

Interview with Magaly Robalino Campos

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We interviewed the education specialist of the Regional Office for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, Education Sector Coordinator of the UNESCO Office in Quito, Representative for Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela, Director of the UNESCO Office in Lima and Representative of UNESCO in Peru, Dr. Magaly Robalino Campos.



PhD in Education by the Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil; Master in Leadership and Educational Development from the Central University of Ecuador and Specialist in Management and Evaluation of Social Projects from the San Francisco University of Quito.

She has been a consultant in international organizations and ministries of education in the region. She is a guest professor in graduate programs at several universities in Latin America. She was a member of the National Education Council of Ecuador, Counselor of the Education Committee of the Parliament of Ecuador, Director of the National Center for Social and Educational Research in Ecuador, Director of the Time to Educate Magazine.

She was the Coordinator in Ecuador of the ESTRADO and member of the GESTRADO (Study Group on Teaching) of the Federal University of Minas Gerais.

She has worked at UNESCO since 2003, where she has been an education specialist at the Regional Office for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2008, she was responsible for the coordination of the Education Sector of the UNESCO Office in Quito, representation for Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela. She is currently the director of the UNESCO Office in Lima and the UNESCO representative in Peru.

Her areas of interest include education policies, teacher development and evaluation, working conditions, education and information and communication technologies, among others.

1) Good morning Dr. Magaly, thank you for accepting to be our researcher interviewed in this issue of Conexão Ciência magazine. I would like to know, from your cosmopolitan perspective in Latin America and from the work with UNESCO, what you think about the moment of education in the continent.

Education in Latin America refers to Basic Education (12 years of schooling) according to the available information, shows significant overall progress and at the same time major challenges and pending tasks.

In conceptual terms, it should be noted that the recognition of education as a fundamental human right that must be guaranteed by the States is a great leap forward. Nowadays, education is valued as one of the essential axes to promote human development, the exercise of citizenship, participation in the construction of models of life with equality and social justice, the sustainability of the planet, etc. This is a substantive advance because until few decades ago, education was not a priority on public policy agendas and the economic resources allocated to this sector were considered an expense rather than an investment in the development of countries.

In Latin America, the most important achievements, among others, are: budget increase, access to primary education, gender parity, infrastructure improvement, elimination of access barriers for sectors in diminished economic conditions, recognition of the value of teachers' work, etc. However, there are still pending tasks to ensure, in addition to access, the permanence of students in school, completion of relevant studies and the quality learning for all.

On the other hand, the continuity of studies in secondary and university education is a huge challenge. In several countries, schooling rates in the upper and lower reaches do not reach the desired levels and present high rates of school dropout, repetition and delay in school, particularly in the population in situations of social inequality. Likewise, the importance of teachers' work does not translate into integrated and sustained policies to increase their prestige, working conditions and social recognition.

In this sense, the Education Monitoring Report, coordinated by UNESCO (2017), warns of the seriousness of the educational situation of the population in contexts of poverty, violence and vulnerability, and points out that educational disparities are still very good due to socioeconomic, ethnic, local residence, type of school, etc.

Among the strategic issues to be addressed, according to the Report's recommendations, the following stand out: early childhood training; reevaluation of the teaching profession; strategies to extend the years of schooling; quality assurance,

equity and inclusion in education; transformation and access to higher education; and non-formal and second-chance learning programs. This is to mention some very specific issues as part of a larger agenda and as part of ongoing mobilization to keep the right to education fully effective in policies, budgets, legislation, etc.

2) The same question about research related to education.

Educational research in Latin America should address at least four major interrelated problem areas: 1) policies to promote educational research; 2) economic resources to finance and disseminate research; 3) use of information and knowledge derived from research as a support for decision making in public policies; and, 4) researchers training.

There are few countries in which there are institutionalized spaces to promote research, and unfortunately in some of them, those spaces are at risk or tend to weaken. A large part of the production of knowledge in education comes from universities, specialized centers and, in some cases, international cooperation organizations. Educational research budgets are scarce; the information generated by the research does not have ample channels for its dissemination and is not always a contribution to the formulation of policies, strategies or educational programs and, frequently, its circulation is restricted to communities of specialists. In addition, research continues to be a weak issue in the training and practice of education professionals and, in general, in the life of educational systems.

3) What could be done in relation to the increase of the research in the field of education in Latin America and in relation to the increase of scientific publications?

The view of research in education as a central aspect in the life of educational systems is imperative because, as stated in the previous question, information and knowledge should be a key input for all educational policy actors: ministries, educational organizations, universities, research centers, and schools.

The teachers themselves should take a look at their work and the results they produce, that go beyond the everyday, that explore what lies behind what appears at first sight and can learn from their reflection to generate new knowledge and improve their work permanently. Here, clearly, there is a task of initial training and in-service training for the development of teaching capacities for research and systematization of knowledge.

Therefore, a first (non-unique) task is related to the positioning of the fundamental value of the knowledge generated by the research to make the best decisions at all levels. At the same time, it is necessary that researchers, universities and research centers understand the usefulness of their work for public

policy, for social life. Therefore, we must continue to bring the knowledge produced by research on the life of society and communities in the school's life.

Likewise, collective action is required to achieve, maintain, or achieve the increased budget for research in the ministries of education, government agencies involved, universities, development projects, etc.

In addition, the training of researchers and attention to inclusion in the training and practice of educators is another great subject that requires attention, both to revalue research and to qualify the work of education professionals and to contribute to generate knowledge of practice and knowledge of teachers. The involvement of teacher training institutions is crucial in this regard.

Finally, in order for education research to reach its social function, it is necessary to publish, disseminate, promote its use and also for this subject, it is necessary to obtain allocations of resources that ensure the circulation of knowledge, at the same time, it is necessary to find the maximum relevant to specialized production to reach different audiences, and even encourage publishers to publish and promote works resulting from educational research.

4) How could a Latin American researcher and / or an educator collaborate with UNESCO projects? Is it possible to submit research projects in the field of education to UNESCO? Are there any financing lines or other forms of support?

The UNESCO was created by the states of the world to work for peace, eradication of poverty and intercultural dialogue through education, science, culture and communication. UNESCO is a specialized technical assistance agency in the areas of its mandate and works through the generation of knowledge, the promotion of alliances, the strengthening of public policies and the strengthening of technical capacities. As can be seen, knowledge generation is an explicit strategy associated with research, and the other three strategies also depend on research.

UNESCO promotes studies, diagnoses, production of global, regional and national reports and has partnerships with universities and research centers. In addition, it relies on the work of researchers from different countries of the world. All these actions are developed within the work plans at the global level and in each country and the opportunity is to identify issues of common interest that can stimulate alliances and joint actions.

Some UNESCO offices are very much in line with their work plans, promote studies with universities or call for research funds. For example, at the moment, the Peruvian Bureau of UNESCO supports the Ministry of Education and the Education Council in Peru to promote competitive funds for further research in teaching jobs. Each office has

details, however, in all regions, universities are important partners for UNESCO's work.

It is also important to mention that UNESCO has a very interesting number called UNESCO Chairs that are created in universities and research centers to promote studies, publications and events in relation to an issue that is within UNESCO's mandate. To have a UNESCO Chair, you must follow a process described on the web page and this is a great opportunity to forge alliances exactly for the momentum of the investigation.

5) There is relatively little interchange between Brazilian researchers and other Latin American countries. In your opinion, what are the main reasons and what can be done to change this situation?

For a long time, Latin American universities have been attentive to relations with institutions in other continents and regions, especially in the northern hemisphere. In recent years, however, important efforts have been made to promote internationalization processes and openness to alliances between the universities of the continent itself.

In fact, there are university networks that work very well; exchange of programs between teachers, among students; graduate double degree programs; participation in academic events; projects and publications. Several interesting examples can be mentioned, such as studies, publications and events promoted by Rede ROAD; the Latin American PhD program based at UFMG; studies carried out by initiatives such as PASEM (Education Support Program in Mercosur); the incorporation of professionals from other countries to projects promoted

Brazilian universities, the same case of this Journal is a good example.

Of course, we must continue and expand these efforts by increasing contacts and joint actions among researchers, universities and centers in the different Latin American countries, of course, as we continue our relations with other regions of the world.

6) What is the reason, given your intense schedule of educator and researcher, did you accept to be a part of the Editorial Board of Conexão Ciência Journal?

I accept with a great pleasure the invitation to be part of the Editorial Board of Conexão Ciência Journal because it is an opportunity to strengthen the relationship with the field of research and dissemination of knowledge in Brazil through a Journal that makes an important effort to maintain its rigor and contribution to science. Also, because it is an opportunity to know and learn from the work of the researchers that are published in this Journal and to expand my view about Brazil and the fields that are being investigated.

7) **I would like you to send an encouraging message to researchers and students, especially Brazilians, about the need to research and publish about the field of education in Latin America.**

I would like to tell the students and researchers that Latin America is a region with great opportunities and challenges. It is a region that has a great field to learn and contribute to research and, in particular, to education, to achieve equality, inclusion and social justice, those dreams / goals for which social movements, communities continue to institutions, organizations, professionals and people who believe that there is a future of well-being and happiness for the entire population.

Researchers have a great role to play if the knowledge they generate spreads and contributes to the building of new societies, to improve the lives of the population and in this case, if research also helps the twin countries and peoples and to recognize themselves as researchers who bring from their cultures, identities and institutions to create ties and common meanings with other worlds that are part of this same territory called Latin America.

Opportunities are needed to partner with other universities, promoting joint research, developing shared programs and initiatives in this region that has a long tradition of networking.

Thank you for your support, attention and collaboration for the publication of the Journal, on behalf of the UNIFOR / MG (Centro Universitário de Formiga / MG) and the Conexão Ciência Journal.

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Co-editor of Conexão Ciência Journal.