



EVENT BRIEF

GUATEMALA CITY • AUGUST 22-24, 2012

BETTER LEARNING THROUGH BETTER TEACHING

PREAL's Working Group on the Teaching Profession holds international conference and Experts Meeting



On August 22-24, PREAL and its Working Group on the Teaching Profession (GTD) convened education experts from throughout Latin America in Guatemala City for a conference on the status and outlook of the Teaching Profession in the region. The event was carried out in partnership with the *Universidad del Valle*, with the collaboration of UNESCO's Regional Education Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC), the Educational and Cultural Coordination of the Central American Integration System (CECC/SICA), *Empresarios por la Educación*, the *Gran Campaña Nacional por la Educación*, the Center for National Economic Research (CIEN), and the Association for Research and Social Studies (ASIES).

The last of a series of similar events in all seven countries in Central America and the Dominican Republic, the conference included presentations by national and international experts on the state of the teaching profession in Guatemala and best practices elsewhere.

The event came at a particularly opportune time for

Header Image: From left, Roberto Moreno Godoy, Rector of the Universidad del Valle de Guatemala; Paz Portales, program coordinator of UNESCO's Regional Education Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC); Marcela Gajardo, co-director of PREAL; José Luis Guzmán, coordinator of the Central American and Dominican Chapter (CCAD) of the GTD; and María Eugenia Paniagua, secretary general of the Educational and Cultural Coordination of the Central American Integration System (CECC/SICA). Photo from [UVG](#).

Guatemala, which is embroiled in debate over a Ministry of Education proposal to increase teacher training requirements. Minister of Education Cynthia del Águila, who provided remarks at the conference, praised its relevance to Guatemala's education discussion: "I think that given the moment in which we find ourselves in Guatemala, [the timing of this

conference] is very serendipitous, and the content will be beneficial. It will be beneficial for us to understand other experiences, to understand our own experience, and to be able to understand emerging points of convergence. The lessons learned elsewhere help us – not to replicate them, exactly – but to see which of these lessons can be adapted to Guatemala and which lessons we can also share with other countries."

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– Cynthia del Águila, Minister of Education, Guatemala

Fernando Rubio, Director of the USAID project *Reforma Educativa en el Aula*

in Guatemala, agreed, thanking PREAL for hosting "a great event, with a special sense of opportunity." He noted that the discussions and presentations provided important information for the country that he was sure would contribute to current efforts to design new teacher policies.

Given the current state of affairs in Guatemala, much of the discussion during the event focused on teacher training. Sylvia Ortega Salazar, rector of the *Universidad Pedagógica Nacional of Mexico*, provided remarks on the subject in both the conference itself, as well as a small roundtable discussion with the minister of education held prior to the second day of meetings. She emphasized the importance of



More than 100 participants from the private sector, government, NGOs, academia, and the teaching profession participated in PREAL's international conference on the "Outlook and Perspectives on the Teaching Profession in Latin America." Photo from [UVG](#).

collecting and using accurate data when making policy decisions and of the need for higher and primary education officials to collaborate on teacher training and staffing needs.

During the first day of the conference, Paula Louzano, an education expert from Brazil, gave a presentation on the teaching profession based on lessons learned from Chile, Costa Rica, and Brazil. She noted a trend in all three countries toward training teachers at the tertiary level, and argued that while attracting the best and the brightest to the profession is important, education systems must also develop rigorous standards and evaluations for prospective teachers.

Also on the first day, a panel of teachers' union representatives from El Salvador and Guatemala discussed the contributions of the unions to the teaching profession in the region. A key conclusion of the panel was that ministries of education need to create space for sincere dialogue with unions in order to develop a consensus on macro-level education needs.

On the second day of the conference, members of the Central American and Dominican Chapter (CCAD) of the GTD formed two panel discussions to provide perspectives on the teaching profession from other Central American countries. Moderated by CCAD/GTD Coordinator José Luis Guzmán, the panelists discussed lessons learned from Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama.

The conference also included a panel discussion on Corporate Social Responsibility, with representatives of business-education partnerships from Chile, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. Both on the panel and in a round-table meeting with members of *Empresarios por*

la Educación, Blanca Cuadrado and Isadora Recart of the Arauco Foundation provided presentations on the experience of their privately-funded organization in improving education in three regions of Chile. Juan Valiente, of the Business Foundation for Social Action (FUNDEMÁS) in El Salvador, and Josefina Vijil, of the Center for Social Education Action (CIASES) and the Fundación Pantaleón in Nicaragua, also shared their views on private sector contributions to improving schools and the teaching profession.

Finally, Adriana Vilela, Director of the Inter-American Network of Teacher Training (RIED) of the Organization of American States provided an overview of RIED's contributions to the teaching profession and discussed ways to promote greater regional cooperation on the issue.

Following the conference, members of the CCAD/GTD held a meeting on August 25 to conclude their cycle of activities for the year. The education experts from throughout Central America discussed the success of and lessons learned from the series of seven conferences beginning in Costa Rica on March 14 and ending with the conference in Guatemala. In total, the conferences attracted approximately 600 participants, including the ministers of education of Costa Rica and Guatemala; the minister of higher education, science, and technology of the Dominican Republic; the vice-president of Honduras, the Nicaraguan Ministry of Education director of teacher training, and vice ministers of education of Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, the Dominican Republic, and El Salvador.

According to OREALC Program Coordinator Paz Portales, who observed and spoke at all seven of the conferences in Central America and Dominican Republic, "The political will of actors [at all levels] is a key component needed to generate change in favor of quality education for all." Attracting participants from academia, business, government, the teaching profession, and NGOs, PREAL's conferences on the teaching profession have been able to contribute to the development of this political will at a crucial moment for Central American schools. The events demonstrate PREAL's ability to place key issues squarely on national policy agendas, provide how-to information on policy options, and create a forum for national and international actors to discuss experiences and priorities.

The Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Americas (PREAL) is a joint program of:

