

# Ed.Gov.- Dialogues

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## Ed.Gov.-Dialogue No. 5

hosted by the Educational Governance Research Team  
of the Startchancen Programme

featuring research on Educational Governance,  
System Change & Equity in Education

including a keynote lecture and an open dialogue  
directed at researchers and a broader community

**TUESDAY, JULY 21<sup>st</sup>, 2026**  
4:00 - 5:30 PM (UTC+2 Berlin)

**Prof. em. Sylvia Schmelkes**

from Iberoamerican University, Mexico City, MX

**Educational Policy, Governance & Practice in Latin America:  
Cause or Remedy for Educational Inequity?**

Please register [here](#) until July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026





## Ed.Gov.-Dialogue No. 5

### Educational Policy, Governance and Practice in Latin America: Cause or Remedy for Educational Inequity?

Latin America is the most unequal region in the world, and this socioeconomic disparity is clearly reflected in education. Although access to basic education has steadily improved over recent decades — with primary education now reaching near-universal coverage — significant gaps persist in educational trajectories and actual learning outcomes. These gaps separate advantaged students from disadvantaged ones, Indigenous from non-Indigenous, and rural from urban populations. The causes are complex, and structural factors are undoubtedly the most powerful. However, educational policy has largely failed to prevent education from reproducing rather than reducing these inequalities. It is therefore important to analyze why educational policy has been unable to mitigate the impact of external factors—such as poverty, geographic location, and cultural background—on educational achievement. At the same time, it is worthwhile to examine policies that have successfully improved educational equity, along with the implementation challenges they have faced.

Indigenous and intercultural education deserves special attention, given that Latin America is home to approximately 50 million Indigenous people, and Indigenous students consistently experience the shortest educational trajectories and learn significantly less than their non-Indigenous peers. Historically, educational policy has disregarded linguistic and cultural diversity, favoring the assimilation of Indigenous populations into mainstream society while simultaneously providing inferior resources and less attention to Indigenous schools. This analysis will examine the governance of education targeting Indigenous populations, as well as intercultural policies for society as a whole (including anti-racist education). It will also address implementation difficulties, and successful policy examples will complete the picture. Across all cases, teachers are key to the success of educational policies, because policy must reflect in practice. The extent to which teachers are involved and adequately trained to implement change is a cross-cutting issue in any analysis of educational policies for equity.

In terms of policy recommendations, the presentation stresses the need for educational governance to reclaim education's potential as a tool for greater social justice. It also highlights that, in culturally diverse societies, educational governance must foster and manage cultural diversity while embracing epistemic justice. Equity must become a priority in educational policy, with special attention given to both equity and relevance in learning.

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