

48th International Conference on Education (CIE)

**Inclusive Education:
the road to the future**

*National Report on the Development
of Education in Paraguay*

Asunción, October 2008

Presentation

The National Report on the Development of Education in Paraguay to be presented at the Forty-eighth Meeting of the International Conference on Education (CIE), to be carried out in Geneva, Switzerland, from November 25th to 28th 2008, introduces the subject "Inclusive Education: the road to the future." The document contains an updated revision of the development of education in Paraguay, emphasizing the main innovations introduced in the Educational System since the last national report in 2004.

In the last five years (2004-2008), the improvement in learning of students has been the main issue in educational interventions and work has been done in the development of pedagogical innovations, of new educational systems for professionals in education, measurement of the academic performance and critical thought of the students, of free endowment of resources for learning, besides the accreditation mechanisms of the educational Institutions in charge of the academic education of educators as well as their certification.

Likewise, inclusive education is part of the effective educational policies. In that sense, the national public policies do not discriminate against any citizen by any reason whatsoever, guaranteeing equal opportunity and the access to all public services for the population in general.

The strategies of integration and inclusion helped to increase the participation of the students in this field, being one of the main strategies the support classrooms established in educational centers of basic school education, as well as within the native Paraguayan population and people with special educational needs.

Nevertheless, even though important advances in the inclusion of the population have occurred, especially in those in a vulnerable situation, there are still challenges to face. To do so, the Ministry of Education and Culture is developing joint affirmative actions with society in order to improve the education in Paraguay.

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Table of Content

1. The educational system facing the challenges of the 21st Century: an overview.	4
1.1. Main reforms and innovations introduced to the Educational System.....	4
a. Organization, structure and management of the Educational Ssystem.....	4
b. Purpose and objectives of Education at different levels	4
c. Curricular Policies, Content of Education and Strategies for Teaching and Learning.....	5
d. Legal Framework of Education	5
e. Objectives of the Current Educational Reform	6
1.2. Main policies, achievements and experiences acquired	6
a. Access to Education	6
b. Results from Learning	10
c. Academic education, recruitment, working conditions, transfers and professional development of the educators during their service.....	11
1.3 The role of the educational system in the fight against poverty, as well as other forms of social and cultural exclusion	13
2. Inclusive Education.....	13
2.1. Approach, scope and content	14
2.2 Public policies	17
2.3 Systems, interfaces and transitions	18
2.4 Students and Educators.....	18

1. The educational system front to the challenges of Century XXI: an Overview

1.1. Main reforms and innovations introduced to the Educational System

a. Organization, structure and management of the Educational System

a.1. Organization

Starting on August 15, 2008, through the Decree N° 50/08, the new organizational chart of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) was approved, being the Cabinet of the MEC according to the following dependencies: a) General secretary; b) Technical Cabinet of the Minister; c) General Direction of the Cabinet; d) General Direction of Legal Affairs; e) General Direction of Internal Audit; f) General Direction of Projects and Cooperation; g) General Direction of Administration and Finances (Art. 2).

The Vice-ministry of Education is unfolded in two Vice-ministries. One of the ones created is the Vice-ministry of Education for Educational Management, that will be in charge of the following instances: a) General Direction of Initial and Basic School Education; b) General Direction of Middle Education; c) General Direction of Higher Education; d) General Direction of Permanent Education; e) General Direction of Native Paraguayan School Education; f) General Direction of Inclusive Education (Art. 3).

Also, the Vice-ministry of Education for Educational Development is created to be in charge of the following instances: a) General Direction of Curriculum, Evaluation and Orientation; b) General Direction of Evaluation of the Career in Education; c) General Direction of Strengthening the Educational Process; e) General Direction of Information, Monitoring, Planning and Educational Quality; f) General Direction of Science and Educational Innovation; g) General Direction of Social Management and Equal Education (Art. 4).

The General Direction of Management of the Human Talent will depend on the Vice-ministry of Education for Educational Management jointly with the Vice-ministry of Education for Educational Development, according to the areas of responsibility (Art. 5).

On the other hand, the MEC will have a Strategic Council integrated by the Vice-ministers, the Secretary General, the General Director of Administration and Finances and whoever the Minister appoints as a Consultant and Analyst for strategic decision making (Art. 6).

Also, the Vice-ministry of Education for Educational Management and the Vice-ministry of Education for Educational Development, to fulfillment their functions, will be supported by a Council of General Directors who will have a consultant function (Art. 7).

The Organizational chart is enclosed to this document.

a.2. Structure

About the National Educational System (SEN);

The structure of the SEN sent in the Report N° 47 continues to be in force (2004).

a.3. The management of the educational system

The administration of the National Educational System (SEN) is in charge of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), through the Vice-ministry of Education for the Educational Development and the Vice-ministry of Education for Educational Management. Their offices manage, execute and control the implementation of educational policies in educational institutions from the private and public sectors.

As an instance of support to the management of the MEC, the National Council of Education and Culture (CONEC) is responsible to propose educational and cultural policies, reform the SEN and to follow up their implementation.

b. Purpose and objectives of education at different levels

A reference was made regarding Middle Education in the previous Report (N° 47). In the present Report (N° 48) it was added what is related to Initial Education and Basic Education, as well as Permanent Education.

b.1 Purpose and objectives of Initial Education and Basic Education

The Initial Education is oriented towards the creation of proper conditions for the harmonic development of the potential of children between 0 to 5 years old, in all affective, social, intellectual and psycho-motor aspects, considering the social-linguistic and cultural diversity and the special educational needs.

Basic Education seeks to satisfy the basic learning needs of children, young people and adults, developing knowledge, abilities, aptitudes and values that they need in order to solve their daily problems, to continue learning according to their needs and interests and to improve their quality of life.

c. Curricular policies, Content of Education and Strategies for Teaching and Learning

It was made reference to the curricular design of Basic School Education, Middle Education and the Education of Young people and Adults. (It stands what it was sent in the previous Report N° 47.)

d. Legal Framework of Education

d.1. Legal Basis

In addition to the National Constitution (1992) and the General Law of Education (1.264/98), other standards that support the management of the SEN

are the By-laws of the Educator (Law N° 1725/01), the Law N° 2072/03 that creates the National Agency of Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education (2072/03 ANEAES) and the Resolution of the Minister N° 10.711/00 that creates the Departmental Councils of Education.

e. Objectives of the Current Educational Reform

It is still in force the information sent in the previous Report N° 47 (Year 2004.)

1.2. Main policies, achievements and experiences acquired

a. Access to the education

Initial Education and Basic School Education

The Initial Education, especially Pre-school, has become one of the main issues in the national educational agenda of the last decade. The National Plan of Initial Education 2002-2012 emphasizes the improvement of the quality of education, the equality in the access to education and the participation of the family and the community. Within the framework of this Plan, it is implemented the Program of Improvement of Initial Education and Pre-school 2004 –2008 that aims mainly at the universalization of Pre-school.

In order to guarantee the integral education of children and younger than six years old, the following actions were developed: I) The adjustment of the standard frame of initial education, II) elaboration of a new curricular design for the initial level and the academic education of educators, III) opening of new educational spaces, IV) distribution of educational materials to children, and V) promotion of spaces for the participation of the family and the community, among other issues.

Within the framework of the Program “Escuela Viva” or “Live School” in the Initial Education, **a pilot Project of inclusive education for children, belonging to the early childhood, with disabilities was developed** as one of the components of the Project "Advances and challenges on disabilities in the Regional South Cone."

The objectives of the project are:

- To support the formulation of public policies on disabilities and social protection in countries belonging to the South Cone
- To deepen the knowledge on the social-economic impact of the disability (Chile and Uruguay).
- To elaborate the strategic guidelines for the construction of a policy of integral care for children with disabilities (Paraguay).
- To deepen the debate on disability and to support the governments in making decisions regarding this issue (countries of the Region).

As a strategy of consideration to diversity, in the Initial Education, in the year 2005 projects were launched regarding the care of early children were implemented by means of funds to be awarded, and whose objective is to validate strategies of care for children belonging to early childhood. Initiatives

that aim at the integral development of children from 0 to 5 years old were supported. These projects are within the framework carried out of an inter-institutional agreement between the MEC and the Secretary of Children and Adolescents, and they are implemented through NGO's. Up to date, 49 projects of care to early childhood were awarded in the modalities of: a) direct care for children, b) training for parents and educators. It is worth to point out that the projects of care for children with disabilities are prioritized, as well as regarding projects for the Paraguayan native population.

On the other hand, in Basic School Education (EEB) the expansion of the educational supply, mainly in far-away rural areas, make easier the access to education for the populations settled in such areas, and so decreasing the inequality between urban and rural areas. In the period 2002-2006 one slight decrease in school registration has been recorded (0.5%); this decrease could be explained by the economic situation of the households, considering that out of the total population that does not attend educational institutions more than 50% does not attend school for economic reasons.

In the EEB the low level of efficiency continues (high percentage of students repeating the school year and drop outs), which can be verified by the rate of graduation rate 1998-2006 (9 years of schooling) that is 42%. This means that out of 100 students enrolled in the First grade in 1998, 42 of them finished the Ninth grade in year 2006.

With the purpose of decreasing the inequality, the Program Live School Hekokatúva I has been implemented and it culminated in the year 2007. This program had as one of the line of action to improve learning in Rural Schools, Native Paraguayan Schools and Urban Schools of high risk, by means of the participative implementation of a bilingual, integral and intercultural pedagogical model. The intervention of the program benefited 1000 rural schools and 150 urban schools.

Also, the Program Active School **Mitã Irú** has been implemented, and it has the following objectives: I) to actively bind the community to the educational process of their sons and daughters, II) to offer learning alternatives to the schools with the multi-grade modality, III) to make differentiated and quality offers available to the children of marginal rural and urban areas, and IV) to recover the prime role of educators, students and family in the educational management. This program is implemented in 238 educational institutions from 5 geographic departments in the country.

On the other hand, the project Double Schooling promotes a major permanence of the children in schools in order to obtain a better performance and to decrease the rates of repeating school years and school drop-outs.

Middle Education

Since the year 2002, the Educational Reform has been implemented at this educational level. Within the period 2002-2004 important advances in the matter of enrollment have occurred, nevertheless, one of the main limitations of the access to Middle Education are the high levels of differentiation that are

recorded at the EEB; therefore, it is in Middle Education where the inequality has become serious, in terms of adolescents who have access, stay and finish this educational level.

The equality policy considers strategies of access and retention, proposing the necessary actions to avoid dropping out the school and to complete Middle Education with the competitions demanded in the Higher Academic world, in the social, political, economic and labor areas.

Within this frame, punctual strategies have been implemented directed toward the most vulnerable population, and they are:

- *Sustainable program of Scholarships*, directed to young people whose families are facing an unfavorable economic situation. Scholarships to more than 2000 students have been awarded between the years 2004 to 2008. It is possible to emphasize that this program has been evaluated and it was considered a successful strategy of retention and graduation.
- *Open Average education (EMA)*, with the purpose to insert into the educational system to young people who wish to conclude their studies of Middle School level through an alternative program, it is directed towards young people in school age, who, due to labor reasons, family reasons or any other impediment, have difficulties to attend classes regularly (in an experimental stage). The experimental implementation was made in 20 educational institutions in 8 departments of the country.
- *Opening of educational institutions and qualification of courses of Middle Level*. Middle Education promotes the opening and rating of educational institutions in areas of increasing demographic rate to make room for students into the educational system.

It is important to point out that at the present time moment a coordinated work has begun with other Departments and representatives of the Organization “Frente Paraguayo” for the Rights of the Handicapped, to work on the proposal of public policies regarding disabilities, by means of the Discussion Table of Paraguayan Educational Inclusion, conformed by representatives of the different Departments from the MEC and representatives from each disability, whose mission is to articulate strategic actions, so that young people with different capacities may have access to education at different educational levels.

Permanent Education

With the objective to offer the adult population a greater opportunity to improve their standard of living, extending their possibilities of reading and writing through different educational offers, the National Plan of Literacy 2004-2008 was implemented, whose goal was the certification of illiteracy = 0 in Paraguay by the year 2008. We must emphasize that according to the data coming from the Survey of Households 2007, 5.4% of the population with 15 years of age and older is illiterate, that is to say, they did not pass second grade.

Actions are developed that look to guarantee the access and the permanence of the population of young and adults by implementing the following strategies: I) diversification of educational offers of literacy, II) extension of the coverage of the 1st Cycle of the Bilingual Basic Education of Young people and Adults, III) articulation between formal and non-formal programs, IV) coordination of

actions of inter-sector and inter-institutional nature to support the literacy campaign, V) consideration to the population with higher vulnerability through punctual programs (urban and rural settlements, native Paraguayans and farmers), among others.

Also, the Center of **Resources for Permanent Education that works as Integral Centers of Family Services** and, at the present time they can be considered the new paradigm of Permanent Education in Paraguay.

The Centers are engaged in rendering specific services to the families of the participants through the different Programs that are developed in the Centers. From these Centers, **Integral Care Centers for Children** were created to take care of the sons and daughters of the mothers who attend the Centers of Resources; a follow up is made about the educational insertion of people who obtain their freedom after a sentence served under confinement contexts; **the Classrooms Mentors** offer people with literacy education initial professional training courses through virtual platforms. The labor qualification is one of the curricular components of the program of the EJA and proposes the Initial Professional Training from the 2nd to the 4th Cycle. At the present time, the Project Vulcano Paraguay, which is the fortification of the labor component in the Educational Centers of Young people and Adults, with the purpose of making possible the access of the participants to the labor world.

It is also encouraged, in addition, signing agreements with the Departmental Coordination from Educational Supervisions, with the Departmental Governments, the Municipalities, the companies and factories from the public or private sector, with worker's unions, police and military organizations and church representatives, among others, for the qualification of Educational Centers of Young people and Adults, Literacy Programs for specific groups, extension of Literacy Programs to Programs of Basic Education and Middle Education for Adults.

b. Results from learning

In the search for the improvement of quality and equality in learning, diverse actions were developed, such as: I) adjustments to the Pre-school curricula, Basic School Education, Middle Education and Academic Education of Educators, II) implementation of new systems of evaluation of the process of teaching-learning at all educational levels, III) textbooks and didactic materials to students and educators from official educational institutions.

In **Initial Education**, a longitudinal evaluation of the pre-school education has begun to measure their effects on children development and their impact in the performance of children during the 1st Cycle of the EEB.

The partial results of this evaluation contributed large and systematic information on the situation of pre-school education and the educational surroundings (home-pre-school) in which the children develop, allowing redirecting the strategies of intervention to improve the quality of the education at this level. The longitudinal evaluation ends the present year.

In **Basic School Education** new measuring instruments of the academic performance were elaborated, considering the new approach based on competencies. In general, the national test results applied by the National System of Evaluation of the Educational Process (SNEPE) to the students of 3rd grade and 6th grade in the year 2004 show a low performance of the students in the areas of evaluation; also, they show negligible differences between the achievement level of the students from urban and rural institutions. The average performance of the students from official institutions is lower than the average performance of students from private institutions and subsidized ones.

In **Middle Education** a new model of analysis of results has been developed (RASCH) that will allow comparisons with later results. The first measurement made using this model was in year 2006 in the 2nd year of Middle Education that serves as base line for future comparisons.

With this model of analysis, at the level 0, the percentage of students who have not obtained the minimum competencies required for Middle Education is located. The measurements made to students from the 2nd year revealed that the results are concentrated at the levels 1 and 2 in the evaluated areas.

It was applied, for the first time, a test to measure the level of critical thought of the students from Middle Education, with the intention to determine the dimension of the components that must be strengthened throughout the different academic areas for the improvement of the pedagogical approach.

c. Academic Education, recruitment, working conditions, transfers and professional development of the educators during their service.

Since the year 2003 a new concept of academic education has been designed from a perspective of continuous education that includes the initial education and training during service. A new model of academic education for educators, initial and in service, was designed with emphasis at the level of initial education and at the level of Middle education, with the approach of development by competency. Since year 2006 the experimental implementation of the new curricular design for the initial academic education of the teaching staff for the initial level began. Another task framed inside this concept is the elaboration of the curricular design of the initial and in service academic education of the educator for the 3rd cycle of Basic School Education; in addition, it started the experimental implementation of the new curricular design for the initial academic education of the teaching staff for the level of Middle education as well as the implementation of the continuous educational training. At the moment, the tendency of the Institutes of Education of Educators (IFE) is to prioritize the attention in the academic education, proposing academic axes depending on the demand.

In the year the 2007, MEC approved the model of evaluation of the quality of the IFDs (licensing), with the purpose of promoting the transformation of the Institutes of Education of Educators (IFE) in centers of academic excellence and, at the same time, to answer to the educational challenges and commitment taken within the MERCOSUR.

The mechanism of accreditation of the IFD differentiates two stages in the evaluation: licensing and accreditation. The licensing is the evaluation of the compliance with the essential criteria of quality in the academic education of Educators for the educational system. Its application corresponds to the MEC and there is a resolution for its experimental application. On the other hand, the accreditation will be applied to those institutions that successfully approved the licensing and, therefore, they are in conditions to submit themselves to the process of accreditation managed by the National Agency of Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education (ANEAES).

The MEC has signed an agreement of cooperation with the ANEAES for the application of the licensing stage. The accreditation mechanism was elaborated jointly with the participation of representatives of all the parties involved.

As far as the academic education, it is important to emphasize that a model of certification for the professional educator has been developed that looks to help the professional development of the educator, with the objective to support the continuous improvement in educational quality, verifying by means of systematic performance evaluations if the educators have the necessary competencies to provide an effective education.

The proposed mechanism incorporates effective processes in the MEC for the hiring of educational personnel and it also adds the process of evaluation of educational performance. It was elaborated jointly with the participation of representatives of the parties involved and it is ready for its experimental application.

It is important to emphasize that since the year 2005 started the implementation of a public procedure for selecting and hiring educators. In this frame, the departmental and institutional commissions of recruitment have been created. This mechanism is applied only to educational institutions under MEC administration.

As far as the working conditions, the Law N° 1725/01 By-laws of the Educator, establishes that the Ministry of Education and Culture will be able to contract, in special cases, temporary educators, or the MEC may cover the vacancies or the creation of new positions, in the meantime there is a process of selection of personnel by merit only. These contracts may not exceed the period term of a year, and they cannot be renewed or extended.

The professional educator from the public sector will acquire stability in the position as the winner of a public selection contest based on merits, after a test period of a year, and to such effect, the educator will subscribe a contract with the Ministry of Education and Culture or the competent authority that governs this period term.

As far as the benefits, the Law itself establishes the right to retirement, after the proper contribution, Christmas bonus and salary levels for educators from the public sector. The salary level includes five academic degrees and it can be made every five years.

Also, article 36 of the By-laws of the Educator establishes, among other things, that the educators may: I) receive their salaries in the days of recess established in the school calendar, holidays and suspension of classes due to force majeure, out of the hands of the educator, II) the right to access to a paid leave of absence, maternity leave, at all the levels and educational modalities, six weeks before and six weeks after the childbirth; III) the right to a paid sick leave, after proper verification, up to thirty days with pay and for a year without pay. having the right of re-incorporation; IV) for one time only during their whole career, to obtain a leave due to particular reasons for up to three months, without pay; V) to access to special leave permits to use scholarships, programs of cultural exchange or specific educational functions, being regulated by the Ministry of Education and Culture; VI) permission for breast feeding; VII) to obtain a family bonus of five percent per each children born during the teaching career, up to a maximum of five children.

1,3 The role of the educational system in the fight against poverty, as well as other forms of social and cultural exclusion

With the purpose to mitigate the effects of poverty on school attendance, the Ministry of Education and Culture is implementing compensatory actions directed towards students who come from poor homes, and they are: I) basic school materials to students from Pre-school and the EEB from institutions under MEC management, located in poor areas, II) scholarships to students from the Middle level of limited resources, III) nutritional complement to students of certain Institutions.

2. Inclusive Education

2.1. Approach, scope and contained

It is considered that an education is inclusive when all children from a certain community learn together regardless their personal, social or cultural conditions, including those who show a disability. It implies the modification of the educational structure and resources to adapt to the users following the criteria of fairness not of equality.

The present vision is based on a process that is developed and it is based on the principle that all people are equal in right and dignity, thus they all must be respected and valued, as a basic condition of respect and guaranteeing all human rights. It is not simply a philosophical principle, but an attitude within the framework of an inclusive society.

As far as the most important challenges to assure the educational and social inclusion, it is the achievement of favorable conditions as much at the institutional level, as at the level of national policy.

At the institutional level

- That the children, young people and adults with disabilities be educated in the institutions to which they would attend if they did not have a disability whatsoever.
- That the spaces, programs and materials be accessible for them.
- That the bond between peers / classmates without special educational needs be promoted and valued.
- To decrease the attitudes barriers, physical and communicational, to assure the effective bond among diverse educational agents.
- For the students with these conditions be able, under diverse contexts, to receive not only support and technical facilities to assure the availability but, in addition, the support and the emotional care from their families, so that they can develop their capacity of acceptance and promotion of rights in relation to their sons and daughters.

At the National Policy Level

The development of inclusive schools will only be possible if there is a "clear political bet" within the legal frame that establishes rights and responsibilities and the provision of the necessary resources.

The inclusive education has to be a policy of the MEC, as a whole, because it implies a transformation in GENERAL EDUCATION and not only in the Education of People with Special Educational Needs associated to conditions of disabilities.

It is important that the legislation of general character considers the inclusion and pays attention to **the diversity as a central axis** and develops, if necessary, specific rules that will assure the access and the proper care of a certain groups of students: children with special educational needs (NEE) associated to a disability, immigrant children, farmers, street children, etc.

At the moment, there is a proposal of a normative that regulates the school inclusion of students with disabilities, a document that must be subject to a thorough analysis and validation by the educational community in general.

Normative Frame of Inclusive Education

Within the legislation in force of Paraguay, the concepts of Inclusive Education and Educational Integration are included within other more generic concepts. The national public policy does not discriminate against any citizen for any cause, guaranteeing equal opportunities and the access to all public services to the population in general.

The legal frame on which the inclusive education is based is:

- The National Constitution
- The General Law of Education
- The Code of Children and Adolescents

1.1 National Constitution: Article Nº 58º: Of the rights of the exceptional people

It must be guaranteed the health care, education, recreation and the professional training to all exceptional people in order to help them achieve a complete social integration. The Government must organize a policy of prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and integration of the physical, psychological and sensorial handicapped people, to whom the Government will provide the special care they require. The exercise of their rights that this Constitution grants will be recognized to all the inhabitants of the Republic, in equality of opportunities, in order to compensate their disadvantages.

1.2 General law of Education – Chapter IV

Article 80º: The National Government, by means of the National Educational System will guarantee the basic education of:

- People with individual educational characteristics significantly different from their peers, and
- People with individual educational characteristics significantly different from their peers, and people with special educational needs: mentally challenged, with learning disabilities, with behavior problems, language problems, and others.

Article 81º: This educational modality will be oriented towards the development of the individual based on their potential for the acquisition of abilities that allow them to achieve their personal accomplishment and their active incorporation to society. As much as possible it will be made in an integrated way in the regular educational institutions.

Article 82º: The special content of the programs of these services and their pedagogical technical direction, as well as the system of evaluation and promotion will be approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Article 83º: The educational personnel of this educational modality must have specialized training.

Article 84º: The National Government will establish the policy for the prevention, the early diagnosis and the treatment of people with special needs, and it will also support the preparation of the family and the awareness of the community to favor the integration of the exceptional person.

Thus, in the General Law of Education it appears among the modalities of

educational care, everything related to the education of people with limitations or exceptional capacities will be in charge of the Direction of Special Education. The special educational needs are defined in the Law as personal characteristics of certain students, identified as people with special educational needs. The classification of the same ones includes the following categories: mentally endowed, with learning difficulties, behavioral problems, language difficulties and others. Although some of these terms are used to group the statistical data, in the glossary of the statistical information there are no definition of these categories. The term of curricular adaptations is in the curricular guidelines of the different levels from the educational system and makes reference to the adaptation that is necessary to make for an education pertinent to different social realities, linguistic, cultural, personal realities, etc.

1.3 Code of the Children and Adolescents. Law 1628

Article 22^o: Of the special educational needs. The child and the adolescent with physical, sensorial, intellectual or emotional disability, must have the right to receive proper care and attention, immediately and continuously, and they must consider early stimulation and specialized educational treatment, to help them in their rehabilitation and social and labor integration, that will allow them to be independent and to participate in the life of their community in conditions of dignity and equality. In no case the discrimination or the social isolation of the affected ones will be allowed.

Article 23^o: Of the mandatory care and rehabilitation. It is the obligation of the father, the mother, or the person in charge of the child or adolescent with special needs, to take him/her as many times as necessary to the Institutes qualified to provide him/her with the proper care and rehabilitation. The person who has any knowledge of the existence of a child or adolescent with special needs that is not receiving proper treatment must immediately inform of such case to the competent authorities.

1.4 Other Rules

The Law N^o 122/90: establishes the rights and privileges for the handicapped.

Resolution N^o 10/90: of the Department of Special Education (MEC) by which the Program of Educational Integration of Exceptional Persons is official.

Resolution N^o 01/ 81: by which the Registrar of Institutions, Organizations and Organizations for the Handicapped is created.

The Ministerial Release N^o 27/81: by which the implementation in elementary school is arranged, from the document of Special Education in Elementary Schools.

The Ministerial resolution N^o 2488/98 from the Ministry of Education and Culture: by which it is promoted the Department of Special Education to the Category of Direction of Special Education.

2.2 Public policies

The Inclusive Education is part of the national educational policies. The Direction of Special Education, in charge of the execution and administration of the national policies in the matter of special education, promotes and bases the care and attention for the people with special needs within the frame of inclusive education.

Even though in the legislation it is not excluded any citizen, the populations that have less access to such institutions are the rural one, the natives and the population with some disability. In the last years, the strategies of integration and inclusion helped to increase the participation of students from rural areas in special education, through integrated classrooms in educational centers of basic school education. Notwithstanding the above mentioned, it is very important to indicate that these measures have not been enough because there are not concrete measures of supporting the inclusion.

In relation to the organization measures to support the inclusion at different educational levels, we could mention the reconstruction of the services of special education, tending towards the inclusion, and dimensioning again the role of the centers of special education and their reorientation as centers of support to inclusion actions in the regular centers; nevertheless, the shortage of budget and resources to that effect makes the corresponding direction very difficult. The Project UNESCO has been developed on Inclusive Schools and Basic Programs in the Community that contributed the criteria for the adoption of measures that will contribute to strengthening of the educational policies of inclusion.

The relevant aspects of the present educational policies in the country lie mainly in establishing the concrete conditions to favor inclusive education. It means that the National Government must take care in public instance the factors such as: the philosophy of implementation, inclusion of this issue in the institutional educational project, special care as a subject or specialization in the academic education of educators, flexibility in curriculum and evaluation, model of curricular adaptations, accessibility.

2.3 Systems, interfaces and transitions

Even though efforts have been made to guarantee an inclusive education, there are barriers that have made very difficult an effective inclusion. The main barriers for the educational inclusion are:

Economic: Meager inclusion in the General Budget of Expenses of the Nation. It is only executed the budget corresponding to educational wages, there are no investments made in educational specialization, infrastructure, accessibility, among others.

Most of the people with disabilities belong to economical poor groups, and for that reason the access to education, which is not free, is difficult. In addition, the specialized services are concentrated in the capital of the country and the capital cities of certain Departments. There are still cultural barriers that

consider the people with disabilities as unproductive, and for this reason the families do not insist on their education.

Social: The discrimination practices are still very present, as much as in the social life as in the student life. There is very little incidence of the movements related to and for people with disabilities.

Educational: Insufficient initial education and training of the educator during service, lack of technical and educational teams in the interior of the country.

There are no standards regarding the curricular adaptations of the students with special educational needs in the regular school.

The investigation and development of innovating experiences are still in the early stages, as well as it is required the improvement of support services to educational institutions, curricular flexibility and conditions of access to curriculum, clear and punctual legislation, participation of the parents, and, once and for all, the active participation of the community.

As far as the types of approaches and measures adopted in a more general model in the educational systems, the Direction of Permanent Education developed to the Reform for the Young and Adults with the main objective to achieve effective learning opportunities for those who were abandoned by the system or who did not reach the proper level of qualification. The four modalities in this reform, implemented in educational centers at a national level and the great importance of the program of distant education, facilitated the professional formation of the young people and adults who participated on these courses.

An Institution that is also relevant, impelled by the previous Direction of Special Education, is the conformation of the Discussion Table on Inclusive Education – MEIP.

The MEC within the program PRODEPA 2, in which the project 4 is, improves the System of Education of Young people and Adults with Disabilities, and with the purpose of establishing a **National Plan of Education** is pushing through the Direction of Special Education the establishment of the normative frame under which the creation and operation of the **Discussion Table on Inclusive Education Paraguay** hereinafter ‘**MEIP**’, as an organizational, instrumental and technical unit, whose objective is to generate knowledge, to spread it and to promote the sensibility of the society and the public institutions of the country in favor of the education without discrimination, and the inclusion of all the People with disabilities.

The objective of the MEIP is to promote and to articulate strategic operations with governmental institutions and organizations of the society, to be implemented with the aim to encourage and to strengthen the educational inclusion.

Specific Objectives

- To generate spaces of analysis, discussion and permanent consultation regarding all aspects related to the educational inclusion.
- To be itself a Consultant Body on inclusion in the educational area.
- To promote inter-institutional and inter-sector consensus of the organizations involved that work in the area of disability and inclusion.
- To promote processes of sensitivity, reflection and conceptual unification of inclusive education and the role of each one of the parties involved and to be an Institutions of reference in the matter of educational inclusion.
- To monitor the actions developed in the country in the matter of inclusion to generalize the best experiences.

2.4 Students and Educators

New teaching and learning strategies have been developed in order to increase educational opportunities and to improve the quality of learning, among which we can highlight:

- Leo project, I think and I learn, for the improvement of the school performance in reading and writing, first cycle of the EEB.
- Project of Multilingual Intercultural Education, directed towards the native communities of Paraguay.
- Project for the incorporation of new information and communication technologies in the educational system.
- Project of Improvement of teaching Mathematics.

The national curricular proposal is a minimum established as the basis for all the educational institutions of the country. Other instances of decision, such as the geographical departments or the educational institutions, make decisions as far as the social-cultural or social-linguistic particularities from the region or the local educational community. Nevertheless, from the central level of the Ministry of Education and Culture the general directives for the selection and application of specific strategies of inclusion are given.

On the other hand, the capacity of reading is set forth from the Initial Education. In the Basic School Education, in the first cycle, 9 hours a week are proposed for the area of Communication, in the second cycle and the third cycle, 4 hours a week of Spanish and 4 hours a week of Guaraní are proposed. In Middle education, on the other hand, an average of nine hours a week for languages is established (including Spanish, Guaraní and foreign languages).

Regarding the academic education of educators, at the present time there are no offers of specialization courses in Special Education at the public level. In the private sector there are thematic modular courses on diverse disabilities, also courses of specializations in inclusive education focused to educators of regular education and Degrees in Phonoaudiology and Psychomotor.

In order to develop the services to support inclusion, higher education courses or specialization per area of disability is required.

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Structure of the National Educational System

The national Educational system includes the education of general regime (formal, non formal and reflection), the education of special regime and other modalities of Educational attention.

Education of General Regime

Formal Education: It is structured in three levels: the first level is the Initial Education and the Basic School Education; the second level, the Middle Education, and the third level correspond to Higher Education.

The Ministry of Education and Culture administers the education of the Initial and Basic, Middle and Higher non university Education of the official sector, and controls the activities of the private sector.

Public and private Universities and Higher Institutions of Education are part of the Educational system. Their operations are adapted to the dispositions in the pertinent legislation.

Levels of the Educational System – Formal Education

Initial education and Pre-school: The Initial Education and Pre-school are developed in three modalities: formal, non-formal and informal or reflection. It is structured in two stages: Stage 1: for children from birth up to 3 years old. Stage 2: for children from the 3 to 6 years old, it corresponds to this stage the Pre-kindergarten (3 years), Kindergarten (4 years) and Pre-school (5 years).

Basic School Education: Basic School Education is obligatory and free in public schools under official management. It includes nine grades and it is distributed among children from 6 to 14 years of age. This level is divided in three cycles of three years of duration each one: First cycle (1st, 2nd and 3rd grade), second cycle (4th, 5th and 6th grade) and third cycle (7th, 8th and 9th grade).

Middle Education: The Middle Education in their different modalities has the purpose of actively incorporate student to the social life and productive work, or their access to education of higher level. It lasts three years and it has only one cycle, made by three yearly courses. It consists on the following modalities: Scientific baccalaureate (with emphasis in Letters and Arts; with emphasis in Social Sciences; and with emphasis in Basic Sciences and Technology), and the modality of Technical Baccalaureate (Industrial, Agriculture and Services).

Professional Education: The MEC, by itself or in cooperation with other Ministries and institutions linked to the work training, will offer professional opportunities at different levels of qualification and specialization. The professional education is directed towards the education in areas related to the production of goods and services. In order to attend courses of professional education it is required to have concluded the 6 years of Basic School Education or its equivalence.

Higher Education: The Higher Education is developed through universities, institutes, and other institutions of professional education of the third level, technical institutes of educational education and institutes. It includes university and non-university degrees.

Academic Education for Educators: The present structure of the educational system includes courses of Teacher in Initial Education (it lasts 3 years), Teacher in Basic School Education -1st and 2nd cycle (it lasts 3 years), Teacher for Basic School Education -1st cycle -, by areas of specialty (it lasts 4 years) and Teacher for Middle

Education, by specialty areas (it lasts 3 years).

In addition courses of specialization in Education Sciences are developed, Orientation, Educational and Vocational, Evaluation and School Administration, among others, of 2 years, respectively. Other types of courses refer to higher courses for Educators, in order to offer a Teaching Degree to High School graduates in service and to university graduates who are teaching without having any pedagogical background.

Superior Technical Education: It offers non-university courses at the third level, of two and more years of duration, with elaborated modular curricular structure elaborated in order to comply with the demand and that have a strong accent in the tertiary sector of production (services) prevailing in the private sector.

University Education: The higher university level, as much as in the public sector as in the private sector, is independently managed by their respective Presidents of the Universities and Council. The objectives of the university education are the higher professional education, the research and the cultural extension, through sciences, letters and arts. The courses are distributed among the different schools, institutes and departments of the universities that operate in the capital as in rural areas.

Graduate Studies: The graduate studies education have the objective to deepen and to update cultural, educational, scientific, artistic and technological knowledge by means of the investigation, the critical reflection on the discipline and the exchange on the advances in specialties. The graduate studies courses offered include specialization, master degree and doctoral degrees.

Non-Formal Education

The non-formal education is referred to all those activities that in an organized and systematic way are outside the formal Educational system, and that were designed to address the concrete need of learning for a certain sector of the population, to complement or to extend academic or labor aspects in some situations as an alternative to improve their quality of life.

Reflection Education

The reflection education occurs through the means of information and social communication in the processes of permanent education and diffusion of the culture according to the principles and objectives of education, without prejudice of the freedom of the press and the freedom of expression. It is also called informal education.

The National Government will be in charge to stimulate and to encourage the participation of the means of information and social communication and will adopt mechanisms and stimuli that allow the proper and effective use of these means in education.

Education of Special Regime

The Education of Special Regime includes Artistic Education and Education in Foreign Languages and from other ethnic groups. The Artistic Education has the purpose of providing the students an artistic background that will guarantee their abilities and qualification in the fine arts.

Modalities of Educational Attention

General Basic Education and Permanent Education: The General Basic Education and Permanent Education wants to recognize and to encourage the know-how and the popular culture, and starting from the identification of the needs of the communities, to define projects of action and programs of literacy and basic education. It includes

Bilingual Basic Education for Young people and Adults, complying with the requirements to satisfy their need for learning of people of 15 years of age and older who were excluded from the Basic School Educational system. It includes 4 cycles and it is considered as an auxiliary education. It grants a certificate in basic school education.

Special Education: The Special Education is distributed among young children with sensorial deficiencies, mental retardation, disabilities, communication problems and learning difficulties, as well as to the mentally endowed. Its objective is to help the students to develop their potential and to qualify them for their insertion into society. In the denominated Classrooms of Support they attend children with learning problems.

Alternative Middle Education for Young people and Adults: This program is directed towards adults of 17 years of age and older who have dropped out from the Basic School Education System or their equivalent. It lasts four semesters (February to July / July to December). It grants the degree of scientific baccalaureate.

Distance Middle Education for Young people and Adults with emphasis in New Information and Communication Technologies: It is a modality at a distance directed to people who have not finished their studies corresponding to the Middle level with the purpose of accessing to a degree and to continue their studies in higher Education; it is organized in four scopes of knowledge (propedéutical and professionalizing), of modular character and with a pedagogical model based on the cross-sectional competencies (learn to undertake, learn to learn). Theoretical age of beginning: 17 years old. It grants the degree of Baccalaureate in Middle education.

Professional Education: The Professional Education is a modality that implements a special curriculum with approach to the formation of manual labor described for a specific kind of labor occupation.

Alpha Bilingual Prodepa Prepara It is a component of the Program of Bilingual Basic Education for Young people and Adults, of non-formal nature, a Program of Bilingual Literacy Guaraní-Spanish, designed to contribute with the decrease of the illiteracy rate based on the dialogical methodology (action-reflection-notion) directed to the most vulnerable sector of the population of the country, tending to the improvement of the instruction and the quality of life implemented in the interior of the country, settlements, natives and peri-urban communities. Theoretical age of beginning: 15 years old.

Teleclass: It is a methodological proposal of non-formal education through the active and participative audio-visual methodology and founded in the constant repetition of the proposed exercises, in an implicit way aims to the reflection, the experience, the rescue of the values and the self-esteem of the participants. Theoretical age of beginning: 15 years old.

Bi-literacy Guaraní - Spanish: It is a non-formal program of intercultural character for the simultaneous literacy in Guaraní-Spanish for bilingual illiterate adults from the interior of the country. It has the objective to contribute to the human development of women and men by means of the treatment of thematic axes linked to the production, protection of the environment, equality of gender, civil rights and community health with emphasis in reproductive health. Theoretical age of beginning: 15 years old.