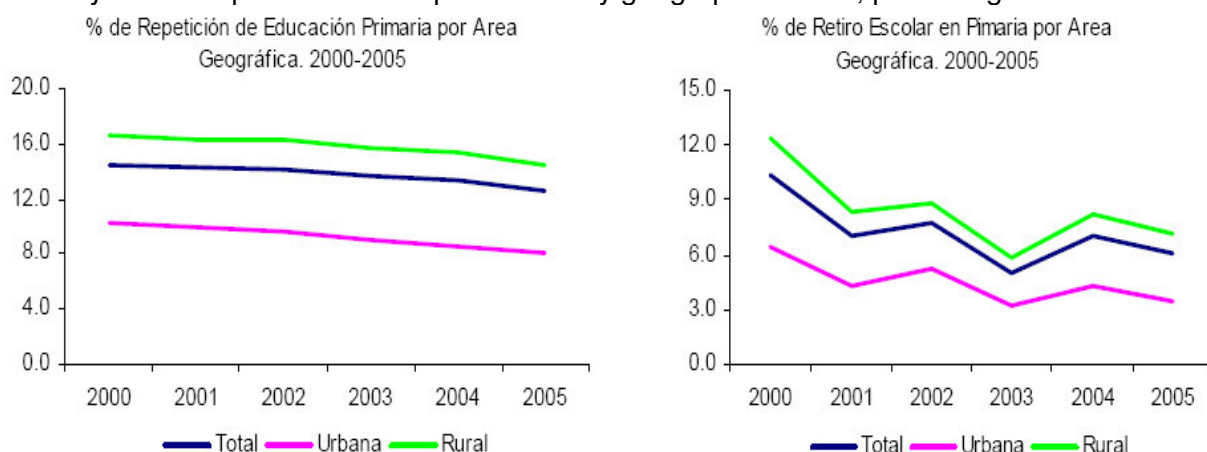
MINEDUC statistics show that Guatemala made substantial progress towards universal primary education in the 2000 to 2005 period, reflected in a rise from 84.3% to 93.5% in the NER for this level of education.⁵ As with the other educational levels, however, girls, inhabitants of rural areas and those in the most disadvantaged socio-economic groups have significantly less access to primary education than other groups. The country will have to deal with this situation if Guatemala is to attain the goal of universal primary education by 2015.

With regard to the inequity in primary education access suffered by girls, it is important to note that the intake of girls in the first grade has been increasing faster than that of boys, making it possible that the disadvantage girls are currently under in education coverage may be reversed in the near future, so that it is boys who are underrepresented.

When progress with primary education coverage is broken down at the departmental level, it transpires that the departments of Sololá and Quiché scored highest, increasing their school coverage by 16 and 17 percentage points, respectively. The

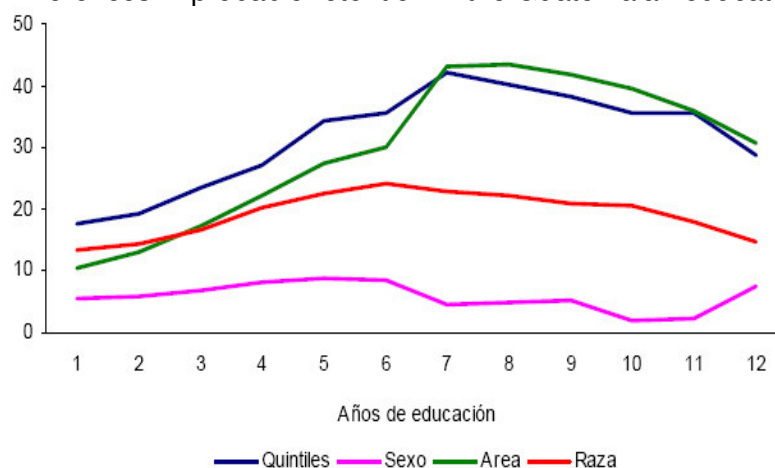
department that has the most ground to make up is Alta Verapaz, where one in four 7- to 12-year-olds is outside the Guatemalan education system. While the progress made by Guatemala in increasing coverage is seen as positive, school retention and progression are just as important as the primary intake if the education for all goals are to be achieved. The following chart shows that the primary school drop-out ratio fell significantly in the 2000-2005 period, especially in the rural areas (from 12.4% to 7.2%), while repetition rates declined very slightly.

Primary school repetition and drop-out rates by geographical area, percentages



Despite the progress noted, there are still disparities by area of residence, sex, socioeconomic stratum and ethnicity, with girls and rural residents consistently coming off worst (see chart below).

Differences in probable retention in the Guatemalan education system



Statistics on primary and pre-primary education

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006
Data				
Percentage of female students. Pre-primary	49	50	49	...
Percentage of female students. Primary	47	47	48	...
Pupils of the official school age. Pre-primary. Female	...	199,132	205,135	...
Pupils of the official school age. Pre-primary. Male	...	202,719	210,310	...

Pupils of the official school age. Pre-primary. Total	...	401,851	415,445	...
Pupils of the official school age. Primary. Female	863,336	905,401	938,734	...
Pupils of the official school age. Primary. Male	927,612	968,968	999,978	...
Pupils of the official school age. Primary. Total	1,790,978	1,874,369	1,938,721	...
Enrolment in pre-primary. Public. All programs. Total	...	345,697	352,120	...
Enrolment in pre-primary. Public and private. All programs. Female	202,789	211,027	215,384	...
Enrolment in pre-primary. Public and private. All programs. Total	409,777	425,825	436,154	...
Enrolment in primary. Public. All programs. Total	...	2,018,504	2,078,078	...
Enrolment in primary. Public and private. All programs. Female	1,031,791	1,082,999	1,116,509	...
Enrolment in primary. Public and private. All programs. Total	2,178,200	2,280,706	2,345,301	...
Enrolment in primary. Grade 1. Total	619,634	614,414	595,764	...
Enrolment in primary. Grade 2. Total	441,584	453,822	473,073	...
Enrolment in primary. Grade 3. Total	366,922	383,110	402,411	...
Enrolment in primary. Grade 4. Total	297,618	329,873	338,921	...
Enrolment in primary. Grade 5. Total	247,951	274,069	291,465	...
Enrolment in primary. Grade 6. Total	204,491	225,418	243,667	...
Gross enrolment ratio. Pre-primary. Female	28	28	28	...
Gross enrolment ratio. Pre-primary. Male	27	28	28	...
Gross enrolment ratio. Pre-primary. Total	27	28	28	...
Gross enrolment ratio. Primary. Female	105	108	109	...
Gross enrolment ratio. Primary. Male	115	117	118	...
Gross enrolment ratio. Primary. Total	110	113	113	...
Gender parity index for gross enrolment ratio. Pre-primary	1.01	1.01	1.00	...
Gender parity index for gross enrolment ratio. Primary	0.91	0.92	0.92	...
School life expectancy (years). Pre-primary. Female	1.1	1.2	1.2	...
School life expectancy (years). Pre-primary. Male	1.1	1.1	1.2	...
School life expectancy (years). Pre-primary. Total	1.1	1.1	1.2	...
School life expectancy (years). Primary to secondary. Female	8.6	8.9	9.1	...
School life expectancy (years). Primary to secondary. Male	9.6	9.8	10.0	...
School life expectancy (years). Primary to secondary. Total	9.1	9.4	9.5	...
Rate of primary school age children out of school. Female	11	9	7	...
Rate of primary school age children out of school. Male	6	4	3	...
Rate of primary school age children out of school. Total	8	6	5	...
Percentage of private enrolment. Pre-primary	...	19	19	...
Percentage of private enrolment. Primary	...	11	11	...
Teaching staff in pre-primary. Total	16,857	16,708	17,371	...
Teaching staff in primary. Total	71,368	73,835	75,519	...
Pupil-teacher ratio. Pre-primary	24	25	25	...
Pupil-teacher ratio. Primary	31	31	31	...

For the latest statistics visit:

http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=136&IF_Language=eng&BR_Topic=0

2.2 School accessibility

The Guatemalan education system is unequivocally incapable of providing a basic education to every student. The Ministry of Education is infamously one of the most corrupt components of the government. There's several places where the education system lacks.

Small National Budget

Nearly all government services in Guatemala are financially strapped due to a lack of tax income for the government. Property taxes are paid for by only a handful of persons, and Income taxes don't really exist. The only major source of funds is a national sales tax, but it is only paid for by certain vendors and excludes all sales in open air markets and the massive informal economy, where the majority of transactions occur.

Administrative Priorities

The Ministry of Education is known to be one of the most corrupt government agencies in the nation. Thousands of dollars are siphoned off by administrative officials for personal benefit. In addition, the local and national government is known to make investments in adding classrooms, teacher in-services, and computers without supporting recurring costs such as increasing the number of teachers or covering school supplies.

Inadequate Number of Schools, Teachers and Classrooms

While the Ministry of Education claims to provide universal education, international studies show that it only serves 20% of all Guatemalan children. Classrooms are often packed with more than 40 students per teacher, and most public schools cap class sizes below 50 – leaving many students without access to public education. In rural areas, some grade schools with between 100 and 200 students are covered by one teacher. Infrastructure such as roads and school buildings is extremely deficient due to the civil war (which lasted 36 years and ended in 1996).

The Family's Response

To make up for the inadequate education system, particularly the lack of spaces for students, many parents send their children to one of the many private schools. Most private schools are run by religious agencies that pull in some funds from local or international church groups. Occasionally non-religious groups also fund these schools.

Funding

The funding given to these schools does not cover most of the costs of anything beyond teacher salaries, such as office supplies, furniture, and improvements. The families of students end up footing most of the overall costs directly on top of all the school supplies, utilities, etc. Most private elementary schools (grades 1-6) cost 150-200 quetzals per month, or roughly \$20-26. Middle school, none of which are public, cost roughly 300Q (US\$40) per month. High school, which less than 20% of all Guatemalans graduate, costs roughly 450Q (\$60) per month. On top of the tuition costs, students must purchase school uniforms, all their school supplies, and transportation.

2.3 Forms of primary education

A four-year program of early childhood education begins at age 3. Education is compulsory for ages 7 to 15. Primary school begins at age 7 and continues for 6 years. Primary or elementary school comprises the next six years. Students must pass a general examination at each grade level in order to pass to the subsequent level. Students who fail any part of the year-end examination must repeat that entire year. Examinations are prepared under the supervision of Guatemala's Minister of Education, who also presides over the curriculum and administrative functions of the country's public schools.

Curriculum

Students receive instruction in all the "basic" areas, including language, science, mathematics, and history. In most city schools, both Spanish and English are taught at all primary levels, although in more remote areas, indigenous Mayan languages are used exclusively. In some larger urban schools, courses in German, French, Italian, Arabic and Chinese may also be offered. French, German, and English-run schools teach a combination of the national curriculum and their respective country's curriculum.

2.4 Special needs education

Equal opportunity for persons with disabilities in education and in other state services is mandated but not implemented. Discrimination is reported in education and employment practices. Educational resources are scarce, and for those with special needs even scarcer. 4,187 children with special needs receive education service from the ministry; 160 are in mainstream schools while the others attend 16 special education schools.

Minor children of women in detention live with their mothers and receive minimal education or other services. Persons with disabilities receive social security benefits and have the right to work. Universities are not accessible to the handicapped.

2.5 Conclusions

In both pre-primary and primary education levels school attendance is rising significantly when looking at the period of 2000-2005. However despite the progress noted, in primary education there are still disparities by area of residence, sex, socioeconomic stratum and ethnicity, with girls and rural residents consistently coming off worst. Due to the small national budget and an inadequate number of schools, teachers and classrooms the Guatemalan education system is unequivocally incapable of providing a basic education to every student.

There is a four-year program of early childhood education that begins at age 3. Education is compulsory for ages 7 to 15 and primary school begins at age 7 and continues for 6 years. The primary school curriculum consists of all "basic" areas (languages, mathematics, science, etc.).

Educational resources are scarce and for those with special needs even scarcer. 4,187 children with special needs receive education service from the ministry; 160 are in mainstream schools while the others attend 16 special education schools.

3. Secondary education

3.1 School attendance

Statistics on secondary education

Years	2003	2004	2005	2006
Data				
Percentage of female students. Total secondary. General programs	46	46	46	...
Percentage of female students. Total secondary. Technical/vocational programs	51	52	51	...
Percentage of female students. Total secondary. All programs	47	47	48	...
Pupils of the official school age. Secondary. Female	217,050	232,629	252,080	...
Pupils of the official school age. Secondary. Male	236,769	252,134	270,667	...
Pupils of the official school age. Secondary. Total	453,819	484,763	522,747	...
Enrolment in secondary. Grade 1. Total	187,159	199,507	214,156	...
Enrolment in secondary. Grade 2. Total	142,207	151,590	162,721	...
Enrolment in secondary. Grade 3. Total	114,227	122,008	130,967	...
Enrolment in secondary. Grade 4. Total	12,809	13,409	14,394	...
Enrolment in secondary. Grade 5. Total	9,145	9,749	10,465	...
Enrolment in lower secondary. Public. All programs. Total	...	132,771	145,297	...
Enrolment in lower secondary. Public and private. All programs. Total	444,455	474,585	507,633	...
Enrolment in total secondary. Public. General programs. Total	...	134,888	147,790	...
Enrolment in total secondary. Public. Technical/vocational programs. Total	...	47,171	49,424	...
Enrolment in total secondary. Public. All programs. Total	...	182,059	197,214	...
Enrolment in total secondary. Public and private. General programs. Total	465,547	496,262	532,701	...
Enrolment in total secondary. Public and private. Technical/vocational programs. Total	187,945	202,299	221,795	...
Enrolment in total secondary. Public and private. All programs. Total	653,492	698,561	754,496	...
Gross enrolment ratio. Lower secondary. All programs. Female	47	49	51	...
Gross enrolment ratio. Lower secondary. All programs. Male	55	57	59	...
Gross enrolment ratio. Lower secondary. All programs. Total	51	53	55	...
Gross enrolment ratio. Upper secondary. All programs. Female	39	41	44	...
Gross enrolment ratio. Upper secondary. All programs. Male	39	40	44	...
Gross enrolment ratio. Upper secondary. All programs. Total	39	41	44	...
Gross enrolment ratio. Secondary. All	44	46	49	...

programs. Female				
Gross enrolment ratio. Secondary. All programs. Male	49	51	54	...
Gross enrolment ratio. Secondary. All programs. Total	46	48	51	...
Gender parity index for gross enrolment ratio. Lower secondary. All programs	0.84	0.85	0.86	...
Gender parity index for gross enrolment ratio. Upper secondary. All programs	1.01	1.02	1.01	...
Gender parity index for gross enrolment ratio. Secondary. All programs	0.89	0.90	0.91	...
Percentage of private enrolment. Lower secondary. General programs	..	72	71	...
Percentage of private enrolment. Upper secondary. General programs	...	90	90	...
Percentage of private enrolment. Upper secondary. Technical/vocational programs	...	77	78	...
Percentage of private enrolment. Secondary	...	74	74	...
Teaching staff in lower secondary. Total	27,865	28,406	29,828	...
Teaching staff in upper secondary. Total	17,053	16,994	18,076	...
Teaching staff in secondary. Total	44,918	45,400	47,904	...
Pupil-teacher ratio. Lower secondary	16	17	17	...
Pupil-teacher ratio. Upper secondary	12	13	14	...
Pupil-teacher ratio. Secondary	15	15	16	...

For the latest statistics visit:

http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=136&IF_Language=eng&BR_Topic=0

3.2 Forms of secondary education

Secondary education begins at age 13 and is completed in 5 years. Most secondary schools are located in the urban areas of Guatemala and are affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church (Catholicism is the predominant religion of Guatemala, although there are many Protestants and Mayan religions practiced). Several German, French, and American schools also exist. Teachers at these schools use English, rather than Spanish, to deliver instruction.

Not compulsory

Since compulsory education ends at the sixth grade, many Guatemalan children do not attend secondary school. In fact, recent estimates hold that only one third of all children continue their education beyond primary school, a problem that may contribute to a high level of illiteracy in adults over age 15. Children may not have easy access to a secondary school, or, if they come from agricultural communities, they are unable to attend because they must work to support their families' farms.

Form of secondary education

At the secondary level, students receive three years of general education, called *Ciclo Prevocacional*, followed by two years of vocational training, called *Ciclo Diversificado*, which allows students to "specialize" in one of several professional areas such as education, agriculture, and business. Students who complete the final three years of study receive a *Bachillerato*, the equivalent of a high school diploma, and are eligible to be admitted to university. Instead of attending *Ciclo Diversificado*, students may opt to devote their following three years of study to specialized studies, resulting in a certificates in *perito* (certification) in *industria* (industry), *agricola* (agriculture), or *contador* (law).

Requirements to combat illiteracy

Guatemala faces a rather hefty illiteracy problem with as many as 50 percent of the entire population, especially rural women, being functionally illiterate. To combat this problem and to improve the quality of education, Guatemala implemented a requirement into the secondary education requirements for its senior students. Before completing the curriculum necessary for receiving a diploma, secondary students are now required to teach five people to read. This mandate, which went into effect in 2001, seeks to increase citizens' awareness of the need to educate the populace, while simultaneously combating illiteracy. Although this measure was met with some initial resistance by the schools, it has so far proven to be an effective means of reducing the widespread effects of illiteracy in the country.

3.3 Conclusions

As with primary education there is a definite increase in the enrolment rates for secondary education. However these rates are still very low and therefore, the enrolment in secondary education leaves a lot of room for improvement. Secondary education begins at age 13 and is completed in 5 years and is not mandatory. At the secondary level, students receive three years of general education, followed by two years of vocational training, which allows students to "specialize" in one of several professional areas. Instead students may opt to devote their following three years of study to specialized studies, resulting in a certificates in *perito* (certification) in *industria* (industry), *agricola* (agriculture), or *contador* (law). To combat illiteracy Guatemala has instated that al secondary students are required to teach five people to read in order to receive their diploma.

4. Higher education and university

4.1 School attendance

Statistics on tertiary education

Years	2003	2004	2005	2006
Data				
Percentage of female students. Tertiary ISCED 5A	42	...	...	...
Percentage of female students. Tertiary ISCED 5B	66	...	...	...
Percentage of female students. Total tertiary	43	...	...	...
Enrolment in 5A tertiary. Total	109,441	...	...	...
Enrolment in 5B tertiary. Total	5,323	...	...	...
Enrolment in total tertiary.	11,764	...	...	...
Gross enrolment ratio. ISCED 5 and 6. Female	8	...	...	...
Gross enrolment ratio. ISCED 5 and 6. Male	11	...	...	...
Gross enrolment ratio. ISCED 5 and 6. Total	10	...	...	...
Gender parity index for gross enrolment ratio. Tertiary	0.72	...	...	...
School life expectancy (years). Tertiary. Female	0.4	...	...	...
School life expectancy (years). Tertiary. Male	0.6	...	...	...
School life expectancy (years). Tertiary. Total	0.5	...	...	...
Teaching staff in total tertiary. Total	4,147	...	...	...

For the latest statistics visit:

http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=136&IF_Language=eng&BR_Topic=0

4.2 Forms of higher education

There are five institutions of higher learning in Guatemala, all located in the capital city. The most prominent of these is the Universidad de San Carlos (USC), the country's largest institution of higher education (and the largest in Central America) with an enrollment of over 60,000 students. As the only public university in Guatemala, USC offers a comprehensive list of degree options in business, education, the arts, medicine, law, agriculture, veterinary, and in other disciplines. The university also operates a number of satellite or complimentary campuses located throughout the country.

Private universities

The remainder of Guatemala's universities are private: the *Universidad del Valle de Guatemala*, the *Universidad Rafael Landivar*, the *University of Francis Marroquin*, the *University of Mariano Galvez*, and the *University of Galileo*, the country's youngest university. Many of the private universities in Guatemala are linked to the Roman Catholic Church (*la Universidad de Francis Marroquin* was established by an

Archbishop, for example), although the *la Universidad de Mariano Galvez* is a Protestant church-governed institution. All institutions offer a variety of degree and certificate programs in all areas of study, including arts and letters, business, medicine, law, engineering, and agriculture.

Admission

Admission to universities in Guatemala is based on applicants' holding of the *bachillerato* (equivalent to a high school diploma), a knowledge of Spanish, and, in the case of the private schools, a satisfactory grade on the appropriate *Examen de Admision* (entrance examination). Once enrolled, students must obtain a minimum grade of 51 percent to pass coursework; at some private institutions, a minimum grade of 61 percent is required. When students complete their programs of study, they are issued a diploma by Guatemala's Minister of Education, not by the individual institution. Students from other countries may enter Guatemala's universities provided they have credentials similar to the *bachillerato* and a knowledge of Spanish.

Different types of programs and stages

Students may complete many different types of programs at the university level. The first stage is known as the *licenciatura*. This is equivalent to a bachelor's degree in the United States. A student receives this credential after three to seven years of study, depending on the subject area: a technical certificate (*tecnico*) requires three years of study, a degree in Arts and Sciences requires four years; a degree in *ingeniero* (engineering), requires five to six years; and a degree in medicine requires seven years. Usually each degree is accompanied by some type of professional certification. Also as part of their mandatory curriculum, students must complete a seminar in Social Issues, which requires them to write about a significant problem facing Guatemalan society, such as the illiteracy rate. The school year lasts from January to October.

Master's degree

Beyond the *licenciatura* is the *maestrado* (master's degree), which requires two years of additional study and a thesis, and the *doctorado* (doctoral degree), which requires two years' study in addition to the time required for the *maestrado*. Doctoral students must also complete a thesis in one of the following areas: law, humanities, education, economics, or social sciences. To combat the illiteracy problem, each graduating university student must complete an internship which requires them to teach five Guatemalans how to read and write as part of his/her program of academic study.

Accreditation

Universities in Guatemala, both public and private, are granted a great deal of autonomy. Beyond the basic authorization to operate, the Council of Private Higher Education (CEPS) does not generally intervene in the operations of its member universities except to report a specific case of egregious negligence in terms of the quality of infrastructure, staff or the education being provided.

In Guatemala, as in many countries in Latin America, the lack of a tradition of quality assurance at the university level, the absence of adequate funding, and need for clear governance in higher education has muddled the development of a standard accreditation process or governing body. Despite of this, and in order to comply with their government mandate to oversee private higher education, CEPS has initiated the process of creating the Sistema Nacional de Acreditación de la Educación Superior or National System of Accreditation for Private Higher Education (SINADEPS). SINADEPS will work with the Universidad San Carlos (USAC) in an effort to accredit all of the institutions of private higher education in Guatemala and eventually to evaluate and recognize individual departments at each university. This process will require a great deal of cooperation between the private and public sectors, a development many experts hypothesize will be expedited by the future strengthening of regional cooperation amongst accrediting organizations.

For its part, the USAC has begun utilizing a quality assurance system of internal and external evaluation on a departmental basis – a process directed by the Central American regional accreditation agency SICEVAES (Central American System of Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education).

4.3 Conclusions

There are five institutions of higher learning in Guatemala, all located in the capital city. The Universidad de San Carlos, the only public university offers a comprehensive list of degree options in business, education, the arts, medicine, law, agriculture, veterinary, and in other disciplines.

Admission to universities in Guatemala is based on applicants' holding of the *bachillerato* (equivalent to a high school diploma), a knowledge of Spanish, and, in the case of the private schools, a satisfactory grade on the appropriate *Examen de Admision* (entrance examination).

Students may complete many different types of programs at the university level. The first stage is known as the *licenciatura*. This is equivalent to a bachelor's degree in the United States. Beyond the *licenciatura* is the *maestrado* (master's degree), which requires two years of additional study and a thesis, and the *doctorado* (doctoral degree), which requires two years' study in addition to the time required for the *maestrado*.

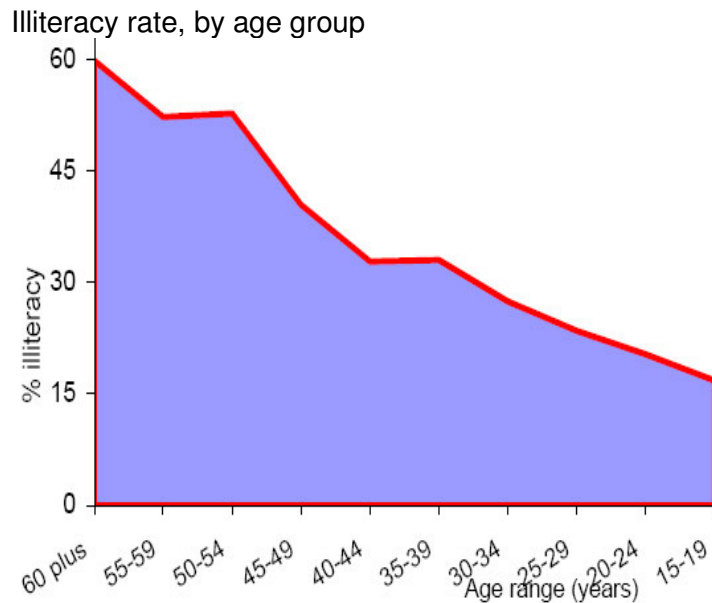
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5. Informal education and literacy

5.1 Literacy

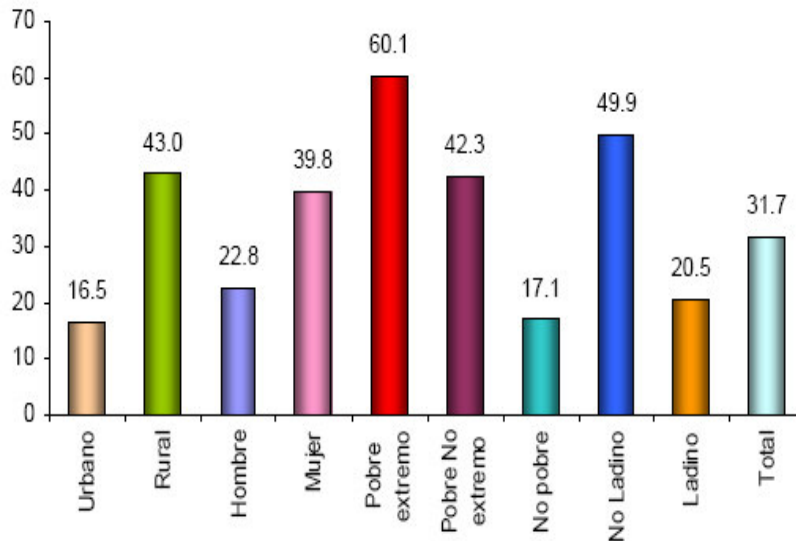
5.1.1 Literacy rates

An alternative way of assessing progress in literacy among the adult population is to analyse the proportions of people who are literate by five-year age group. The following chart shows that Guatemala has made substantial progress in reducing the illiteracy level among the youngest, confirming that the new generations have greater access to basic education.



Guatemala still has the highest rates of adult illiteracy in the whole of Central America. Using the most recent UNESCO survey available, it is estimated that 31.7% of the Guatemalan population aged 15 and over is illiterate, the worst affected being rural residents, women, the poorest households and the country's indigenous groups.

Illiteracy rate in different population groups, percentages



These large differences indicate that the State needs to design aggressive programmes that can significantly reduce these high illiteracy rates, using all the information available to target cost-effective interventions, especially considering the scale of the externalities that arise when illiteracy prevents youths and adults from communicating in writing. There is ample evidence of the numerous benefits accruing to the illiterate when they learn to read and write.

According to recent reports from MINEDUC, the National Literacy Committee (CONALFA), which meets the needs of the illiterate population by running literacy and post-literacy programmes in Spanish and 17 Maya languages with the involvement of governmental and non-governmental organizations, dealt with 223,997 people in 2005 of whom 120,669 were at the initial stage, equivalent to the first grade of primary school, 55,024 were at the first post-literacy stage, equivalent to the third year of primary school, and 48,304 were at the second stage, equivalent to the sixth year of primary school. According to CONALFA estimates, by late 2005 these measures had brought down the adult illiteracy rate to 25.19%.

5.1.2 The Guatemala Literacy Project

In 1989 a few educators from Guatemala and the United States began to work together as volunteers to improve literacy education in Guatemala. They were individuals who met each other and decided to work for change. They had no government sponsorship or agency grants, in fact, no funding at all. Early in their partnership they decided not to seek funding, but to remain a grassroots teacher-to-teacher partnership.

The Americans, led by Marcia Mondschein of Long Island, New York, were members of the Nassau NY Reading Council of the International Reading Association. The Guatemalan educators were from various universities and public schools. Together they created an international literacy project that has thrived for fifteen years, and continues to serve hundreds of Guatemalan teachers and children every year.

Here is a chronological overview of the Guatemala Literacy Project from 1989, when the Nassau Reading Council (NRC)/Guatemalan partnership began, to the present.

1989-ongoing

Groups of educators from the US volunteer to travel to Guatemala twice a year as workshop leaders. During each trip they, along with Guatemalan workshop leaders, provide several days of workshops for educators in Guatemala. The Guatemalan

educators are responsible for and arrange all workshops, including volunteer translators. In addition, a different group of Guatemalan educators visit Long Island, NY each year to attend professional conferences, visit local school districts and meet with teachers, students and administrators to exchange educational ideas and practices.

1991-1993

NRC worked with Guatemalan educators to form the Guatemalan Reading Council, which became the Guatemalan Reading Association, fully affiliated with the International Reading Association.

1991-ongoing

The GRA holds monthly workshops for educators throughout Guatemala. More than 300 educators voluntarily attend each month. Many Guatemalan educators who have participated in the Partnership have begun or returned to higher education programs and have attained degrees. Some have become teacher trainers throughout Latin America.

The National Reading Conference (NRC) donates mini-libraries (each consists of 150 new, high-quality children's books in Spanish) to Guatemalan public schools. The GRA distributes the libraries to schools whose teachers have consistently attended monthly GRA workshops. As of January 2004, more than 250 mini-libraries have been distributed. NRC raises the funds for mini-libraries by selling Guatemalan handicrafts at IRA national, state and local conferences. All profits are used for the purchase of books. The only expense paid before profit is the cost of the handicrafts.

1993-ongoing

Every two years the GRA and the NRC have sponsored an international literacy conference in Guatemala City. At each conference, 1500-2000 Guatemalan educators participate in workshops on the latest techniques and strategies in education. Presenters have traveled from Central and South America, Puerto Rico, New Zealand, and nine states in the US. The International Literacy Conference sponsored by the GRA and NRC in 1999 was the Latin American Regional Conference of the International Reading Association.

5.2 Conclusions

It is estimated that 31.7% of the Guatemalan population aged 15 and over is illiterate, the worst affected being rural residents, women, the poorest households and the country's indigenous groups.

In 1989 a few educators from Guatemala and the United States began to work together as volunteers to improve literacy education in Guatemala, this literacy project is still running.

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