

CENTRAL AMERICAN EDUCATION POLICY 2013-2030

Revised and updated version in accordance with the Incheon Declaration and its Action Framework Education 2030 “Towards an inclusive and equitable quality education and life-long learning for everyone”, approved by the Council of Ministers, in their XXX session of October 4 of 2017.

The update was performed based on the version Approved in the XLIII Ordinary Meeting of Heads of State and of Government of the member countries of the Central American Integration System (SICA) held in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, on June 27 of 2014.

This policy issues from the Council of Ministers of Education of the member countries of the Central American Integration System, based on Resolution #1 of the 16th Meeting of Ministers of Education of the CECC/SICA, held in San Salvador on December 1 and 2 of 2011, at the end of the effective term of the Regional Education Agenda 2009-2011.

After an important regional consultation process, it was approved in Guatemala City on December 7 of 2013, in the framework of the XIX Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Education of the CECC/SICA. Finally, it received the final approval in the XLIII Ordinary Meeting of Heads of State and of Government, on June 27 of 2014.

By mandate of the Council of Ministers, in their 35th Ordinary Meeting in the city of Tela, Honduras, on April 1 and 2 of 2016, the Central American Education Policy was reviewed in order to update it. This was done in accordance with the international commitments assumed by the countries of the region with the Sustainable Development Objectives, as well as with the Incheon Declaration, regarding Education 2030.

For this reason, the Central American Education Policy establishes its effective term up to the year 2030, establishing as intermediate stage the year 2021, which was the one originally indicated as the limit of effectiveness of the policy, in accordance with the goals previously outlined by the member countries of the SICA in the “Education Decalogue 2021”

CECC/SICA

What is the Central American Education Policy (PEC)?

The Central American Education Policy (PEC) is a set of guidelines to endow the eight member countries of the SICA with a general action framework on education matters, in accordance with the identified regional priorities.

This Policy responds to the need of bringing together the international commitments assumed by the countries in successive moments, summoned by different organizations. Previously, the Organization of American States (OAS), the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI), different United Nations entities and the Central American Education Decalogue 2021, had done this. Recently, and summarizing all of them, the Incheon Declaration and the Action Framework Education 2030, constitute a proposal for the future for Central America, with the purpose of attending to universal access and the permanency of their citizens in the education system, with equity and quality and promoting permanent learning opportunities for everyone. The Ministers of Education adhered to it when they committed to Sustainable Development Objective 4, according to the Resolution of the Sixty-ninth sessions period, approved by the UN General Assembly of September 1st of 2015¹.

The Ministers of the Region have signed, under the mentioned calls, various commitments that obligate the States, and it is necessary for the Central American Education Policy to integrate not only the international assumptions, but also the social and educational demands of the countries, as well as the lessons learned in the last two decades. It is important to adapt these commitments and binding international agreements in accordance with the national educational policies, with a regional vision.

The PEC offers guidelines on the road to travel in order to achieve a renewed vision of the Central American education, based on the current situation of the countries, the gaps and regional asymmetries, taking advantage of the comparative advantages of each one of the m, the experiences and the lessons learned.

The PEC includes guidelines, objectives, goals and strategic actions in the medium term (2021) and the long term (2030). The year 2021 constitutes for the region the intermediate referent towards the achievement of the goals committed to for the year 2030. The commitments for advancing will be carried out through a regional strategy and action plan.

¹ A/RES/69/315 §59, page 18

The PEC is structured around three areas indicated by the Council of Ministers of Education of the SICA, where five main objectives are included for Education to fully achieve by 2030, which seek the convergence of the Regional Agenda (Education Decalogue 2021) with the 2030 Agenda. From these main objectives and their respective goals, specific strategic actions derive. The objectives, goals and strategic actions are aligned in such a way to guarantee the thematic accordance. The region seeks to focus its efforts in the access, equity, inclusion, quality and results of learning, within an approach of life-long learning.

The more specific elements for the implementation of the PEC will be developed, by assignment of the Council of Ministers, by the CECC/SICA, in coordination with the technical Vice-Ministers of the countries, in terms of a strategy and an action plan that includes the establishment of impact and performance indicators, the assignment of short and medium term responsibilities, budget calculation, the funding possibilities, among the main ones.

The PEC contents imply an established orientation towards the regional needs on educational matters and the adoption of concrete responsibilities in virtue of the national commitments with the institutions of the Central American Integration System (SICA) and its regulatory instruments. Those needs also arise from the analysis of the education indicators by the CECC/SICA, based on the information recorded by each Ministry of Education in the Regional Series of Education Indicators, which has allowed identifying the bottlenecks that generate continuity issues for the students in the school system.

The PEC objectives reflect the education priorities of the Central American region, which were recognized by means of a wide consultation in the region during the year 2012. The Action Framework “Towards an inclusive and equitable quality education and long-life learning for everyone” has ratified that those are the priority objectives and has advanced towards the establishment of international goals, to the achievement of which all the Ministers of the member countries of the SICA have committed internationally, channeling their own national goals towards those achievements.

The adjustment and update of the PEC were carried out based on the analysis of the documents of the Incheon Declaration and its Action Framework. The technical Vice-Ministers, in consultation with their national technical teams, contributed to that review, developing this version that was submitted, analyzed and approved by the Council of Ministers of the CECC/SICA in its session of *October 4 of 2017*.

The PEC offers great aggregate value to the education and social processes developed in the countries, mainly in the search for a harmonization of processes, in the update of the

conceptual frameworks and in the promotion of specific actions that guarantee the Central American integration based on Education.

Principles, basic concepts, objectives, goals and strategic actions of the PEC

PRINCIPLES

The principles on which the PEC is supported are the following:

- ✓ Education is a universal, fundamental human right and one enabling other rights. It is a public asset, and the State is the main guarantor of that right: ensuring that it is mandatory, free, with no discrimination and with equal opportunities (Convention of Children's Rights). So that *"no educational goal should be considered achieved unless it has been achieved for everyone.*
- ✓ Education constitutes an objective in itself of the Agenda for Sustainable Development (ODS 4), it is the cornerstone of development: *"To guarantee an inclusive and equitable quality education and promote permanent learning opportunities for everyone."* It thus constitutes a basic factor of that development in the context of which it should be permanently conceived and updated: *"The education systems should be pertinent and adapt to the labor markets, the technological advances, urbanization, migration, political instability, environmental degrading, the persistence of poverty, growing inequality, and the growing threats to peace and security"* (MA, 6)
- ✓ The quality of education is a process of multidimensional character that comprises: the respect of rights, the relevance and pertinence, equity, effectiveness and efficiency:
 - The respect of rights is achieved upon guaranteeing that everyone has access to a curricular offer oriented towards the same basic principles, independently of their ethnic origin or socio-economic condition, responding to the needs of access, continuity and permanency in the education system, of people and minority groups or in a vulnerable situation.
 - Relevance and pertinence respond to the purposes of education that represent the aspirations of society as a whole and not only of specific power groups. Pertinence ensures the development of competences necessary to participate in the different fields of human life, facing the

challenges of current society and the development of a life project in a community.

- Equity underlies the existence of resources and aid that each one needs to be in equal conditions to take advantage of education opportunities and exercise the right to education. It is about ensuring inclusive access, and success in teaching processes that respond to the learning needs of the students.
 - Effectiveness determines the degree in which the actions respond in concrete legal terms to a quality education for the entire population; and efficiency accounts for the degree in which the material efforts made for making the right a quality education real, be adequately acknowledged and reciprocated.
- ✓ The two dimensions of equity: impartiality that implies that the social and personal circumstances are not an obstacle to carry out the educational potential; and the inclusion referred to guaranteeing a basic minimum standard for everyone. This implies that the efforts are focused on those less favored.
 - ✓ Gender equality, which is inextricably bound to the right to education for everyone. Achieving this requires a focus on rights that ensures that children not only are able to access and complete education cycles, but that they acquire the same competences in education and through it.
 - ✓ Teacher centeredness in the school educational processes and in the achievement of quality in the education centers.
 - ✓ Accountability as a demand from society, based on national systems of comprehensive follow-up and assessment that are the bases for the formulating policies and the education systems management. In the regional plane, the strengthening of the Regional Series of Education Indicators, with the main feedback for the development of regular reports on the achievements of objectives and goals of the Central American Education Policy. This includes surveillance at the highest level in each country to keep the Series updated.

SOME BASIC CONCEPTS

The Central American Education Policy adopts the dimensions of education quality that were adopted by the Ministers of Education of Latin America and the Caribbean, in the Declaration of the II Inter-governmental Meeting of the Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean, Buenos Aires, March 29 and 30 of 2007.

Pertinent Learning: Learning pertinence refers back to the need that this one should be significant for people of different social and cultural contexts, and with different capabilities and interests, in such a way that they are able to appropriate the contents of culture, worldwide or local, and become subjects in society, developing their autonomy, self-government, their freedom and their own identity. Flexibility in the offer and pedagogy of diversity, are two characteristic notes of this concept.

Equity and equality: equity means the democratization in the access and the appropriation of knowledge. It exists when any person may receive the necessary support to learn with excellence, and when the results of learning do not reproduce the original inequalities of the students. Equal opportunities in the access to knowledge requires sufficient institutions and education programs, accessible to everyone, both from the physical as well as economic point of view.

Effectiveness and efficiency: are two central concerns of public action in the field of education, which indicate in what measure objectives are achieved and if the resources assigned to this task are used adequately. Effectiveness implies analyzing in what measure we are able to or not guarantee, in terms of goals, the principles of equity, relevance and pertinence of education. Efficiency refers to how public action assigns to education the necessary resources and if it distributes and uses adequately.

Education with a gender approach: is exercised by the education systems that take measures to end with attitudes, social and cultural practices and prejudices based on gender and discrimination. The education establishments and other learning contexts that take into account gender matters, eliminate discrimination and violence based on gender to guarantee that the teaching and learning are of identical benefit for children and youths of both sexes, and are vigilant to end with gender stereotypes and promote equality between men and women.

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The Central American Education Policy (PEC) endows the member countries of the SICA with a guiding framework on education matters, which supports the efforts of integration of the region that mobilize the regional energies towards the achievement of the objectives and goals committed to by everyone before the international community.

CONVERGENCE OF THE PEC WITH THE INTERNATIONAL AGENDAS

The objectives of the Central American Education Policy (PEC) reflect the explicit convergence with the objectives and goals of the international agendas, following the recommendation of the III Meeting of the Inter-governmental Committee Table of the Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean (PRELAC), held in Mexico City, on January 29 and 30 of 2013. These agendas have been endorsed by the Ministers of Education subscribing commitments with:

- The eight Millennium Objectives established in the Millennium Summit, summoned by the United Nations in the year 2000.
- The six fundamental objectives of Education for Everyone (EPT-its acronym in Spanish) agreed to in the World Forum on Education of the year 2000, summoned by UNESCO.
- The five strategic focuses of the Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean (PRELAC), approved by the Ministers of Education in 2002.
- The guidelines issued for the CECC/SICA in the Education Decalogue 2021 (ED 2021), endorsed by the XXXI Ordinary Meeting of Heads of State and of Government of the Countries of the Central American Integration System (SICA) in 2007
- The “Education Goals 2021: the education we want for the Bicentennial generation” (ME 2021) agreed in 2008 in the XVIII Ibero-American Conference of Ministers of Education.
- The Lima Declaration (October 2014) of the Ministers of Education of Latin America and the Caribbean, who, upon making a balance of Education for Everyone (EPT-its acronym in Spanish) in Latin America and the Caribbean, pointed out the pending challenges as from 2015 and renewed the commitments of the countries to achieve equity, quality and inclusion, life-long inclusive and equitable learning for everyone, skills and competences for life and work, education for sustainable development, quality of education, governance and financing, in preparation towards the World Forum 2015.
- The Incheon Declaration (ID) for Education 2030 approved on May 21 of 2015, which presents a new vision of education for the next 15 years. As well as its “Action Framework: Towards an inclusive and equitable quality education and life-long learning for everyone” (AF) in which the goals committed to by the signing countries are expressed.

The three areas pointed out by the Council of Ministers of Education of the SICA, within a life-long learning approach, coincide with all the commitments of the countries in the Incheon Declaration and which are:

- Access and permanency in the school system,
- The quality of education and the learning results
- Inclusion and equity

The five large objectives for the education of the region are included in those areas.

The convergence of the PEC with the international agendas is evidenced pointing out to which of those commitments corresponds each one of its objectives.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To guarantee an inclusive and equitable quality education and promote permanent learning opportunities for everyone.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

1. Every child between the ages of 0 and 3 years-old of the member countries of the SICA will receive initial attention and education in the framework of the diverse attention modalities the countries of this region have, focused on the essential and irreplaceable actions of the family.

Goal 1.1

- By 2021, ensure that between 60 and 80% of the children who have access to various types of attention and development services during their early childhood, fulfill an initial education program standardized by the Ministries of Education.
- From here to 2030, ensure that all the children who have access to various types of attention and development services during their early childhood, fulfill an initial education program standardized by the Ministries of Education. (SDGs Goal 4.2)

2. Every child from the SICA member countries will complete a full cycle of free schooling of, at least, 9 mandatory years, with quality learning achievements, as a result of a continuous education process, and that all the non-schooled children and youth have access to a quality education, through different modalities

Goal 2.1

- By 2021, oversee that 80% of the girls and 90% of the boys have access to quality services on matters of assistance and development in early childhood and preschool teaching, with the purpose that they are ready for primary teaching (SDG4 Goal 4.2)
- By 2030, ensure that all the children have access to assistance and development services in early childhood and quality preschool education, with the purpose that they are ready for primary teaching.

Goal 2.2

- By 2021, oversee that between 85% and 90% of the children have free, equitable and quality primary schooling (1st to 6th grades) and initial secondary schooling (7th to 9th grades) that produces pertinent and effective learning results.
- By 2030, ensure that all the children conclude primary schooling (1st to 6th grades) and initial secondary schooling (7th to 9th grades), which should be free, equitable and of quality, that produces pertinent and effective learning results. (SDG4 Goal 4.1)

3. The two-year post-basic education will be a strategic education extension to offer the adolescents of the member countries of the SICA both extending their academic training as well as the knowledge and skills related with employment and dignified survival of the person and family.

Goal 3.1

- By 2021, oversee that between 60% and 80% of adolescents have full secondary education, free, equitable and of quality that produces pertinent and effective learning results.
- By 2030, ensure that all the adolescents have full secondary education, free, equitable and of quality that produces pertinent and effective learning results. (SDG4 Goal 4.1)

Goal 3.2

- By 2021, ensure access in equal conditions for between 30 % and 40% of men and women to quality technical, professional training (ODS Goal 4.3)

- By 2030, ensure equal access to between 40 and 60% of all men and women who concluded secondary education to quality technical, professional higher training. (SDG4 Goal 4.3)

Goal 3.3

- By 2021, guarantee that 75 % of the young people (15-25 years-old) and between 75 and 85 % of adults, both men and women, have reading, writing and arithmetic competences
- By 2030, ensure that all the young people and at least 90% of adults, both men as well as women, are literate and have elementary arithmetic notions. (SDG4 Goal 4.6)

Goal 3.4

- By 2021, increase by 50% the number of young people (15-25 years-old) and adults who have the necessary competences, particularly technical and professional, to access employment, decent work and entrepreneurship.
- By 2030, increase by 50% the number of young people (15-25 years-old) and adults who have the necessary competences, particularly technical and professional, to access employment, decent work and entrepreneurship. (SDG5 Goal 4.4)

4. The education systems of the member countries of the SICA will reduce and seek to eliminate the disparities and inequalities among the students due to gender, social origin, age, income level, special needs, religion or ethnic group.

Goal 4.1

- By 2021, eliminate by 75% the gender disparities in education and guarantee access in equal conditions to all levels of teaching and professional training, especially for disabled people, indigenous populations and children in vulnerable situations
- By 2030, eliminate the disparities of gender in education and guarantee access in equal conditions to all levels of teaching and professional training, especially for disabled people, indigenous populations and children in vulnerable situations. (SDG4 Goal 4.5)

5. The governments of the member countries of the SICA will favor a significant improvement in the processes of recruitment, training, update and accreditation of educators, for all education levels.

Goal 5.1

- By 2021, have proven instruments and mechanisms to ensure quality in the performance of professionally updated teachers.
- By 2030, all the teachers of all the education levels of the system comply with the quality requirements regarding their training and continues update. (SDG4 Goal 4.c²).

6. The education systems of the SICA member countries on all levels will adopt an extended concept of quality that includes theoretical-practical learning for a sustainable human development, the values and attitudes for the exercise of citizenship and the permanent construction of a democratic and peace culture, as well as the answer to the emerging social needs in the region.

Goal 6.1

- By 2021, ensure that the specific education policies and curricular guidelines that adopt knowledge and practices of an education for sustainable development, the adoption of sustainable life styles, human rights, gender equality, the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, world citizenship and the valuation of cultural diversity, among other means, are in effect in all the countries.
- By 2030, ensure that all the students acquire theoretical and practical knowledge necessary to promote sustainable development, among other things through education for sustainable development and sustainable life styles, human rights, gender equality, the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, world citizenship and the valuation of cultural diversity and the contribution to the culture of sustainable development. (SDG4 Goal 4.7)

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

For the achievement of objective 1:

1. Strengthen the coordination with other sectors – in the framework of comprehensive and inclusive policies – that carry out national programs of child development, and the investment in the education budget to extend the initial education of the population under 3-years old, especially for the most vulnerable sectors and ensure for them, at least, early education opportunities, especially through the actions of both parents.
2. Strengthen the institutional capacities in the structure and training of the personnel of the ministries of Education to identify the different modalities of attention that the specialized sectors of the State offer to the children population and exert governance duties on the pedagogical proposal which the specialized research recommends for the initial period of life.

For the achievement of objective 2: about a full schooling cycle

3. Strengthen the investment to extend the pre-school education of the 4-6-year-old population, especially to the more vulnerable sectors and ensure for them, at least, two years of quality, free and mandatory pre-school education.
4. Design strategies and finance their application to remove the factors associated with school exclusion, guaranteeing the access and permanency of all the children and adolescents in a full and continuous education cycle of at least 9 years of basic general education, mandatory and free, until their successful culmination with pertinent learning results.
5. Promote flexible and diverse education modalities (according to their age) to offer opportunities in language, mathematical, scientific and technological training, to the population over 15 years-old, who dropped out of school at some time, in the framework of a life-long education, offering pertinent educational opportunities.
6. Adopt intensive and sustained programs with adequate funding, to reduce the high illiteracy rates in reading, writing and mathematics, which still prevail in some areas of the region, as the sustainable human development of the member countries of the SICA demands.
7. Develop the necessary modifications in the formal education systems of the region, to offer flexible learning routes, in the framework of promoting life-long quality learning opportunities, as well as the acknowledgement, validation and

accreditation of knowledge, skills and competences acquired through informal and non-formal education.

For the achievement of objective 3: about post-basic education

8. Improve the strategic investment for the equitable access to post-basic quality education, of two or three years, in its different modalities, particularly in technical/professional education, with a comprehensive training linked to personal and family well-being, work and the capacity of entrepreneurship, the competences to continue life-long quality learning and a responsible practice of citizen life.

For the achievement of objective 4: about eliminating differences

9. Monitor and assess the duly established indicators about equal education opportunities for all the children and adolescents, to adopt, based on evidence, pertinent measures that reduce the gaps in the results of learning obtained, and the disparities in the access to education linked with the socio-economic conditions, special needs, geographical origin, gender, linguistic and/or cultural group.
10. Establish express policies coordinated among the countries to respect the right to education for the Central American migrant population in aspects such as: certification, accreditation, homologation and/or recognition.

For the achievement of objective 5: about the teaching profession

11. Create the conditions for social acknowledgement and economic incentives for the career as a professional teacher, which are capable of attracting and retaining the most talented and motivated teachers.
12. Analyze and assess periodically the quality of the existing offer of initial teacher training and apply the necessary reforms to ensure that the initial teacher training is of a higher level and that meets quality features adjusted to the needs of the education systems in transformation processes.
13. Promote the professional development of the in-service teachers as a national need and demand, through an extensive offer of updating processes and high quality and pertinent training.

For the achievement of objective 6: about an extended concept of quality

14. Provide an adequate learning infrastructure (physical, technological, scientific, artistic, and playful) that configures flexible, accessible, healthy and safe spaces, in accordance with the education demands of the population.
15. Incorporate into and/or strengthen the curricular design and development of the national study programs and in the training and updating processes of teachers, directors and other education personnel: the ethical principles for the exercise of a responsible citizenship and respect of human rights; the sustainable development topics (including among others the comprehensive management of disaster risk, environmental protection, adaptation and mitigation of climate change); peaceful coexistence; the prevention of violence, delinquency, harassment and abuse in all of its manifestations.

CROSS-CUTTING COMPONENTS

The fifteen strategic lines contemplate, in each one of them, the following cross-cutting components: the participation of the parents and of the communities, the gender approach, information and communication technologies, and the ethical values (ethics and citizenship).

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Central American Education Policy adheres to the commitment of the international community expressed in the Action Framework of Education 2030 of identifying indicators adapted to the national and regional realities. The General Secretariat of the CECC/SICA will arbitrate the measures so that the region and the countries have indicators that allow estimating the achievement of the goals and for the Regional Series of Education Indicators to become the monitoring instrument and the basis for developing international reports to which the countries have committed. For this, it will seek the counsel of the specialized international organizations.

The General Secretariat of the CECC/SICA will have the responsibility of coordinating the actions of the countries in order to progressively prepare a Follow-up Report of the Education in the Member Countries of the SICA²⁰, at the end of the period of validity of the Central American Education Policy, according to the recommendations formulated for the development of the Follow-Up Report of Education in the World, established in the Action Framework of Education 2030.