



**REGIONAL PREPARATORY  
MEETING FOR THE FIRST  
SESSION OF THE 'UNESCO  
CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION  
DATA AND STATISTICS'**

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN  
OUTCOME DOCUMENT

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2023

**2024** CONFERENCE ON  
**EDUCATION DATA  
AND STATISTICS**

- **Date:** November 2 and 3, 2023
- Virtual format via Zoom
- **Attendees:**
  - 82 people on day 1
  - 47 people on day 2
- About 60% of the attendees came from Ministries of Education and Evaluation Agencies (Planning Directorate, Statistics Departments, and SDG Monitoring Offices, among others)
- About 30% came from National Institutes of Statistics.
- In total, government officials from **35 countries** attended at least one session<sup>1</sup>

## ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS (EMIS)

The session on administrative records in education took place on Thursday, November 2, from 11:00 to 13:00 (local time in Santiago de Chile). Among the emerging topics that stood out from the meeting, it is possible to mention two main areas: the need to generate methodological frameworks on how systems should operate to generate statistics aligned with international standards. Likewise, representatives from member states highlight complexities for EMIS to develop optimally, such as governance (decentralization and local burden), interoperability between institutions, and adaptability of EMIS to the diversity of the school population:

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<sup>1</sup> Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, Brazil, British Virgin Islands, Chile, Colombia, Commonwealth of Dominica, Costa Rica, Curaçao, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, St Kitts and Nevis, Suriname, Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Island, Uruguay, Venezuela.

- **Data Comparability and Standardization of Methodologies:** The difficulty in comparing data between different educational systems highlights the importance of standardizing methodologies. Comments from St Kitts and Nevis and Ecuador about the need for a dialogue on how to improve the comparability of student achievement levels underline this point. Belize supports the idea of international collaboration to improve data collection on teacher qualifications. Standardization would benefit the evaluation of educational policies and allow the transfer of successful practices between countries.
- **Complexity and Decentralization in Teacher Training Data Collection:** The collection of information on the continuous training of teachers presents significant challenges due to the decentralization of responsibility to territorial entities, as observed in Colombia. This generates heterogeneity in the quality and type of data available, making national consolidation difficult. In addition, there is an emphasis on the need to improve calculation and collection methodologies to align with international standards and ensure that the information is comparative between countries. Efforts to standardize these data would allow for better monitoring of teacher professional development and the effectiveness of the training received.
- **Data Interoperability and Legal Protection:** There is growing concern about the ability to share and cross-reference data between different educational institutions due to restrictions imposed by data protection laws, as noted by Ecuador. In Panama, there is also reluctance from private institutions in providing detailed data, which hinders the generation of reliable statistics. The challenge lies in finding a balance between the protection of individual privacy and the need for detailed data for effective educational policy formulation.
- **Administrative Burdens and EMIS Capacity Building:** Participants indicate that the administrative workload to feed EMIS systems is excessive, especially in educational centers with limited resources, as noted in El Salvador. This burden can compromise fundamental pedagogical activities. It is suggested that innovation in data capture and the strengthening of information systems through international support can alleviate this burden. In addition, St Kitts and Nevis requests references for systems that go beyond basic solutions, such as spreadsheets, seeking efficiency and security in data management.

- **Data Collection for Diverse Populations and Educational Costs:** The Dominican Republic highlights the need to develop specific instruments for collecting data on students with special educational needs, suggesting that current data systems may not be sufficiently inclusive or detailed. Additionally, Costa Rica raises the question of whether there is a standardized methodology to calculate the annual cost per university student, which is vital for efficient planning and resource allocation in higher education. These concerns point to the need for more sophisticated and adaptive EMIS systems that can address differences in educational needs and provide a complete picture of educational investment.

## HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS

The session took place from 14:00 to 16:00 on Thursday, November 2 (local time in Santiago de Chile). The emerging topics reflect a consensus on the need to improve the quality and coherence of educational information in household surveys. Consolidating and synthesizing the emerging themes from the session, we can organize them into four key areas:

- **Standardization and Analysis of Educational Data:** Emphasis on school attendance. The central theme mentioned by Member States refers to the standardization and analysis of educational data collected through household surveys. This theme focuses on the harmonization of concepts and methodologies to ensure comparability and coherence of data at the regional and international level. A significant group of countries such as the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Costa Rica mentioned that this issue applies especially to the collection of school attendance in household surveys, traditionally measured using the question "Do you attend an educational establishment?" These countries argue that it is essential to have common criteria in the definition and tracking of these phenomena, including sets of questions that could be adopted in different national contexts to assess factors such as school attendance and reasons for non-attendance, thus ensuring that the data collected are comparable among different countries.
  - **Understanding the reasons for non-attendance at school** is fundamental to addressing the underlying causes of school dropout. This involves capturing information about circumstances such as domestic work, caregiving responsibilities, economic barriers, among others. By standardizing how this information is

collected, countries can develop more effective policies based on reliable and comparable data.

- **Survey Structure:** To improve the quality of the information collected, the use of question models and decision trees is proposed. This involves structuring surveys in a way that guides the respondent through a logical process, minimizing ambiguity and maximizing the relevance of the information obtained.
- **Enrollment vs. Attendance:** It is important to conceptually distinguish between enrollment and actual attendance at classes. While enrollment may simply reflect registration in an educational institution, attendance indicates the active participation of the student and is therefore included in a reference period. This distinction is crucial for understanding the educational reality and for assessing the accessibility and utilization of the education provided.
- **Debate and Continuous Improvement:** The records kept by educational institutions should be part of the debate on what and how it is being measured, fostering closer collaboration between different statistical agencies and educational institutions.
- **Challenges and Limitations:** Finally, the debate should also recognize practical challenges such as the length of questionnaires and budgetary constraints, which can affect the depth and frequency of the data collected.
- **Preference for Administrative Records over Household Surveys:** A preference emerged for reinforcing administrative records rather than relying on household surveys to collect data on education, due to the perception that administrative records can offer greater accuracy and more faithfully reflect the educational reality of the country (mentions were made by Ecuador and Costa Rica in this regard).
- **Challenges in Measuring Non-Formal Education:** The need to develop a methodology or standards for classifying and measuring non-formal education was identified, recognizing the diversity and the lack of uniform recognition of these programs by educational authorities.
- **Complementarity of Tools and Technologies for Data Collection:** The importance of using emerging technologies and the complementarity of data collection tools to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the educational sector was highlighted, recognizing the

utility of combining administrative records with surveys and other indices to capture the multiple dimensions of the educational context.

## LEARNING ASSESSMENTS

The session took place on Friday, November 3, from 11 am to 1 pm local time in Chile, led by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics with the intervention of the LLECE coordinator, Carlos Henríquez. The emerging topics reflect a consensus on the importance of standardization, validation, and cultural relevance of learning assessments, in addition to highlighting the urgency of developing assessment systems that serve not only for diagnostics and certifications but also support political decision-making and the achievement of the SDGs.

- **Integration of Local and Regional Assessments with International Standards:** The need to harmonize local and regional assessments with international standards was a recurring theme. Nuevo León, representing Mexico, underscored its unique approach in joining ERCE, differentiating from national assessments and partially aligning with international frameworks such as PISA. This concern for coherence and comparability was echoed in the contributions from Costa Rica and Trinidad and Tobago, who discussed the need to integrate national assessments with regional and international standards to ensure a coherent framework that can support educational policies.
- **Challenges in Assessment and Monitoring of Learning in Tertiary Education and Migrations:** Belize articulated concerns about assessment in tertiary education, noting the lack of a system to monitor learning at that level. The Bahamas face similar challenges and are also affected by the difficulty of integrating international assessments into their systems. Panama highlighted the importance of standardizing instruments to collect data on migrant populations, a phenomenon that pressures educational systems and is also of interest to Ecuador, seeking to adapt administrative records to these realities.
- **Calibration and Validation of Assessment Data:** The calibration and validation of assessment data was a challenge identified by the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) and seconded by Guatemala, where the complexity of communicating national assessment results in the international context was underscored. Trinidad and Tobago added to this

dialogue the need to develop regional assessment strategies that recognize the cultural particularities of the Caribbean.

- **Use of Assessments for Public Policies and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** The dialogue extended to the role of assessments in public policy formulation and their contribution to the SDGs. Guatemala and the CXC emphasized the usefulness of assessments for accountability and for progress towards the SDGs. Mexico complemented this vision, advocating for the inclusion of socio-emotional skills and curricular parameters that guide national policies.
- **Tools and Structures for Standardized Assessments:** The implementation of tools and structures for standardized assessments was a key point. The Bahamas discussed the use of EMIS and the need for international standards to guide national assessment systems. UNESCO reaffirmed that LLECE instruments are available to help countries in their assessment processes, while Trinidad and Tobago suggested mapping the Caribbean's regional assessments that could lead to a series of standardized tests for the region.