

In search of business sustainability: Latin American education and the role of the private sector



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Preface

In search of business sustainability: Latin American education and the role of the private sector is an Economist Intelligence Unit report sponsored by FedEx Express, Latin America & Caribbean Division. The Economist Intelligence Unit's editorial team conducted the interviews and wrote the report. The findings and views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the sponsor. Kim Andreasson was the editor and project manager. Bob Johnstone was the author of the report. Richard Zoehrer was responsible for layout and design. Our thanks go out to all the interviewees for their time and insights.

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Introduction

Latin Americans have concluded that investing in public primary and secondary education is a high priority. Their economies are lagging behind many other parts of the world and there is a growing realisation that poor education performance is a major reason for this. If Latin American companies are to compete, they need to help raise education standards. “I’m not doing this because I’m a nice guy,” the chief executive officer (CEO) of one major Brazilian company told Alberto Rodriguez, lead education researcher at the World Bank recently. “I’m doing it because I’m going to go bankrupt if I don’t.”

Latin America was late in providing universal access to education. It was not until the late 1990s that most countries had succeeded in enrolling almost all their children in primary school. Conditional cash transfer programmes like Mexico’s Oportunidades and Brazil’s Bolsa Família pay poor families to ensure that their children attend class.

Having expanded the quantity of education, now the task is to improve the quality of it. However, policy makers in Latin America—as elsewhere—are finding that raising education standards is more complex than getting children into the classroom. “What exactly do you do to improve quality?” Mr Rodriguez asks. “Do you put in computers, buy books, train teachers, build more beautiful schools? Latin American countries are wrestling with that problem.”

Now that almost all children attend school, they need to study longer. Latin American children spend fewer years at school than their counterparts elsewhere. According to figures from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean



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Alberto Rodriguez, lead education researcher, World Bank

(ECLAC, a regional commission of the UN) and the OECD, the Latin American average is just over five years, compared with almost ten years in Asian countries. The most glaring deficiency is that students spend too little time at their desks. In Brazil, they average just four hours a day; in Mexico, four and a half, compared with six hours a day in countries with more effective school systems such as Singapore and South Korea.

Time in school relates directly to student achievement. According to a report by ECLAC and



UNESCO, 93% of Latin American children begin primary school, but only 62% continue to junior high and high school. Even fewer graduate. Nearly one-third of children in primary school repeat a year. This imposes an enormous burden on the region's chronically underfunded education systems.

International comparisons

The state education systems in Brazil and Mexico trail their counterparts in the developed world. However, they are also being outperformed by their peers in countries like Singapore and South Korea.

A survey conducted by the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2006 found that over 50% of Mexican 15-year-olds and 60% of Brazilian 15-year-olds are functionally illiterate.

If they cannot compete with overseas rivals for technologically sophisticated, value-adding jobs, then Mexican children are destined to become the "manual labourers of the future", ran the headline of an article commenting on the PISA results in *El Financiero*, a leading Mexican newspaper.

The comparison between Brazil and South Korea is particularly stark. In 1960 both countries had about the same level of income per head. Today, South Korea's income per head is about five times that of Brazil. South Korea is one of a group of countries that consistently tops the PISA rankings in maths, science, and reading abilities. The country recruits its primary school teachers from the top 5% of university graduates, making teaching a high-status profession.

In 2007 McKinsey, a consultancy, published a study based on the PISA results. Since the quality of teachers affects student performance more than anything else, it recommended that a successful education system must hire the best teachers. In Brazil and Mexico, teaching is regarded as a second-rate career where schools generally attract less-qualified graduates. Absenteeism by demoralised, low-paid teachers is not uncommon.

The consequences of under-educated workers for productivity are startling. According to a 2008 World Bank study entitled *Knowledge & Innovation for Competitiveness in Brazil*, using identical equipment and an equal number of high-school-educated employees, a production line in São Paulo, Brazil, produces just nine mobile phones per hour compared with 15 at a factory run by the same company in Pusan, South Korea.

Such results alarm corporations throughout Latin America. With globalisation, companies need a skilled workforce to compete against such countries as India and China. The productivity of their workers is below that of their Asian counterparts, too.

Responding to the skills deficit, Latin American business leaders have become more involved in state education. This differs markedly from the old-style, corporate-good-citizen approach that was based on donations. Instead, to improve educational outcomes,



some industrialists are putting together hands-on partnerships with the public sector. Others are forming groups to lobby the government. Such groups lay out the results that they expect from state education in terms of access and quality of student learning.

There have been some success stories. Escuela Nueva, for example, is a progressive model from Colombia that has improved the quality of education in rural schools across the region. Now, in order to lift standards, Escuela Nueva is forming partnerships with the private sector. Technology can also help. In countries like Guatemala, public-private partnerships are working to bring computers to state-school children.

Latin Americans know that they are going to have to run faster simply to keep pace with their rivals around the globe, let alone catch up. Nowhere is the struggle more apparent than in Latin America's two largest economies: Brazil and Mexico.



Brazil

One feature that distinguishes Brazil's education system from counterparts elsewhere in Latin America is that it is extremely decentralised. States and municipalities run the schools and pay the teachers. Aside from universities and a few technical colleges, the federal government does not own any schools.

A consequence of decentralisation is that school principals have discretion over how to spend public money. Some opt to join one of Brazil's huge school networks. These represent one of several avenues by which the private sector has been working to improve the quality of education in Brazil.

The networks were built by educational services companies like COC and Objetivo. In 2005 classrooms in seven of the ten highest-scoring school districts in the state of São Paulo were managed by COC. In such schools, teachers attend monthly training sessions and are constantly evaluated. Schools benefit from services like teacher training that would normally be provided by the government.

"The educational services companies are very good, very well organised and very entrepreneurial," says Mr Rodriguez, who specialises in Brazilian education. "If you look at their textbooks, they're very professional." In addition to publishing textbooks, the companies develop and test their own curriculums, and create Internet-based educational content for students. Schools that sign up to their networks receive access to all these materials. They also receive what amounts to a seal of quality through association with the service pro-



"Education at all levels is the number-one priority."

Brazilian president, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, World Economic Forum 2006.

vider's brand name. The networks have blossomed, the largest of them consisting of around 5,000 schools. "It's like a bomb that exploded," Mr Rodriguez says.

Forming partnerships

In addition to such conventional for-profit activities, another form of private-sector involvement in Brazilian education is public-private partnerships. Many large Brazilian companies—like construction firm, Tecnisa—have long provided on-site classrooms and teachers for their employees. So, firms have gone beyond remedial work to attack the



“Most important is support of the private sector from the political point of view.”

Maria Helena Guimarães de Castro, secretary of education, São Paulo

education problem at its root.

One promising example of a public-private partnership is Procentro, initiated in 2001 by Marcos Magalhães, president of electronics firm, Philips do Brasil. Mr Magalhães mobilised major Brazilian companies to support a network of 20 high-quality charter schools in 16 municipalities in his native Pernambuco, a state in north-east Brazil. Procentro’s principals hire their teachers based on demonstrated qualifications and classroom experience. The private sector pays for

laboratories, extra-curricular activities, and building repair. The state is still responsible for paying Procentro’s teachers; however they earn more than other state-school teachers, carry a full workload, receive professional development and are evaluated according to their students’ achievements.

Most of their students come from failing state middle schools. Procentro has an annual dropout rate of 2%, much lower than the 17% average for Pernambuco’s regular state schools. This model of private support for state education is likely to be adopted in other Brazilian states, especially in the poor neighbourhoods of metropolitan areas. For the moment, however, serving only 20 of Brazil’s 200,000 schools, Procentro is just a drop in the ocean.

Although significant, there is a limit to how

CASE STUDY Small Steps

Source: company websites

It is possible to find examples of successful collaborations between companies, foundations, and schools in Brazil and Mexico, although they are generally small-scale, and in some cases short-lived. Not surprisingly, given the global nature of their business, technology-driven US multinational firms like GE, HP, IBM, Intel and Microsoft are involved in many of these collaborations as part of their corporate social responsibility activities. Some collaborations are based on donations of cash, equipment and know-how, others on employees volunteering their time, still others on a combination of the two.

Brazil In 2006, funded by a US\$600,000 grant from the GE Foundation, GE volunteers teamed up with International Medical Services for Health (INMED) in a programme

called Children as Agents of Change. The project benefits nearly 2,000 students (ages four to 14) from local state schools who live near a GE consumer products manufacturing plant in Rio de Janeiro. It integrates topics such as hygiene, nutrition and preventive healthcare into the curriculum.

Under the aegis of its Reinventing Education programme, IBM is helping the government of the state of Rio de Janeiro to improve the professional development of teachers. More than 2,250 teachers and students throughout the country have participated since the programme began in 1999. Since 2004 the corporation has also been working with local partners, Instituto Nacional de Matemática Pura e Aplicada and Anima Mundi, on the development of new

content that can be used to teach students at lower grade levels.

In 2004 Microsoft donated US\$75,000 to the Bradesco Foundation, which provides free basic education to children and teenagers from disadvantaged communities. The foundation used the money to set up centres that provided training to nearly 20,000 individuals last year. In the second phase of the project, ten new centres—each with ten computers—will be established throughout the country. Microsoft is donating software and funds to be used for hardware and training.

In 2006, prior to beginning operations in Brazil, Starbucks partnered with local advocacy group, Todos pela Educação (Everyone for Education), in sponsoring a charity event to benefit Oswaldo Aranha high



much companies can do financially. However, there are also other ways that they can help. “Most important”, says Maria Helena Guimarães de Castro, “is the support of the private sector from the political point of view”. A former deputy-minister of education, Ms Guimarães is now secretary of education for São Paulo, Brazil’s most populous state and its economic powerhouse.

Refining advocacy

As an outstanding example of how the private sector can bring its influence to bear on politicians to promote improvement in the quality of education, she cites Todos pela Educação (everyone for education). This is an advocacy group formed in 2006 by a group of wealthy Brazilian industrialists. “These were people that in the 1970s, 1980s and even 1990s were nice to the poor,” Mr Rodriguez

explains. “They ran these big companies, and they would say, ‘we have to serve the people in our community, we’re going to build them a great school.’ Then they realised that it was not enough; they had a problem, which was that they were now competing in a world economy and they just didn’t have the skills.”

Todos pela Educação holds high-level meetings at which its members hammer out expectations from the state education system in terms of student learning, access and equity. “They are very noisy about it,” Mr Rodriguez says, “they organise media events where they hold the minister of education and state secretaries accountable for the results of the Brazilian education system”.

Most vocal among the industrialists is Jorge Gerdau, chief executive officer (CEO) and president of Gerdau, a fast-growing steelmaker with opera-

school in São Paulo. The school, which has 1,600 students, was selected because of its excellent standards. Funds raised at the event were matched by Starbucks and used to help rebuild the school library.

Mexico The GE Foundation is partnering with Junior Achievement Mexico to implement education programmes in seven schools that are intended to help children develop the attitudes and values of an entrepreneur. The partnership is a collaborative approach that links students, teachers and GE volunteers, who teach the programmes. The volunteers reinforce the in-class efforts of educators by sharing their own, real-world experience with the disadvantaged children.

In 2003 IBM Mexico and the state of Hidalgo launched a partnership designed

to improve the professional development of teachers. The initial phase of the project

focused on improving the standards-based instruction of primary and secondary school teachers of Spanish, biology, history, science and mathematics. The partnership connects to several other IBM Mexico initiatives, including the e-Mexico initiative, which provides for community digital centres throughout the country.

In 2000 Microsoft Mexico and the Unión de Empresarios para la Tecnología in Educación (UNETE), a not-for-profit organisation, launched the Aula Móvil (mobile classroom) initiative, which uses a bus equipped with technology to provide computers and Internet access as well as information technology (IT)



training for children, parents and teachers in 500 rural and remote state school communities

throughout the country. Microsoft donated US\$1.4m worth of software. Funding in 2006 supported the purchase and equipping of a second remote learning centre.

In 2001 Johnson & Johnson, via a local subsidiary, Cordis de Mexico (with assistance from the El Paso Community Foundation), partnered with local contractor Siga Construcciones in the building of a school for 300 children in a poor neighbourhood of Juarez. A grant of US\$80,000 from Cordis de Mexico was matched by the contractor. In 2004 the partners funded the construction of a second school.



tions in 13 countries, and one of Brazil's most admired companies. His firm competes against South Korean and Chinese rivals with better-educated workforces. It is thus in his direct interest to look for ways to improve the skill level of his employees. "Education is the most important investment we can make," Mr Gerdaud told the World Economic Forum in 2006.

Ambitious goals

The target date for Todos pela Educação is 2022: the bicentenary of Brazil's independence. Its goals are that, by then, 98% of children between the ages of four and 17 will attend school and, by the age of eight, all children must be able to read and write. In addition, the group seeks to have 60%

of students enrolled in the appropriate grade for their age while investment in education must be increased from 3% to 5% of GDP.

Agreeing on long-term goals is easy. Developing a good way of implementation to achieve them is more difficult. Although the participation of the private sector in Brazil is growing, funding for basic education remains public. "The major bottleneck is salaries for teachers and other staff," Ms Guimarães says. "They absorb on average 80% of resources for education." The involvement of the private sector is important, but still minor in relation to overall funding. "It is helping to create a new culture of partnership," she says, "but the quality of education will improve only if there is a profound change in the legislation governing the public schools."

Mexico

Education systems everywhere are notoriously resistant to reform, but in Mexico the challenge is compounded by the fact that the system there is highly centralised. This makes it hard to try out innovations. Moreover, complacency is also a problem. "Surveys of Mexican parents show that around 85% of them are happy with their children's schools," says Lucrecia Santibáñez, an education specialist at the Centre for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE) in Mexico City. Having had little or no education themselves, almost anything seems better than nothing.

Corporations, however, know all too well that improvement is necessary if they are to sustain their businesses in the global marketplace. Not surprisingly then, in the past two or three years the private

sector has begun to make its voice heard in Mexico's corridors of educational power.

Previously, global companies largely contributed to education as part of corporate philanthropy or for public relation programme purposes. Coca-Cola, for example, built 35 model schools in poor and rural areas. (Mexico reportedly has the world's highest consumption per head of Coca-Cola.) Ford and its dealerships likewise construct and maintain primary schools. They have also equipped more than 100 of the schools that they sponsor with multimedia centres.

Foundational support

Today, most private-sector involvement in education still takes the form of donations through philanthropic foundations set up by wealthy businessmen.



For example, the Telmex Foundation of Carlos Slim, a telecommunications magnate who is Mexico's richest man, recently pledged US\$50m to buy 250,000 laptops to give primary school children access to computers and the Internet. "Poverty is resolved with education and jobs," Mr Slim told the *New York Times* in 2007. Meanwhile, the Televisa Foundation, an offshoot of Mexico's largest broadcaster, runs a programme called *Goles por la Educación* (Goals for Education). Every time the national football team scores a goal, Televisa donates a media classroom to a state school. Another aspect of the foundation's corporate social responsibility activities is a programme of professional development for teachers, school administrators, and district supervisors, as well as offering scholarships at all levels, and some funding for schools.

"Most of these foundations use a very patchwork sort of approach," says Ms Santibáñez. "They see a little hole and they try to patch it up." Eduardo Andere, a professor at Mexico Autonomous Institute of Technology (ITAM) and an authority on Mexican education, agrees: "the amount of money foundations give is so small compared with the size of the challenge that they don't really make a difference at all".

Exerting pressure

Yet, two recently established foundations by Mexican companies are taking a more active role in pushing educational reform. One, *Empresarios por la Educación Básica* (Industrialists for Basic Education), established in 2006, lobbies for the establishment of standards, what children should learn and how they should learn it. Companies involved in the foundation include Bimbo, the world's fourth-largest food-maker. The other foundation, *Mexicanos Primero* (Mexicans First), was formed in 2003 by four old university friends who in the interim had become high-profile businessmen. Like the former,



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Lucrecia Santibáñez, education specialist, CIDE

the objective of *Mexicanos Primero* is to improve the quality of basic education in Mexico. Specifically, the group wants to increase the autonomy of educational evaluation and to improve the training of teachers. One major objective is to ensure that Mexican children stay in school for longer. "For every additional year of schooling we can achieve, Mexico's GDP would grow by 6%," said the president of *Mexicanos Primero*, Fernando Landeros, in 2007.

In addition to exerting behind-the-scenes pressure, every year the group organises a major publicity campaign using the media to make its demands known. They run full-page advertisements in national newspapers, addressed to the minister of education and the head of the teachers' union. They buy spots on national television to let people know how Mexican children performed on PISA (the OECD's Programme for International Student Assess-



“In Mexico, like in many other countries, awareness of the need to do something is at the rhetorical level.”

Eduardo Andere, professor, ITAM

ment) or other international benchmarks. “It’s a very powerful way of informing the public,” says Ms Santibáñez. “There’s a lot more to be done, but they are making some headway.”

In 2007, for example, Mexicanos Primero requested that parents should receive better information about their children’s progress. In response to this pressure, the Ministry of Education made a great effort to ensure that report cards were sent out. The foundation also lobbied for schools to have independent test administrators, because in many cases teachers were administering tests to their own students. This

year there is a push to have different teachers giving the tests. Such victories may seem small, but they are evidence that speaking out does make a difference, Ms Santibáñez says, “whereas before there really wasn’t any voice at all from the private sector”.

Mr Andere is not so certain. Having CEOs or company chairmen on the board of your foundation means that the minister of education, or even the president, will pick up the phone when you call. Such high-level access facilitated the establishment in 2002 of a new semi-autonomous organisation called the National Institute of Education Evaluation. Six years on, Mr Andere is unsure of the impact made by the institute’s assessments.

Rhetorical solutions

“In Mexico, like in many other countries, awareness of the need to do something is at the rhetorical level,” Mr Andere says. “We’re very modern in the language of policy-making. We talk about decentralisation, about

CASE STUDY A success story

Colombia’s Escuela Nueva (New School) movement is a rare large-scale Latin American educational success story. Today, it is breaking new ground, showing how public-private partnerships can be used to improve educational outcomes. For 30 years Escuela Nueva founder, Vicky Colbert de Arboleda, and her colleagues have been demonstrating how to improve the quality of basic education in the poorest schools. For her work Ms Colbert has won many awards and accolades: most recently she was selected by former US president, Bill Clinton, to advise the Clinton Global Initiative on education.

Ms Colbert took the ideas of progres-

sive educators—such as active learning, self-paced learning and collaborative learning—and applied them to Colombia’s neglected rural schools. In these classrooms, a single teacher typically handles students from multiple grades. Under Escuela Nueva, the teacher’s role changes from lecturing students to guiding their comprehension. Everything that the children learn must be relevant to their family and community.

These innovations were so successful that by the end of the 1980s they had spread to almost 20,000 rural schools in Colombia and Ms Colbert herself became the country’s deputy minister of education.

Fourteen Latin American and Caribbean countries have adapted the model, which now reaches around 5m children. Brazil for example has implemented 4,000 Escuela Activa schools; Mexico also has its version, albeit on a much smaller scale.

Even the best innovations, though, are vulnerable to shifts in the political landscape. To sustain momentum outside government, Ms Colbert set up the Escuela Nueva Foundation, a non-governmental organisation. In this new guise, she turned for support in expanding the programme to partnerships with the private sector.

“Companies are starting to see that if



the autonomy of schools, about new curriculums for the new century, about new ways of getting professionalism into the schools, about learning to learn, about the quality of teachers being crucial to educational outcomes. But once you get from the rhetorical level to the implementation level, many many things are lost in translation. Then you get back to the way things have been done for many years, to the culture and the history and the politics of education. We don't really have a consensus among the key players about the kind of restructuring that we need. They talk about a deep reform of the education system, but they can't seem to agree what that reform should be."

Although she agrees that consensus on what to do with state schools is lacking, Ms Santibáñez is more upbeat about the future of Mexico's education system. "There have been improvements in the past few years in terms of evaluation, testing, and accountability," she says. "Things will continue to improve, but the pace of change will be not be rapid."



they don't support improvement in the quality of basic education in the region where they are, their businesses are not going to prosper," Ms Colbert says. For their part, firms are enthusiastic about the approach of Escuela Nueva to education because, among other things, it promotes core 21st century skills for contemporary enterprises such as the ability to take the initiative and to work in groups.

One partner is the Colombian Petroleum Company, the country's largest firm. The corporation helps Escuela Nueva in specific ways, by financing and providing learning materials to schools. "They are very happy

because they see that this is something that goes directly to the children," Ms Colbert says, "the money is not lost in meetings or training or other things".

A second partner is the Colombian Coffee-Growers Federation, a not-for-profit business group that represents 500,000 producers. In addition to providing financial support to schools, the federation also assists in school management and provides personnel. On their own initiative the coffee growers have expanded the programme from the sixth to the ninth grade. "For them it has been a tremendous success," says Ms Colbert, "it has helped them for their

farming, for their business, for their whole company".

The federation is planning to donate 150,000 computers to schools. The coffee growers have asked the foundation for technical advice, to make sure that the technology is used in constructive ways. "They are worried that if this is not linked with the Escuela Nueva model of participatory, self-paced, and co-operative learning, then many teachers will just use the computer as a toy. So we're starting to work with them to monitor this project, to ensure that we get good results." ■



CASE STUDY A public-private partnership



A promising vehicle for companies wanting to contribute to education is public-private partnerships. Guatemala's Sergio Paiz Foundation, for example, is involved in two such partnerships. The first, formed in 2006 by participants including the Foundation, Guatemala's Ministry of Education, and Wal-Mart Central America, is Tecnología para Educar (Technology to Educate). Its objective is to bring computers to all of Guatemala's 17,000 state schools. Using refurbished machines donated by Wal-Mart and local banks, in its first year Tecnología para Educar has already delivered more than 4,000 computers to 300 schools.

The second partnership, Abriendo Futuro (Expanding Futures) arose from an awareness that simply bringing computers to the classrooms was not enough. "We realised that whereas the children could learn how to use the computers in about five minutes," explains the director of the foundation, Salvador Paiz, "for a teacher to learn about computers, and how to teach with a computer, was a whole different challenge".

The objective of Abriendo Futuro is to give teachers a personal computer to take home and familiarise themselves with the technology, at their own pace. Thus far the programme has delivered over 58,000 machines. "Since we as a country only have about 85,000 elementary public-school teachers, from one year to the next a very significant portion of our teachers now have access to computers."

The partners in Abriendo Futuro are the Sergio Paiz Foundation, the Ministry of

Education, and Microsoft. The role of the Foundation, which is unusual in Guatemala in that it is not directly related to a business, is to be "the cartilage between the two big bones—the private and public sector," Mr Paiz says. "We are the little piece that makes them work together and facilitates the flexibility between them."

Several lessons can be learned from the success of these partnerships. "First, like any good business, you've got to look at them as responding to a market need," says Mr Paiz. "Tecnología para Educar was the result of understanding that the government, specifically the education ministry, knew how to train teachers and run schools, but didn't have a good grasp of how to source technology or how to refurbish computers. So there was a real need for them to go outside to seek help. That was the latent market we were seeking to address."

Second, because maintaining momentum is not easy, "you have to exercise real entrepreneurial spirit and bold leadership". Third, to differentiate it from its individual partners, "the alliance must take on a persona of its own. If a company is the central persona, then people will be sceptical, because they know that at the end of the day, companies are in it for the money. If the government is the central persona people are also sceptical, about how the bureaucrats spend public money. But if people understand that the partnership is not the government, not the private sector, that it is just for the benefit of the children, then they will support it."

Fourth, think big. "When you think big, things happen that you didn't think about beforehand, for example, media support and economies of scale." Thinking big also leads to the idea of not just some computers for every school, but one laptop for every child. In yet another partnership, this one involving the Inter-American Development Bank, the foundation is assessing whether or not the one-to-one model is practical. To this end, two schools have been equipped with laptops donated by giant US chipmaker, Intel.

Intel has had more experience with education than most. Currently, the company is working with schools in more than 40 countries, including Brazil and Mexico. In every place the company's goal, according to Will Swope, vice-president and general manager of Intel's corporate affairs group, is "to leave in place functioning ecosystems. It's not a matter of coming in and giving some computers, it's getting the school set up so that they've got computers, wireless connection. It's having not only teachers that are trained in how to teach children better, but also individuals that are responsible for supporting and training others, as well as people that can create local content. So those four pillars—access, connectivity, education and local content—really matter."



Conclusion

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hile fundamental problems with Latin American public education remain, there is also a new willingness by the private sector to help provide solutions. Corporations operating in the region are becoming directly involved with schools not out of charity, but because they see it as important to their business.

"Our role as a corporation is not charity, because people don't like getting charity, and once it's gone, it's gone. We really give away very little cash, we give away programmes, intellectual property, our expertise and know-how. We hold forums where we get government regulators from different countries together so we can learn from each other. We try to facilitate learning, we also try to leave in place those connections such that regulators can continue to help themselves," says Will Swope, vice-president and general manager of Intel's corporate affairs group.

No large-scale, private-sector-driven programmes are visible in the region's two largest economies, Mexico and Brazil. Around the region, however, there are some examples of promising initiatives. They illustrate how the private sector can, and does, become involved with state schools and education systems at the local level. However, many executives understand that the private sector must do more. Moving beyond philanthropy, some executives elect to exert political and social pressure through various advocacy groups. Others look to replicate what has worked well elsewhere. Among the many approaches, the public-private partnership model appears attractive as it engages consortium members while taking advantage of

their individual capabilities. No matter what the approach, one thing is clear: as companies face growing competition from overseas, they can no longer ignore the fact that increasing their involvement and investment in state education is vital for their long-term health.





Getting involved

A discussion with **Will Swope**, vice-president and general manager of Intel's corporate affairs group

Corporations operating in Latin America increasingly realise the importance of getting involved for good corporate citizenship purposes, but also for sustaining their own businesses. How do you get involved, though? Will Swope provides insights into the key steps involved in a successful public-private partnership.

The role of the private sector “There’s certainly a long-term sustainability aspect, of just trying to feed Intel. But we need governments to have confidence that, as we help them educate more of their population in 21st century learning skills like critical thinking and problem-solving and collaboration, that will not only feed our industry, it’s going to make for a stronger country,” Mr Swope says.

Challenges One particular challenge in the region is that many Latin American schools are in remote locations. “Your first problem is communications,” says Mr Swope, “how to get the information to the student”.

A second challenge is far more fundamental: “a child that is hungry is not going to be able to learn, a child that doesn’t have proper sanitation is just going to get sick at school,” Mr Swope continues. “So we love teaming up with other organisations that have expertise in these other areas.”

Ingredients for success Team up with people who have local knowledge. “Guatemala is a great example of that: we helped the government, then set up so that all the teachers got notebook computers and then a way to train them on the technology. But we did not dictate to them that they had to use our equipment.”

Think systemically Start with the end in mind: “think where your programme is going to be three years from now”. Involve the government in the process early on, “because they are your friend”. Finally, “although your focus is education, you have to be prepared to team up with organisations in other fields in order to reach your goals”.

Outcome “That’s the way we do it,” Mr Swope says, “we’re not one-hit wonders, we like to go in, stay in, make a change, understand it.” By overcoming challenges and working through the key ingredients, Mr Swope concludes, “you’re going to end up with a child who is capable of learning, a teacher who knows how to teach, and a programme that allows the environment that you’ve built—a school, or whatever—to sustain itself after you leave.”

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List of interviewees

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Maria Helena Guimarães de Castro, secretary of education, São Paulo

Vicky Colbert de Arboleda, founder and director, Escuela Nueva

Lucrecia Santibáñez, professor, Centre for Economic Research & Teaching (CIDE)

Eduardo Andere, professor, Mexico Autonomous Institute of Technology (ITAM)

Salvador Paiz, director, Sergio Paiz Foundation

Will Swope, vice-president & general manager, corporate affairs group, Intel

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