

# English Language Learning in Latin America

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English language learning has become an important strategic issue across the Latin American region. Countries have developed national strategies, created programs and made important investments to expand access to English learning opportunities. This report provides an overview of the state of English language learning in ten countries in Latin America, with a particular focus on assessing the policies in place and identifying key bottlenecks affecting the opportunities for high-quality programs. The Inter-American Dialogue and the authors see this report as a contribution to a much-needed debate across the region on how to improve the quality of English language learning.

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## Executive Summary

English proficiency is increasingly necessary for business and international communication and, in that regard, linked with prospects for economic competitiveness and growth in the global economy. Interest in learning the language continues to grow throughout Latin America. The region has made considerable efforts to improve English language learning through policies and programs, resulting in more people in the region having access to English language learning (ELL).

However, test results indicate that English proficiency is very low. The educational system is simply not producing students with adequate levels of English proficiency. Schools are often unable to provide the necessary English classes, while those that do exist are often of poor quality. Learning opportunities outside of the educational system, although increasingly available, are unable to make up for deficiencies within formal schooling.

Improvements in ELL policy and programs are necessary to improve English proficiency levels. Furthermore, quality implementation of these policies and programs is essential to overcoming the barriers faced throughout the region.

How can countries implement effective policies and programs to improve learning levels? Through an analysis of ELL policies, teacher effectiveness, and learning programs, this report looks at best practices and weak areas throughout Latin America. Finally, this report makes four recommendations to solve policy bottlenecks, address the teacher shortage, find other learning opportunities, and create a space for sharing and learning across countries.

### *English Language Learning Policy*

A well-developed policy framework is essential to guide English teaching and learning. An evaluation of the ELL policy frameworks of ten Latin American countries, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay, demonstrates the advancements in ELL policy as well as the gaps and bottlenecks to improving English proficiencies.

## English Language Learning Policy Framework: Indicators of Progress

	Argentina	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Costa Rica	Ecuador	Mexico	Panama	Peru	Uruguay
<b>Legal Foundation</b>										
English Mandatory by Law	◆	✓	✓	◆	✓	✓	✓	✓	◆	◆
National Plan or Strategy	X	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	◆	✓	◆
<b>Standards for Learning</b>										
Learning Standards and Objectives	◆	◆	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Teaching Supports, Including Curricula and Programs of Study	X	X	✓	✓	✓	◆	✓	✓	◆	◆
<b>Student Achievement</b>										
Standard of Measurement	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Proficiency Goals	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Proficiency Assessment	X	◆	✓	✓	✓	◆	◆	X	X	✓
<b>Teacher Qualifications</b>										
Teacher Education Standards	✓	X	✓	✓	◆	✓	X	◆	✓	✓
Proficiency Goals	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Proficiency Assessment	X	X	✓	◆	◆	✓	✓	X	X	X

✓ Yes, this topic has been successfully addressed

◆ There has been some progress in the right direction, but it is not yet sufficient

X The adequate conditions do not yet exist for this topic

Although gaps exist, overall the region demonstrates a strong legal foundation. Laws require the teaching of English in schools in six of the ten countries, while English is encouraged as the mandatory foreign language in others. Half of the countries also have well-developed plans or strategies for improving ELL.

Standards for learning are also well developed in the region. A majority of the countries define learning standards and objectives for ELL and accompany these standards with curricula and other teaching supports. Argentina and Brazil are the only two countries that do not define learning standards specifically for ELL; instead they define them for all foreign language learning. They do not provide an ELL curriculum either, but instead give greater authority to the provinces and states to devise their own.

Persistent gaps, however, exist in the measurement of student achievement and teacher qualifications. While seven of the ten countries utilize a standard of measurement and set student proficiency goals, only two successfully implement student proficiency assessments. There has been some progress in several other countries to implement proficiency assessments, but it is not yet sufficient. It is impossible to measure weaknesses or improvements in proficiency levels without student assessments.

All countries have made progress in the creation of teacher education standards, but many fail to address the issue of teacher assessment. In line with student proficiency goals, seven of the ten countries set proficiency goals or requirements for teachers. Again, though, few countries assess the English proficiency of their teachers. Countries are unable to ensure teacher quality without assessing performance.

Addressing these policy gaps, particularly regarding assessments, is essential to guiding English teaching and learning.

### *Teachers in English Language Learning*

Quality teachers are essential to improving English proficiency levels, since teachers are responsible for implementing ELL policies and activities on a daily basis. However, English language teaching has shown weaknesses pertaining to the quality of both teacher proficiency and training.

English teachers in Latin America demonstrate low proficiency in the language. While the policy frameworks set proficiency expectations from the B2 to C2 level on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), diagnostic tests and studies show that many English teachers perform well below these standards. Costa Rica and Chile demonstrate the strongest performance on teacher proficiency, where the highest percentages of tested teachers were found in the B2 or B2+ proficiency

levels in 2015. Data from other countries, however, show less promising results. High percentages of teachers perform at or below the levels expected of their students.

There is a high demand for English teachers in Latin America. While teacher-training opportunities abound in the region, the quality of training is varied and overall poor. Systems of accreditation to ensure quality exist, but many non-accredited programs continue to enroll and train pre-service teachers. There is also wide variability in the use of entrance or exit requirements for teacher education programs with few countries having a standardized approach.

Additionally, professional development options for English teachers face issues of evaluation and continuity. Both in-country training and opportunities for training abroad exist throughout the region. For example, Colombia, Panama, and Peru all have ongoing national programs for English teachers to receive training abroad, while Colombia also has a national immersive program in-country. Non-state actors are also involved in training English teachers. Uruguay's *Ceibal en Inglés* program and Mexico's Inter-American Partnership for Education (IAPE) both utilize international linkages to provide quality training. While opportunities are increasing, there is little evidence on the impact and cost of the programs. The many new programs in the region also prevent continuity from previous programs.

These weaknesses, coupled with poor implementation of the policy framework regarding teacher qualifications, result in poor ELL teacher quality. Teachers demonstrate poor proficiency levels and often lack certification or training. For example, only 27% of Peru's secondary English teachers are licensed to teach the subject. Countries must commit to improving English teacher qualifications in order to have an impact on English proficiency throughout the region.

### *English Language Learning Programs*

ELL programs exist in various forms throughout the region, but there are three key factors that these programs must address to be successful: ensuring continuity, developing a strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework that informs adaptation, and addressing the lack of sufficient quality teachers. While the needs of every program differ, new programs can learn from both mistakes and successes of other programs in the region.

Ensuring continuity is essential to amplify a program's reach and increase English proficiency. Few programs in the region have received continuous policy support for ELL activities. Continuity also demands the right institutional setting. Chile's *Programa Inglés Abre Puertas (PIAP)* and Uruguay's *Plan Ceibal* are exceptions rather than the rule, both having a decade of experience and strong institutional settings. Several new programs in the region have established strong institutional structures to ensure continued support. For example, *Colombia Bilingüe* counts on local

and national support while the *Programa Nacional de Inglés (PRONI)* in Mexico is working to address issues faced at the local level. A failed program in Costa Rica is exemplary of a lack of an institutional setting. Once the *Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (EILE)* program encountered mixed results and issues with the costs of technology, the program had limited ability to respond since it did not have a plan in place, and thus had to assign outside entities to manage the issues.

A strong (M&E) framework is also important to ensure a program's effectiveness. Evaluation systems in the region are weak and little effort is given to measuring the effectiveness of current approaches. Two long-lasting programs, *PIAP* and *Ceibal en Inglés*, have both made efforts in this area. However, many newer programs do not yet have an M&E system in place. There is a large knowledge gap around this issue that needs to be addressed.

Moreover, the insufficient supply of teachers is a core bottleneck to improving ELL. To address this issue several countries have sought innovative solutions. Panama trains its English teachers abroad for short periods of time. Uruguay looks to technology to leverage the proficiency skills of foreign English teachers via videoconference. Chile and Colombia both look to volunteers to provide English lessons and classroom support. However, more efforts are necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in some countries. Both *Ceibal en Inglés* and *PIAP* have extensive monitoring and evaluation practices, and the IAPE program for Mexico's English teachers, which involves training both in Mexico and in the United States, has been thoroughly evaluated to show strong evidence of its effectiveness.

There is great innovation throughout Latin America, with many initiatives and programs to improve English teaching and learning. However, without these three key components, these programs will struggle to reach intended audiences and impact English proficiencies.

### *Recommendations*

We conclude our report with four recommendations to address policy bottlenecks, address the teacher shortage, find other learning opportunities, and create a space for sharing and learning across countries.

Addressing policy bottlenecks is essential to guiding ELL efforts. This requires establishing standardized assessments to measure student and teacher proficiency, as well as ensuring compliance with teacher proficiency requirements for both current and new teachers.

Teachers are an essential component to improving English proficiencies,

but only with high-quality teachers can Latin America effectively address the need for improved language skills. This requires both improving teacher training in the long-term and looking to short-term innovative solutions to immediately impact ELL results.

Even though performance has improved, efforts in the educational system must be complemented. Countries must also look to other learning opportunities, such as private language institutions, universities, and technologies, to offer multiple learning mechanisms to the population.

Finally, we conclude with a call for a regional learning community. There are many examples of successful policies and programs throughout Latin America. Countries can learn from each other to improve their own ELL initiatives. Sharing Information across ministries, advancing a common research and development (R&D) agenda, and developing joint initiatives will greatly contribute to improving ELL throughout the region.

## Chapter 1: English Language Learning in Latin America

As countries in Latin America seek to enhance their competitiveness and prospects for economic growth, skills gaps of various types emerge that represent potentially serious bottlenecks (Fiszbein, Cosentino, & Cumsille, 2016). English proficiency is one such skill.

How proficient are Latin Americans in English? Are schools and other educational institutions in the region providing a solid foundation that will position Latin American workers favorably for employment opportunities in an increasingly globalized and interdependent world? Perhaps surprisingly, these are not easy questions to answer. The limited information available suggests that English language learning (ELL) in Latin America is deficient. And while many governments are making important efforts to remedy this situation, the remaining gaps are significant. Furthermore, a dearth of systematic information limits the ability of governments to adopt evidence-based approaches to improve ELL in schools and other educational institutions.

This report seeks to provide an overview of the state of ELL in ten Latin American countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay. Together they represent 84% of the region's population and 87% of its GDP (World Bank, 2015).

### *English proficiency is essential for international collaboration and success in the global economy*

The international business community recognizes the growing importance of English proficiency for international collaboration and success in the global economy. Many multinational companies mandate English as the common corporate language, demonstrating that English has established itself as the lingua franca in the world of business (Neeley, 2012). In a 2014 study, 87% of senior human resource managers of multinational companies in thirteen countries (including three Latin American countries: Brazil, Chile, and Mexico), said English language proficiency is important for their employees (Educational Testing Service & Ipsos Public Affairs, 2015). It also found that the need for English has increased over the past few years and that it will continue to grow in the foreseeable future.

In another study, 68% of executives from international companies around the world (including some with headquarters in Brazil and Mexico) indicated English is the necessary language for the company's workforce to know in order to expand to key overseas markets in the next five years, while only 8% indicated Mandarin and 6% Spanish. However, according to those executives, it is not always easy to find workers with the necessary English skills (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012).

National studies from Latin America confirm these international perspectives. For example, in a study in El Salvador, human resource managers and assistants in 300 businesses identified foreign language as the second hardest skill to find among staff, the first one being 'technology' (Zepeda & Bolaños, 2010). In a similar study in Costa Rica, 30% of businesses cited mastery of a foreign language as their main challenge (Pallavicini, González, & Rojas, 2011). In the words of Miguel Ángel Landeros, president of the Mexican Council for Foreign Trade (Consejo Mexicano de Comercio Exterior): "English is very important for the growth of exports; we have three thousand kilometers of border in Mexico, we have the North American Free Trade Agreement, 80% of our exports go to the United States and we do not speak English" (El Informador, 2016). Indeed, while 80% of job listings in Mexico require English proficiency, only 20% of professionals master the language (Latin Business Today, 2016). In Colombia, market growth and new policies have attracted many investors, which has resulted in an increase of foreign companies established in the country. According to ProColombia (2015), approximately 200 foreign companies (not including franchises) began operations in Colombia in the last five years. Growing sectors include tourism and financial services, both industries that often require human talent with mastery of the English language.

Economic returns to English language skills can be high. English speakers in Mexico earn 28% more on average than non-English speakers. Additionally, evidence suggests that English may provide a path to increased economic mobility (Delgado Hellester, 2013). This is consistent with international trends. An international comparative study on the economic returns to language skills in Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Norway, and Italian-speaking Switzerland found that a lack of skills in a second language is a constraining factor to wage opportunities (Garrouste, 2008). In the United States, immigrants born in non-English speaking countries and who are fluent in English earn about 14% more than those lacking English proficiency (Chiswick & Miller, 2001). And in Quebec, the earnings of bilingual men who frequently use English at work are 20.9% higher than those who only speak one language, while those who exclusively use English at work are 18.2% higher (Christofides & Swidinsky, 2008).

Similar estimates of returns are limited for countries in Latin America, but the evidence from emerging economies in Asia is very telling. In mainland China, English proficiency enhances college graduates' starting salaries and future earning potential. Higher salaries of English-proficient graduates are possibly a result of improved opportunities for job interviews and working for foreign companies (Guo & Sun, 2014). In India, men who are fluent in English receive hourly wages that are 34% higher on average than those who do not speak English (Azam, Chim, & Prakash, 2011). In fact, the return to fluent English is as large as the return to completing secondary school and half as large as the return to completing a Bachelor's degree. In India, a single standard deviation increase in English language

skills increases women's earnings by 26% and men's earnings by 20%. In Pakistan, a standard deviation increase in English language skills increases women's earnings by 32% and men's earnings by 13% (Aslam, Kingdon, De, and Kumar, 2010).

Latin American governments recognize the business community's need for an English-proficient workforce. The objectives of national English strategies in three countries provide good illustrations of the view that English is important to national productivity, integration into the global economy, and overall international competitiveness. In Colombia the national strategy *Colombia Bilingüe* seeks to improve students' English abilities to permit them to have greater mobility and access to better job opportunities (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, n.d.). Chile's National English Strategy seeks to strengthen English proficiency in order to "accelerate the integration of Chile into a global world and therefore improve our competitiveness" (Ministerio Secretaría General de la Presidencia, Ministerio de Educación, & Ministerio de Economía, Fomento y Turismo, 2014). Peru's plan to implement a national English program considers English proficiency as a way to attract foreign investment, which would then help to increase productivity and competitiveness (Ministerio de Educación Perú, 2016b). Integration into and success in the global economy appears to be a clear strategic motivation behind governments' efforts to increase English proficiency.

### *The current English proficiency levels at the population level in Latin America are low*

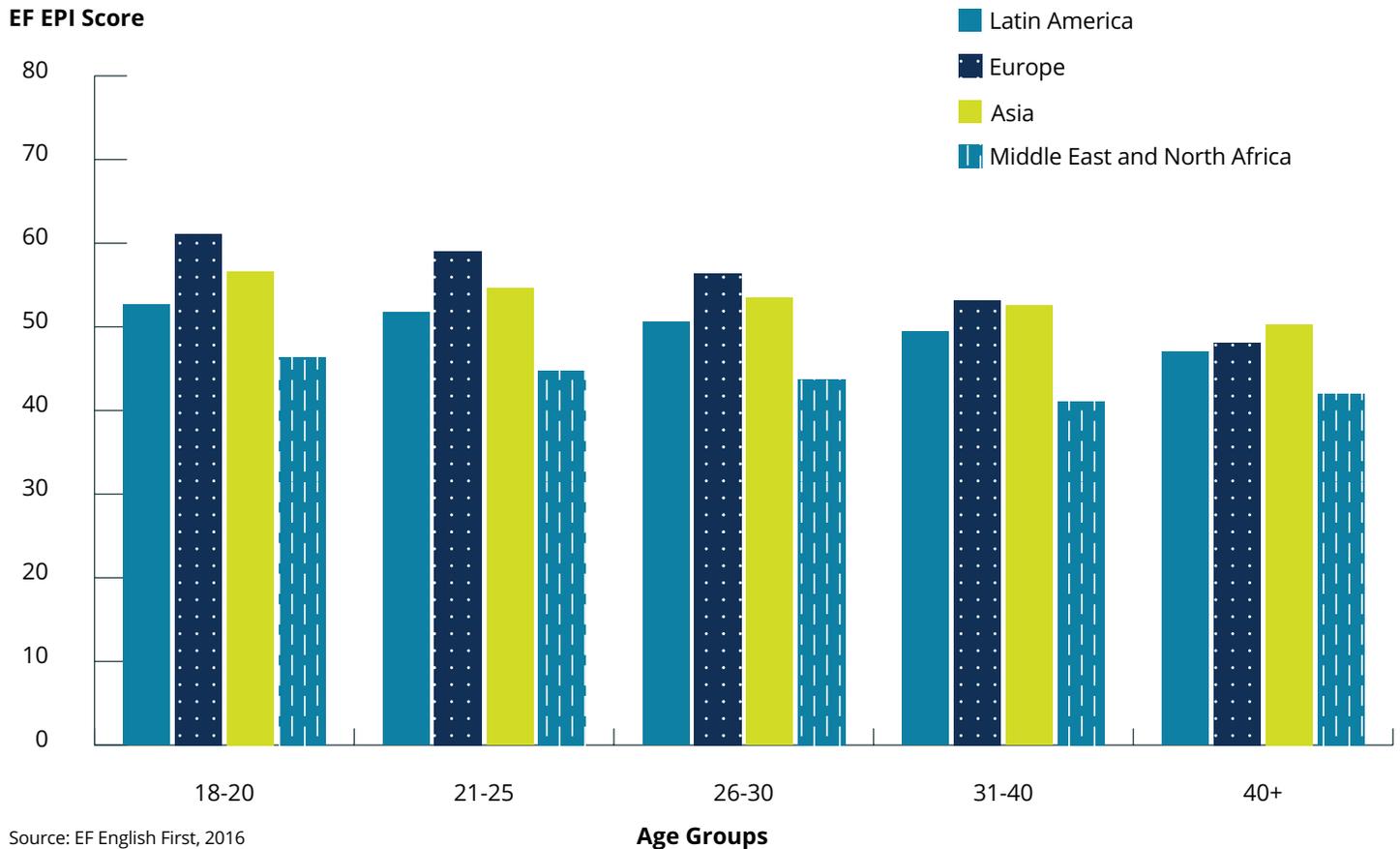
The ideal way to assess proficiency levels (in the overall population or among school age children and youth) would be to consistently apply nationally representative, internationally comparable tests. Unfortunately, available international assessments suffer many limitations. In particular, none of these assessments are based on random samples of participants and, as a result, may have significant biases.<sup>1</sup>

Having said this, available test results demonstrate a low level of English proficiency in Latin America. Although there are variations within the region, most Latin American countries fall into the low or very low categories in such assessments. There is simply no international study in which a country in Latin America achieves the highest level of proficiency in any one of these examinations.

Latin America as a region performs below the world average in the EF English First English Proficiency Index (EF EPI)<sup>2</sup> in all age groups (Graph 1). In contrast, Europe and Asia almost always perform above the world average, and always perform better than Latin America. Perhaps more telling are the differences in gaps among the different age groups. For Latin America, the largest disparity is in the 18-20 years age group, where the region falls behind the world average by 3.8 points. The smallest gap is in the 40 years and older age group, where Latin America falls behind the world average by only 2.34 points. These gaps strongly suggest that education

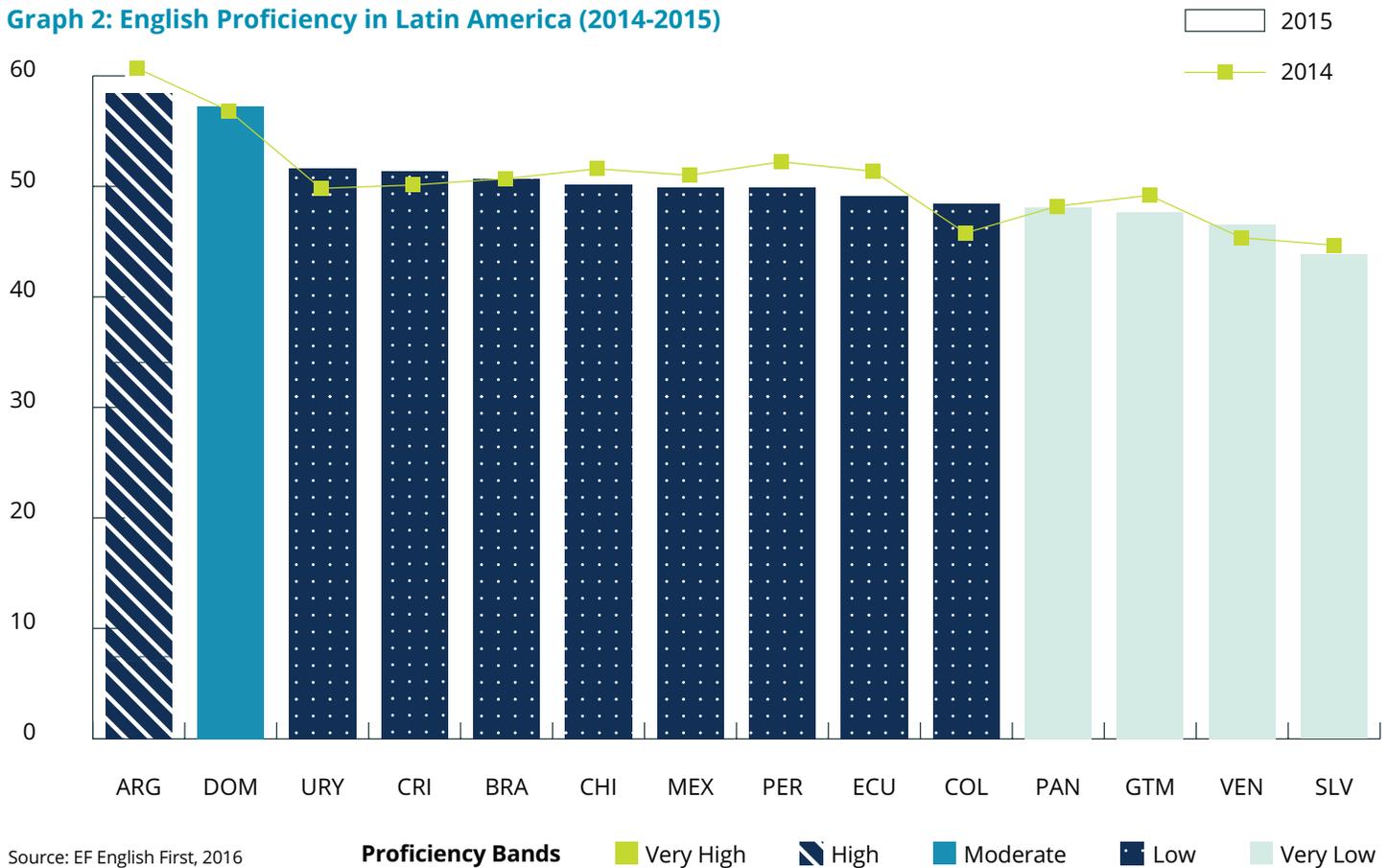
systems throughout Latin America are underperforming in English education relative to those in Asia and Europe (EF English First, 2016). At the same time, the good news is that younger generations are demonstrating a higher level of English proficiency.

**Graph 1: English Proficiency in Different Regions of the World (2016)**



No country in Latin America is in the very high proficiency band (Graph 2). Argentina is the only Latin American country ranked in the high proficiency band with a score of 58.40, along with countries such as Germany (61.58), the Philippines (60.33), and the Czech Republic (59.09). Argentina falls near the bottom of the high proficiency list, only ahead of Romania (58.14). High proficiency sample tasks include the ability to “make a presentation at work,” “understand TV shows,” and “read a newspaper” (EF English First, 2016). The Dominican Republic is in the moderate proficiency band, which places it next to countries like India and Spain. Sample tasks among those in the moderate proficiency band include the ability to “participate in meetings in one’s area of expertise,” “understand song lyrics,” and “write professional emails on familiar subjects”.

**Graph 2: English Proficiency in Latin America (2014-2015)**



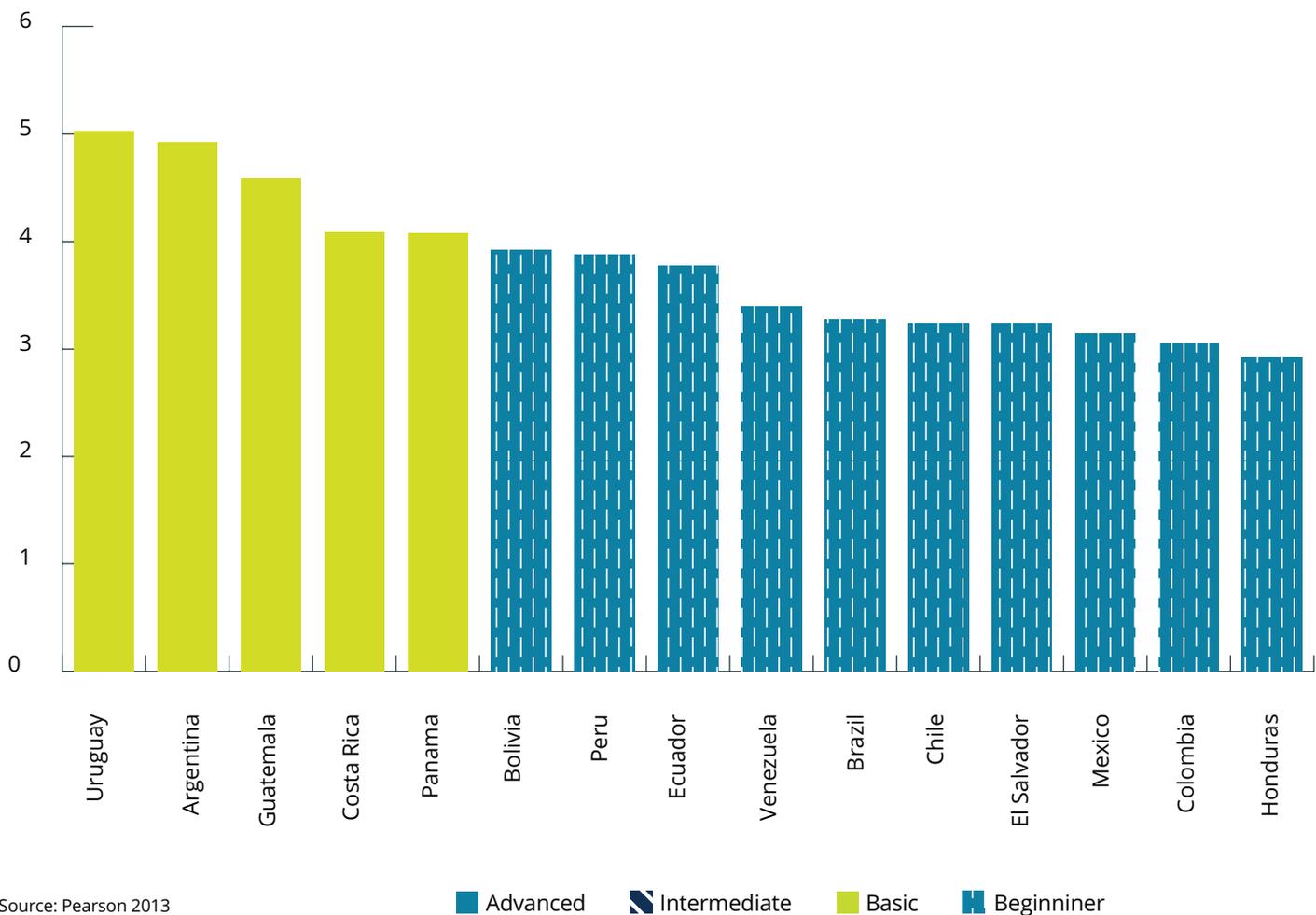
Source: EF English First, 2016

**Proficiency Bands**    Very High    High    Moderate    Low    Very Low

The rest of the countries in the region fall into the low or very low category, which suggests their populations' ability to effectively use English in the workplace is limited. Of particular concern are the declining scores from 2014 to 2015 (Graph 2). Indeed, the most recent scores indicate a decline in nine of the fourteen Latin American countries covered, with three countries (Ecuador, Guatemala, and Peru) showing a decline of more than two points. On the bright side, Colombia and Uruguay showed improvements of 1.87 and 1.38 points, respectively. As indicated before, these results are not representative of the entire populations and thus should be taken with due consideration.<sup>3</sup>

A different evaluation, the Business English Index,<sup>4</sup> assesses English proficiency for the workplace. All fourteen ranked Latin American countries fall into the two lowest categories of beginner and basic, most of them in the lower category (Graph 3). Beginners are unable to communicate and understand information in a business setting, although they can read and communicate with simple phrases. Basic users are able to understand and express problems and solutions, but are unable to take a substantial role in discussions and complex tasks. Overall, these results suggest that while workers in these countries may be able to communicate in English with simple phrases, they are unable to actively participate in the workplace using English (Pearson, 2013).

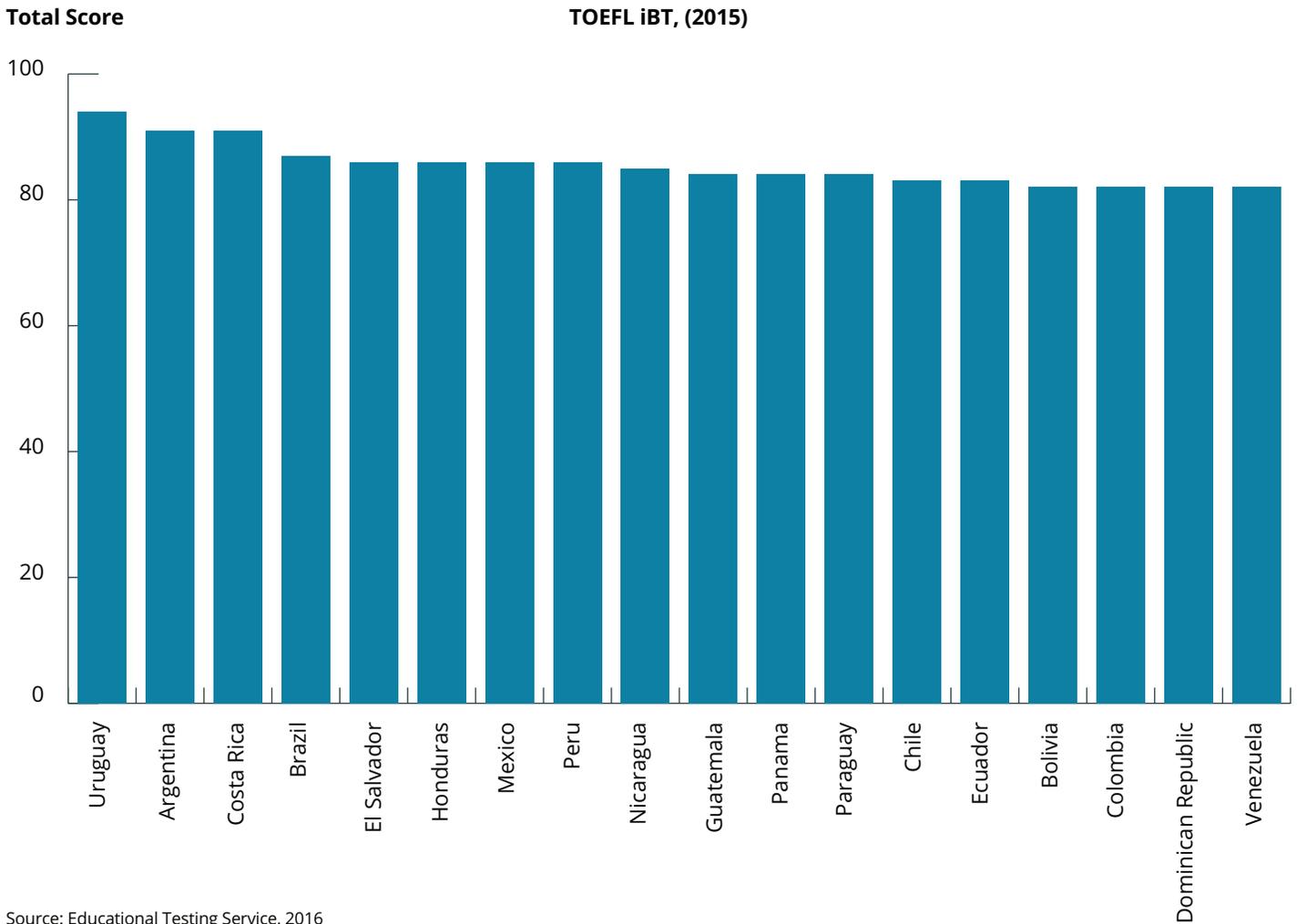
**Graph 3: English Proficiency in the Workplace (Business English Index, 2013)**



The data from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL iBT)<sup>5</sup> provides a somewhat more diverse picture of English proficiency in Latin America (Graph 4).<sup>6</sup> The mean score for countries in Latin America is 85 out of 120, just above the 50th percentile of the global distribution. However, there was significant variation within the region. Uruguay leads the region with a total score of 94, which places it in the 70th percentile of the global distribution, with Argentina and Costa Rica close behind with a score of 91. In comparison to other countries of the world, Finland also had a score of 94, while Zimbabwe, Antigua and Barbuda, and Pakistan all scored 91. Bolivia, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela represent the lowest ranked countries in Latin America, ranked near the 45th percentile overall, with similar scores to Kenya, Zambia, and Aruba (Educational Testing Service, 2016). These comparisons must be interpreted with due consideration to their limitations as the underlying data is not representative for the entire population of the country.<sup>7</sup>

While overall proficiency in Latin America is low by international standards, the areas of strength and weakness follow a similar pattern to that observed in other parts of the world. In most countries in Latin America, listening and speaking scores are higher than reading and writing scores. Countries in other regions of the world that demonstrate this pattern include Germany, Finland, South Africa, and Sri Lanka, among others. This suggests that low proficiency is not due to an intrinsic learning difficulty experienced by Latin Americans.

**Graph 4: Performance in Test of English as a Foreign Language (2015)**



It is important to be careful in drawing definite conclusions from these tests that are not representative of the entire population. Overall, however, they suggest that Latin America demonstrates a low English proficiency level. Even the highest ranked countries underperform relative to the best performing countries in other regions of the world. And the lowest ranked countries in the region are some of the lowest performers of all countries in the world for which information is available. Additionally, there are also some country-specific patterns across tests. Argentina and Uruguay appear to be the top

performers while Colombia tends to be among the lower performers.

### *English proficiency levels at the student level in Latin America show slow progress*

National student-level assessments provide a representative view on English language proficiency among the school-age population in a subset of countries. Although progress is slow, scores have improved over time. Data from Chile, Colombia, and Uruguay demonstrate these trends.

In 2004, 5% of students in Chile obtained a proficiency level of B1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) at the conclusion of their 4th year of upper secondary education. B1 is the first level of an independent user on this scale and is the expected proficiency level of graduating secondary students in Chile. In 2016, this number increased to 17%. There are also increasingly fewer students in lower proficiency levels; from 2012 to 2016, the percentage of students at the beginner level of A1 decreased from 26.8% to approximately 18%.<sup>8</sup>

Student English proficiency in Colombia demonstrates a similar trend of increasing improvement over time, starting from very low levels. In Colombia, 11th grade students take the *Saber 11* exams, one of which assesses English proficiency. English results from 2005 to 2014 generally trend upward, from an average score of 43.5 in 2005 to 54.4 points in 2014 (ICFES, n.d.). The 2011 results show that approximately 90% of first-time test-takers reached either A- (which falls below A1), or A1, while only 2% reached B1. This means the vast majority of students were below or at the most basic level of proficiency, at which they can only communicate and understand very simple ideas (Sánchez Jabba, 2013). In 2015, 3.2% of students reached a proficiency level of B1. The percentage of students in the public sector alone reaching this level rose to 3% (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, n.d.).

Data from Uruguay also shows improvement in English proficiency in primary-age students in recent years. Uruguay administered an English adaptive assessment to students in grades 4 – 6 for the first time in 2014. Results from 2014 to 2016<sup>9</sup> show improvement in vocabulary, reading, and grammar, with increasing percentages of students at higher proficiency levels and decreasing percentages of students at lower proficiency levels. Listening and writing components were introduced in 2015, and also show improvement. Uruguay administered the English adaptive assessment to students in the first year of secondary education for the first time in 2016. Approximately 13% of students at this level took the exam.<sup>10</sup> Results show that 68% achieved at the A2- level in vocabulary, reading, and grammar and 20% at the A1+ level. Listening levels are more varied, with 20% at A1-, 15% at A1+, 42% at A2-, and 15% at A2+. Writing scores are again low at the secondary level, with 36.6% at A0, 36.6% at A1-, and 22.6% at A1+ (*Plan Ceibal, CEIP, & ANEP, 2016*).

### *Many schools are not providing the mandatory English classes*

A majority of countries in Latin America require English language instruction as part of their official curricula, sometimes as early as at the pre-primary level. In several cases this is mandated by law (Chapter 2). Given the high levels of school enrollment throughout the region (Table 1), this implies that a majority of children (i.e. those attending primary and pre-primary school) and a growing number of youth (i.e. those attending secondary school) are supposed to be learning English in school.

**Table 1: Net Enrollment Rate, by Level of Education (%)**

	Pre-Primary	Primary	Lower Secondary	Upper Secondary	Secondary
<b>Argentina (2014)</b>	72.47	99.35	88.13	62.80	88.25
<b>Brazil (2014)</b>	78.72	92.19	79.31	58.69	82.83
<b>Chile (2015)</b>	95.31	94.32	78.46	82.31	87.97
<b>Colombia (2015)</b>	80.97	90.60	74.73	44.21	78.29
<b>Costa Rica (2015)</b>	50.36	96.42	74.84	43.53	79.30
<b>Ecuador (2016)</b>	67.97	91.91	78.74	66.33	87.16
<b>Mexico (2014)</b>	68.72	95.06	80.79	51.64	67.41
<b>Panama (2013)</b>	66.88	95.90	74.18	48.22	77.83
<b>Peru (2015)</b>	88.36	94.08	71.41	56.63	77.68
<b>Uruguay (2014)</b>	88.23	94.22	70.30	47.20	76.35

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016. Data from Mexico is from 2014, with the exception of the secondary rate, which is from 2012. Data from Panama is from 2013, with the exception of the secondary rate, which is from 2012.

The reality, however, is more complex: actual access to English language learning in schools is far from universal. It must be said that the participation in English classes is not tracked in a systematic manner across countries in Latin America and the information available is often incomplete, inaccessible, or outdated.

Uruguay and Costa Rica have made important efforts to expand the coverage of English language learning in public schools. Uruguay's English programs reach 95% of students in 4th through 6th grades in urban schools and are widespread in

secondary schools (Centro Ceibal, n.d.; Comisión de Políticas Lingüísticas, 2012). Costa Rica also has high rates of access, with 87% of primary schools and 100% of secondary schools offering English classes (Ministerio de Educación Pública de Costa Rica, 2014; Calderón & Mora, 2012). Colombia has relatively high rates of access (64%) at the secondary level (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, 2014a) while Panama offers English classes in only 11% of its 3,621 public schools (Quiñones, 2014). In Chile, in 2013 4,308 primary schools (53% of all primary schools, public and private, receiving government funding) opted to start English in 1st grade<sup>11</sup> even though it is not mandatory until 5th grade (De Améstica R., 2013). In Mexico, 18% of all schools participated in the National English Program in Basic Education (PNIEB). Those participating schools reached 35% of all students in the country; however, student participation rates varied significantly across levels (27% of students at the pre-primary and primary levels, 61% of students at the secondary school level) (British Council, 2015f). There are also very large differences across the country: only 2% of students in the state of Jalisco have access to English through the PNIEB while 45% of students in Sonora have access through PNIEB (Ramírez-Romero, cited in Ramírez-Romero & Sayer, 2016).

In Peru, full-day secondary schools (Jornada Escolar Completa, or JEC, in Spanish) currently offer five hours of English per week. These schools, totaling 1,604 in 2016, reached 28% of the secondary student population. In 2017, 400 more schools will become full-day for a total of 2,004 full-day schools (Instituto Integración, 2016), which suggests more students will have access to English classes in school. In 2017, more than 5,000 half-day secondary schools will offer English for three hours per week (Ministerio de Educación Perú, 2016c). Altogether, this implies that 75% of public secondary schools in Peru will be teaching English by the end of this year.

In Ecuador, only 1,000 of the 15,000 public schools had teaching staff to teach English (El Telégrafo, 2014). This information, however, predates mandatory English instruction in the first year of basic education in the Sierra region in 2016 and the Coastal region in 2017. In Argentina, there is no information available at the national level. In the City of Buenos Aires, 90% of the public schools teach English.<sup>12</sup> Overall, significant coverage gaps remain within the schooling system throughout the region.

### *Private language institutions reach interested learners outside of the K-12 educational system*

In addition to public and private K-12 education, English language learners often look to language instruction institutions outside of the traditional system. In fact, the number of students learning English through private language institutions is growing exponentially in many countries in Latin America. For example, Brazil trains millions of people annually in its private language institutions. In a recent

survey conducted by Data Popular, 87% of middle class respondents stated that they had attended a private English institution (British Council, 2015b). Similarly, it is estimated that 400,000 Argentines, or 40% of English language learners in the country as assessed through surveys, study at private language institutes (British Council, 2015a) a similar percentage to the one observed in Peru (British Council, 2015g). In Colombia, 581,000 individuals are currently accessing English training through various private providers (British Council, 2015d).

Cost and the quality of education are both factors to consider in attending a language institution. British Council surveys found that cost was the greatest barrier to learning English outside the K-12 school system (British Council, 2015a, b, c, d, e, f, g). An analysis of the cost of language institutions in Colombia demonstrates a range of prices for a basic level English course, from less than \$3 per class to \$17 per class (Bonilla, 2014). In Peru and Ecuador, the cost of English classes range from \$10 to \$30 per hour, while classes in Brazil range from \$6 to \$20 for group classes to \$26 to \$53 for private lessons. While the region presents a range of options based on cost, there are few regulations to ensure the quality of these programs. Ecuador is one of the few countries that have national policies regarding private language institutions. Without regulation, the quality of private language institutions in most countries varies widely (British Council, 2015b, e, g).

Although cost may present a barrier, the growing proliferation of language academies throughout the region exemplifies the strong interest in English training. In Quito, Ecuador alone, there were 300 English language instruction institutions in 2014 compared to only 50 ten years ago. Peru has language centers in every province through a multitude of private providers. Chile has numerous providers of private language academies, including Instituto Chileno-Norteamericano, Wall Street English, Berlitz, and Education First, among others. Popular options in Ecuador include Wall Street Institute and Education First as well. Berlitz, Harmon Hall, and The Anglo have a strong presence in Mexico, while the Asociación Cultural Peruano-Británica and the Instituto Cultural Peruano-Norteamericano (ICPNA) have the largest shares of learners in Peru, with 55,000 and 50,000 students, respectively (British Council, 2015c, e, f, g).

Unlike the traditional educational system, English language learners at the language academies can choose a program tailored to their learning pace, proficiency level, language goals and schedule.<sup>13</sup> In order to offer this flexibility, language academies often seek English language curricula and learning resources from private providers in the region, such as Pearson, McGraw Hill, Cambridge English, and Oxford. These private providers use innovation, technology, and their expertise in educational materials or pedagogical tools to provide adaptable learning options to language academies.<sup>14</sup>

Language academies reach students that are still in the compulsory educational system as well. Parents are often willing to pay for additional English training for their children outside of the classes they receive at school. Students often attend classes at private language academies, although others seek opportunities through tutors, public universities, cultural houses, or other public institutions. In Mexico, the option of looking to additional English training is most common for children who already attend private schools, but has become increasingly common for public school students as well (Mexicanos Primero, 2015).

### *Lack of a cohesive approach to English language learning at the university level*

Universities also provide English language learning services. However, English is not always compulsory at this level. Most universities in Latin America have the autonomy not only to choose the languages they offer but also to set their own language policies and requirements for academic programs.

Some countries include regulations concerning English in higher education in their legal frameworks and sector policies, such as Peru and Colombia. Peru's 2016 university law, for example, sets out a foreign language requirement for undergraduate programs and includes a preference for English. The country's national English policy also includes specific strategies to promote the use of English among university students (Ministerio de Educación Perú, 2016b). In Colombia, the national plan establishes that English will be mandatory in all higher education programs, including technical, technological, and university programs. Colombia also has an exit exam at the university level with an English component.<sup>15</sup> Public universities in Ecuador also have an English exit requirement for their undergraduate students. To graduate, the students must have at least a B1 proficiency level in English. However, it is unclear how the universities go about testing their students' English levels. Some circumstantial evidence suggests that public universities in Ecuador allow their students to fulfill this requirement by taking some classes in English (British Council, 2015e).

Most Latin American countries, however, have not yet developed a cohesive strategy to regulate English programs in universities or the English proficiency levels among college students. Chile's National English Strategy 2014 – 2030 set forth a goal for action to include an ungraded English section in the national university entrance exam (*Prueba de Selección Universitaria, PSU*), and eventually include the English score in the overall PSU score (Ministerio Secretaría General de la Presidencia et al., 2014). However, these actions have not yet been implemented.

Sometimes, practice moves ahead of regulations. In Mexico, it is now a common practice for public universities to require their students to attain a minimum of 450 points on the Institutional Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), or an equivalent score on other English tests, to graduate (British Council, 2015f). As the global labor market continues to demand English language skills, however, more universities will be under pressure to offer English to their students. Whether this will be reflected in national policies and practices remains to be seen.

### *Quality as a Challenge to English Language Learning in Latin America*

What are the factors that explain the low English proficiency levels we observe in Latin America? Are governments approaching the challenge of expanding opportunities for high-quality English learning in a strategic way? Are they following effective approaches? Do schools and universities operate under well-developed policy frameworks that not only encourage the adoption of effective teaching approaches but also foster the capacities required to implement them?

Latin American families, employers and teaching institutions demonstrate an interest in developing English skills. Surveys in seven Latin American countries found that while many individuals studied English because it was mandatory in school, the next greatest motivation was to improve employment prospects. The ability to access more sources of information and to travel were also strong motivators for learning English (British Council, 2015a, b, c, d, e, f, g). How can public policies help unleash initiative and demand and orient those efforts in a strategic way to achieve better results?

In order to answer this question, we next lay out the policy frameworks that affect all aspects of ELL in each country. We look at four components that affect ELL: the legal foundation, standards and supports for learning, measurements of student achievement, and measurements of teacher qualifications.

## Chapter 2: English Language Learning Policy Framework

Improving English language learning in Latin America will require a comprehensive and focused policy framework guiding actions and investments throughout the education system. In this chapter, we review the English language learning (ELL) policy frameworks for K-12 education (Figure 1) in ten Latin American countries, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay. We consider four components that, together, shape the efforts to provide high-quality ELL within the schooling system: the legal foundation, the standards for English learning and the supports aligned to those standards, the measurement of student achievement and English teacher qualifications. The mere existence of a policy is not enough to determine its adequacy, the extent of its implementation or its impact on learning outcomes. On the other hand, if understood as tools for management and strategic direction, they provide a valuable perspective to understand strengths and weaknesses at the systemic level.

Figure 1: English language learning policy framework



We use several indicators (Table 2) to determine a country's progress towards having a comprehensive policy framework. As part of the **legal foundation**, we analyze whether a country mandates English by law in K-12 education and whether it has a national plan or strategy for the improvement of English language learning. Within **standards for learning**, we look not only at the standards and objectives but also analyze teaching supports, such as the curriculum, which guide classroom instruction. We assess policies for the **measurement of student achievement** through three indicators: the existence of a standard of measurement, proficiency goals, and a proficiency assessment. Similarly, we assess the measurement of **teacher qualifications** through the presence of teacher education standards, proficiency goals, and a proficiency assessment.

Overall, we find that Chile has the most advanced policy frameworks for ELL in the region (Table 2); our assessment indicates that all of the dimensions in the policy framework have been successfully addressed. Argentina, Brazil and Panama, on the other hand, have less well-developed national policy frameworks for ELL with several dimensions not addressed. In between, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay demonstrate areas of strength and weakness.

There are some sharp contrasts between dimensions. All countries have either successfully addressed or made progress towards defining learning standards and objectives for ELL. Similarly, all countries either mandate or encourage ELL within the legal foundation, with the exception of Argentina. However, only half of the countries have strong national plans or strategies for improving ELL, or offer teaching supports to assist teachers in the classroom. Proficiency assessment is the weakest category for both students and teachers in all countries. While most countries have a standard of measurement and student proficiency goals, few implement standardized proficiency assessments to determine whether these goals have been met. Teacher education programs often follow national standards and countries set goals for teacher proficiency, but again there is a scarcity of assessment in the region to ensure teachers meet these goals and requirements.

**Table 2: English Language Learning Policy Framework: Indicators of Progress**

	Argentina	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Costa Rica	Ecuador	Mexico	Panama	Peru	Uruguay
<b>Legal Foundation</b>										
English Mandatory by Law	◆	✓	✓	◆	✓	✓	✓	✓	◆	◆
National Plan or Strategy	X	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	◆	✓	◆
<b>Standards for Learning</b>										
Learning Standards and Objectives	◆	◆	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Teaching Supports, Including Curricula and Programs of Study	X	X	✓	✓	✓	◆	✓	✓	◆	◆
<b>Student Achievement</b>										
Standard of Measurement	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Proficiency Goals	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Proficiency Assessment	X	◆	✓	✓	✓	◆	◆	X	X	✓
<b>Teacher Qualifications</b>										
Teacher Education Standards	✓	X	✓	✓	◆	✓	X	◆	✓	✓
Proficiency Goals	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Proficiency Assessment	X	X	✓	◆	◆	✓	✓	X	X	X

✓ Yes, this topic has been successfully addressed

◆ There has been some progress in the right direction, but it is not yet sufficient

X The adequate conditions do not yet exist for this topic

Note: The rubric used to obtain these ratings is presented in the Annex

## I. Legal Foundation

### *English in K-12 education is mandatory by law in some countries and encouraged in others*

All ten countries studied as part of this report require foreign language learning in primary or secondary education, while six explicitly require English. Those that do not mandate English by law often give preference to English over other foreign languages or place it in the national curriculum, compelling the teaching of English.

Mexico and Costa Rica were the first countries to require English language instruction in schools. Mexico required foreign language learning in lower secondary education in 1926 (Martínez García, 2011). The program was suspended in 1932 (Santos, 1998), but returned to the secondary education curriculum in 1941 with a concentration on English (Mexicanos Primero, 2015). English finally expanded to primary education in 2011. *Acuerdo No. 592* requires the teaching of English from the 3rd year of preschool education to the 3rd year of lower secondary education, the equivalent of 9th grade (SEP, 2011a). In Costa Rica, English became mandatory in primary schools in 1944, with plans for expansion to other levels by 1949. The government of José María Figueres reemphasized the importance of English for the economic development of the country in the late 1990s and again declared English mandatory in primary and secondary education in 1997 (Marín Arroyo, 2012; IDB, n.d.).

Other countries established laws requiring English language learning much more recently. In Panama, a 2003 law required English in both public and private primary and secondary schools (Ley No. 2, 2003). In Chile, a 1996 decree made foreign language learning a requirement starting in the second cycle of basic education, or grade 5, while a modification in 2009 established English as a mandatory subject in basic education. Other languages should follow the English model to prepare their programs (Decreto No. 40, 1996; Decreto No. 256, 2009). In Ecuador, a ministerial agreement expanded the English language requirement to early primary education, when previously only required starting in the 8th year of basic education (Acuerdo No. 0052-14, 2014). This requirement went into effect in the Sierra region in the 2016-2017 school year and will go into effect in the Coastal region in the 2017-2018 school year. Brazil previously only required the study of a foreign language starting in 6th grade, but the most recent revision to the law national education mandates English as the required language (Lei No. 13.415, 2017). This will go into effect in 2018.

Education laws in other countries require foreign language learning at a national level, but do not necessarily mandate English. However, English is often emphasized or placed into the national curriculum, which ultimately compels schools to teach English. A 1994 law in Colombia made foreign language learning mandatory in primary and secondary education, while a provision in 2013 gave preference to

English (Ley No. 1651, 2013). Uruguay's General Law of Education includes foreign language learning as a requirement, but does not specify English (Ley No. 18.437, 2009). However, the secondary curriculum first included English in 1996 with an update in 2006, while the primary curriculum currently offers a choice between English and Portuguese (CES, 2016; CEIP, 2010). While the curriculum allows for a choice, English is taught in all schools in the country. Portuguese is taught only in schools in the northeast of the country in three of the 19 departments of Uruguay, where there is a Spanish-Portuguese bilingual population. In Peru, foreign language learning became mandatory in 2003 (Ley No. 28044, 2003). A 2014 resolution then put forth guidelines for the implementation of English language learning in primary and secondary education (Resolución No. 2060-2014-MINEDU, 2014). Argentina made foreign language learning mandatory in primary and secondary education in 2006, but does not specify English at the national level (Ley No. 26.206, 2006). Instead, the provinces have the autonomy to decide which foreign language to teach.

As the various laws suggest, the required grade levels for ELL vary throughout the region. Mandated English classes start as early as pre-primary education in Mexico and as late as secondary education in Uruguay. There is a trend of increasing years of instruction in many countries of the region. Ecuador recently lowered the starting age for English language learning, while Mexico did so in 2011. These laws establish the first indicator of the legal foundation of a country's policy framework, upon which countries can then develop national plans or strategies to improve the quality of ELL.

### *Existing national strategies serve as models for other countries*

Stemming from the laws that mandate English language learning, several countries have national strategies or plans for ELL. National strategies are comprehensive, coordinated, long-term plans for improving English language acquisition throughout the country. They set forth decisive actions to improve a country's English proficiency and establish the party responsible for achieving these actions. Having a national strategy in place is therefore the second indicator of the legal foundation. A strong national strategy includes an overall objective or mission statement, lines of action, specific objectives and actions, and goals and metrics.

Although not all Latin American countries currently have a national English strategy, those that do have one served as models for others. For example, Chile's strategy served as a model for both Colombia and Perú. The consultancy terms of reference seeking the creation of a document outlining Peru's national English policy required reviewing national strategies of Chile and Colombia (FORGE, n.d.).

Perhaps not surprisingly, the national strategies of Chile, Colombia, and Peru have all of the necessary components of a strong national strategy, including a mission statement, strategic lines of action, specific objectives,

strategies, actions, goals and metrics. The three country strategies reference the importance of English for international competitiveness.

The 2014 Chile's National English Strategy developed by the Piñera administration had the general objective "to strengthen the proficiencies of the Chilean population in the English language, in order to accelerate the integration of Chile into a global world and therefore improve our competitiveness" (Ministerio Secretaría General de la Presidencia et al., 2014). The strategy put forth four lines of action: family and society (seeking to increase contact with English at home and in daily life); schools and students (seeking to improve English language teaching in the education system); initial and continuous training of English teachers; and English for specific purposes (seeking to provide alternatives for learning English in order to improve the skills of professionals in the workplace).

The *Plan de Fortalecimiento de la Educación Pública* (Ministerio de Educación Chile, 2014b), part of President Bachelet's Educational Reform, put forth an immediate agenda to improve public education including on English language policies. The English component of the plan, or *Fortalecimiento de la Educación Pública en Inglés (FEP - Inglés)*, includes a special teacher-training program, the support of a network of English volunteers, and teaching resources and laboratories, as well as free English courses for secondary students. *FEP-Inglés* is being implemented in more than 1,000 public schools throughout Chile.

Colombia's national English strategy, *Colombia Bilingüe*, strives for students "to communicate increasingly better in English and gain access to better job and career opportunities," and focuses on teachers, materials, and monitoring and follow-up. It introduces both goals at the K-12 and higher education levels, including student and teacher proficiency goals for 2018 (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, n.d.).

Peru's National Policy (2015 – 2021), "*Inglés, Puertas al Mundo*", has as an objective to develop English competencies as a way to facilitate the country's participation in international markets and strengthen competitiveness. The policy lays out specific objectives and actions to improve English language acquisition at the basic and higher education level, as well as for work and competitiveness, including in the tourism industry (Ministerio de Educación Perú, 2016b).

Ecuador, Mexico, and Uruguay have all developed national strategies, but they lack key elements for success. Ecuador's *Proyecto de Fortalecimiento de la Enseñanza de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera* has a mission statement, specific objectives regarding curriculum, textbooks, and teacher training, and proficiency goals, but presents vague actions to accomplish these objectives (Ministerio de Educación Ecuador, n.d.b). Mexico's new strategy (National English Program, PRONI) seeks

to “contribute to ensuring the quality of learning in basic education and the integral trainings of all groups of the population by strengthening the teaching and learning processes of English as a second language in public schools of basic education through the establishment of technical and pedagogical conditions” (SEP, 2015b). It has four lines of action (educational materials, academic strengthening through the certification of teachers, international certification of students, and support to local education authorities in order to implement English from the third year of preschool to the sixth year of primary education), but they tend to be less specific and are missing detailed metrics for the goals. Uruguay’s *Comisión de Políticas Lingüísticas en la Educación Pública* developed four documents for improving language policies. Although these documents are not specific to English alone, they provide a framework of reference for language policies, propose restructuring language curriculum, and provide recommendations for teacher training (ANEP/CODICEN, 2007). Again, though, these documents are not yet sufficient to compose a complete national strategy. Argentina, Brazil, and Costa Rica currently have no national strategy for English instruction.

It is worth considering that while ELL programs do not constitute strategies (they can often be short-term, address only a particular aspect of ELL, or do not articulate the interrelationship among the various program components), they can nonetheless provide impetus for creating national strategies. Chile, for example, created *PIAP* in 2004 (Box 1), which played a significant role both in the National English Strategy and the current national plan, *FEP-Inglés*. Colombia’s national strategy incorporated prior programs such as the *Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo (PNB) 2006 – 2010* and the *Programa de Fortalecimiento al Desarrollo de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras (PFDCLE) 2010 – 2014*.

### Box 1: Programa Inglés Abre Puertas

Chile’s *Programa Inglés Abre Puertas (PIAP)* was created in 2004. In more than 10 years of operation, it has reached tens of thousands of students throughout the country.

Student-centered activities include extracurricular activities (including a spelling bee for grades 5-6, public speaking for grades 7-8, and debates for secondary education students), summer and winter camps (in which more than 25,000 students have participated since 2008) and e-learning courses (Ministerio de Educación Chile, n.d.). The debate competitions underwent a major change in 2016, after a temporary suspension in 2015. The new debates run as inter-school competitions that allow students to develop research skills, critical thinking, and debating in English (Ministerio de Educación Chile & UNDP, n.d.). This year, 214 public schools will participate in the debate tournament. PIAP and the University of Antofagasta created a new e-learning course in 2016-2017. This course is an A1 level course for which 5,000 licenses have been issued.

Classroom-support activities of PIAP include a self-learning program offered in all rural classrooms (where proficient English teachers are often absent) and a volunteer program for English speakers to assist in classrooms throughout the country. The self-learning program involves an audiovisual tool along with teaching guides, student booklets, evaluation and planning notebooks. The volunteer program is run through the National Volunteer Center, which recruits English speakers to assist in classrooms throughout the country and to participate in extracurricular activities. From 2004 to 2013, 1,835 volunteers participated in the program (Ministerio Secretaría General de la Presidencia et al., 2014).

## II. Standards for Learning

*All countries set foreign language learning standards, while most provide detailed curricula to support classroom instruction*

Learning standards set minimum requirements expected of students at various levels. Foreign language learning standards exist in all ten countries, and are specific to English in eight of the countries (Table 2). Foreign language standards are typically composed of four principal components or domains: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Argentina, Ecuador and Mexico also include a cultural component such as intercultural reflection in Argentina, communication and cultural awareness in Ecuador, and attitudes toward the language in Mexico. Argentina and Brazil do not tailor their language learning standards specifically to English, but instead have general learning standards for all foreign languages.

Learning standards assist in curriculum development for classroom teaching support. The principle standards of listening, reading, speaking, and writing are first broken down into specific learning objectives or indicators that often describe what a student should know or be able to do. Objectives vary throughout the region; each country specifies the learning objectives to its own national goals or local context. Some countries also discuss the various philosophical foundations and pedagogical approaches that help shape the curriculum or programs of study.

All ten countries provide some guidelines for English language learning, but some are better developed than others. Important components include standards of learning for all grade levels and detailed curriculum with a comprehensive overview of English language learning in the country's education system, scope of content and sequence of material, student activities and instructional and assessment techniques. These components support teachers in their daily teaching activities. Most countries provide detailed curricula for English language learning, while some require improvements, particularly regarding the scope and sequence of material.

Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, and Chile provide detailed curricula in relation to ELL. Mexico's *Propuesta Curricular para la Educación Obligatoria 2016* contains basic information on standards and themes related to English as a Foreign Language (SEP, 2016b), but the 2011 programs of study created through the previous national program, *Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica (PNIEB)*, provide more detail. While the programs of study discuss general assessment guidelines, they lack specific assessment techniques.

Costa Rica has three programs of study that provide the curriculum for three different cycles of education from grades 1 – 12. The programs of study contain a comprehensive overview of English language learning with legal, philosophical, and pedagogical foundations. There is a sequence of material divided into units

of study for each grade level, with themes, objectives, goals, and instructional and assessment strategies (Ministerio de Educación Pública de Costa Rica, 2016).

Panama's programs of study provide similar information to those of Costa Rica. It has twelve programs for each grade level that cover the curriculum for all subjects or courses, last updated in 2014. Each provides a philosophical and pedagogical foundation as well as background information on the educational system of Panama. The English component provides a sequence of material with learning objectives, concepts, suggested activities, and indications and activities for assessment (MEDUCA, 2014).

Colombia provides a suggested curriculum in the "My ABC English Kit," which includes a comprehensive overview of English teaching and learning, curricular foundations, and teaching and assessment methodologies. It provides syllabi, example lesson plans, rubric examples, and suggested resources for teaching English in grades 6 – 11 (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, n.d.).

Finally, Chile provides a national curriculum for English language learning as well as plans, programs of study, textbooks, maps of learning progress, and standards, all of which serve as instruments to implement the curriculum. Chile's *Bases Curriculares* define the English standards and learning objectives for grades 5 – 10, the grade levels for which English is mandatory. It was updated in 2012 for grades 5 – 6 and in 2015 for grades 7 – 10. These documents also define the student profile expected upon completion of each level, provide suggested teaching methods, and describe anticipated student attitudes, or socio-emotional skills. While official learning of English begins in 5th grade, there is a Curricular Proposal for grades 1 – 4, providing support to schools that choose to offer English in earlier grades. The programs of study include a sequence of material in the form of units, with objectives, suggested classroom activities, and hard and soft skills to develop. The programs of study also give examples of evaluation aligned to the learning objectives (Ministerio de Educación Chile, 2015a).

The curricula of Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay include learning standards and objectives, but all lack a sequence of material and provide limited suggestions for classroom activities, if any. Ecuador's *Currículo de los Niveles de Educación Obligatoria* provides a comprehensive overview of the legal framework, student exit profile, curricular components, and methodological techniques. It then focuses on the expectations of the various educational levels for English as a foreign language. It includes the learning standards and objectives, suggested activities, and methods of evaluation and instructional techniques. However, it does not include a sequence of material in the form of units of study (Ministerio de Educación Ecuador, 2016), as Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, and Chile do. Peru's English unit of the National Curriculum of 2016 contains learning standards and objectives and

competency descriptions of Peru's standard of measurement. However, it does not provide a sequence of material, suggested activities for students, or any motivational, instructional, or assessment techniques (Ministerio de Educación Perú, 2016a). Finally, Uruguay's *Programas de Inglés* include learning standards and objectives, a student exit profile, suggested teaching methods, suggested methods of evaluation, and suggested activities for various objectives. The program mentions themed units of study, but does not provide details of the sequence of material and its learning expectations or activities (CES, 2016). However, in the case of *Ceibal en Inglés* (Box 2), a program that is responsible for a large percentage of primary school English lessons and is also present in some secondary school English lessons, there is a clear sequence of material and a wide range of suggested classroom activities.

### Box 2: *Plan Ceibal*: Increasing educational access through technology

*Ceibal en Inglés* started in 2007 as an initiative of *Plan Ceibal* (Uruguay's One Laptop per Child project through which all children in grades 1 – 6 receive a laptop), which provides various programs, educational resources, and teacher training to improve teaching and learning in Uruguay. Their mission is to "promote the integration of technology in the service of education to improve its quality and promote processes of social innovation, inclusion and personal growth" (*Plan Ceibal*, n.d.).

In addition to providing laptops, the program also ensures all public schools have Internet access. Currently 100% of schools have WiFi access, while 92.9% of urban public schools have Internet access via fiber optic cable. This connectivity allows a large percentage of the country's students to learn English via videoconference. Of the 87% of primary students with access to English classes in Uruguay, 73% now learn via videoconference through *Ceibal en Inglés*, while the other 27% learn through in-person classes provided by the *Departamento de Segundas Lenguas* (*Plan Ceibal*, CEIP, & ANEP, 2015).

Argentina and Brazil are the only two countries that do not have a national curriculum or programs of study for English language learning. Instead, both countries provide a national basis for the provinces or states to develop their own curriculum. Argentina's curricular guidelines can be found in the *Núcleos de Aprendizaje Prioritarios (NAPs)*. This document provides standards and objectives relevant to all foreign languages in primary and secondary education at four different levels of learning, depending on the starting point of foreign language courses. However, it provides little content information or suggestions of how to teach the objectives (Consejo Federal de Educación, 2012). Brazil's most recent curriculum update created the *Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC)* in 2016. Instead, the updated curriculum mentions the four principle standards of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in relation to modern foreign languages, but does not elaborate specific objectives or provide details on various language levels. The document proposes curricular themes. The BNCC themes, which include practices of everyday life, artistic-literary practices, political practices, investigative practices, practices mediated by digital technologies, and practices of the world of work, indicate priorities in selecting class material (Ministério da Educação, 2016b). The curricular guidelines of Argentina and Brazil are then adapted to the local context throughout the provinces and states.

### III. Measurement of Student Achievement

#### *Weak measures of student achievement with uneven progress*

The student achievement component is the weakest piece of the ELL policy framework throughout Latin America. Together, standards of measurement, proficiency goals, and a proficiency assessment allow for a comprehensive measure of student achievement, which documents the success, or failure, of efforts to promote English language proficiency within the system.

While the standards of learning described above tell us what a student should know or be able to do, a method of measurement is necessary to determine whether students are actually meeting those standards. National goals for student achievement are also important, as they describe the expectations for students at various levels of proficiency. Finally, evaluation serves to provide data on student achievement, which can then serve to adjust and improve goals and strategies at the national level.

Only two countries in the region, Chile and Colombia, have developed and implemented all three components. Five countries in the region are lacking proficiency assessments in particular, while three countries in the region, Argentina, Brazil, and Panama, do not have any of these three indicators.

In order to assess student achievement, a country must have a standard of measurement. Seven of the ten countries in the region (Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Uruguay, and Peru) turn to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This framework provides a guideline for the assessment of foreign language proficiency (Table 3). The CEFR describes six levels of proficiency in ascending order: A1 (breakthrough) and A2 (waystage) for basic users, B1 (threshold) and B2 (vantage) for independent users, and C1 (effective operational proficiency) and C2 (mastery) for proficient users (Council of Europe, 2001).

**Table 3: Common European Framework of Reference: Common Reference Levels**

<b>Proficient User</b>	<b>C2</b>	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	<b>C1</b>	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
<b>Independent User</b>	<b>B2</b>	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	<b>B1</b>	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise while traveling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
<b>Basic User</b>	<b>A2</b>	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	<b>A1</b>	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Source: Council of Europe, 2001

### *Proficiency goals set ambitious expectations in the region*

Student proficiency goals set specific expectations at various grade levels, which provide targets or benchmarks toward which to strive. A country can then track its level of English language proficiency in relation to the goal and make adjustments to policy as necessary. All seven countries that currently use the CEFR also set proficiency goals in relation to its measurement standards.

Costa Rica and Uruguay set the highest student achievement expectations, which is that graduating secondary students must reach level B2. This is currently an expectation in the Costa Rican curriculum, while this is a goal for 2030 in Uruguay. Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru expect secondary graduates to reach B1, while Mexico and Uruguay expect early secondary students (grades 7 -9) to reach that same level. Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay all set a goal of A2 for primary students, while Colombia and Costa Rica also aim for students to reach the A2 level at the conclusion of primary education (Ministerio Secretaría General de la Presidencia et al., 2014; Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, n.d.; Ministerio de Educación Ecuador, n.d.b; Ministerio de Educación Perú, 2016b; SEP, 2015b; ANEP/CODICEN, 2013; Ministerio de Educación Pública de Costa Rica, 2016).

In Argentina, Brazil, and Panama, the lack of a standard of measurement for ELL makes it impossible to establish proficiency goals.

### *There is a dearth of proficiency assessments*

A country may have measurement standards and a goal for proficiency, but there is no way to measure the national level of English language acquisition without an assessment. Few countries have a national or international exam to measure and evaluate proficiency, even when they have national standards and goals in place.

Few countries utilize standardized examinations to evaluate English proficiency at various grade levels. Costa Rica and Uruguay utilize both international standardized assessments and national assessments to evaluate student English proficiency at various grade levels each year. Costa Rica uses the *TOEIC – Bridge* exam to determine a student's baseline proficiency level in English (Ministerio de Educación Pública de Costa Rica, 2016) for a sample of students at the conclusion of the third cycle of basic education, or the end of the 9th grade. Students completing secondary education then take national exams covering various subjects and have a choice between English and French (Ministerio de Educación Pública de Costa Rica, 2017a). Uruguay has a dual assessment strategy as well. Uruguay works with Cambridge English to administer the *Young Learners Exam (YLE)* at the A1 level, the *Cambridge English Key Exam (KET)* at the A2 level, and the *Cambridge English Preliminary Exam (PET)* at the B1 level. The YLE is given to a sample of students in the 6th grade of primary education (CEIP, 2014). Students up to the age of 12 can certify their

level of English through the YLE exam, while secondary students can certify their level of English through the KET and PET exams (ANEP, n.d.). While international assessments give prestige and external validation, only a small proportion of students take these exams at each level. Uruguay also has a national adaptive English test taken by more than 60,000 students each year and growing.<sup>16</sup>

Other countries only evaluate English at one grade level. Colombia uses a national exam to evaluate students at the completion of secondary education through the *SABER 11* exam. Chile, on the other hand, assesses only a sample of students every three years. These students, in the third year of upper secondary education, take the *SIMCE de Inglés* exam (Ministerio de Educación Chile, 2016a).<sup>17</sup> Both national exams assess students using the CEFR from A1 – B1.

Two other countries assess student English proficiency through optional exams and therefore do not reach all students or even a representative sample. The optional nature of these exams provides a biased result of English proficiency, as examinees are self-selected. Brazil and Mexico both utilize optional exams to measure student English proficiency. Brazil's national exam for graduating secondary students, known as the *Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio (ENEM)*, tests various subjects within four different knowledge areas. The entire exam is optional. The foreign language component, which falls under the knowledge area of "languages, codes and their technologies, and writing," assesses student proficiency in English or Spanish based on the student's choice (INEP, 2017). Mexico developed a national exam to assess proficiency in foreign languages known as the *Certificación Nacional de Nivel de Idiomas (CENNI)*. The CENNI has its own standard of measurement with corresponding levels to the CEFR (Mexicanos Primero, 2015). This exam is not a national requirement, but optional for students who wish to certify their proficiency level in a foreign language such as English (SEP, 2013).

Ecuador only recently began assessing English proficiency and has not yet reached all students. Ecuador has an alliance with Education First (EF) to assess English proficiency levels of public school students at the end of lower secondary and upper secondary education. The assessment, which focuses on reading and listening skills, started as a pilot program in the Galapagos Islands with 800 students in October of 2016. It was then extended to approximately 500,000 students in the Coastal region at the end of 2016 and the Sierra region in April and May of 2017 (Paucar, 2016). Ecuador also plans to incorporate English into its national exam, *Ser Bachiller*, for graduating secondary students, but this will not go into effect until 2025.

Overall, the region lacks reliable data due to the dearth of proficiency assessments. International assessments described in the first chapter also do not provide the reliable data necessary for policy making, due to the optional nature of the exams returning biased results. The lack of

standardized national exams represents a serious limitation to efforts to orient policies and programs for the achievement of English proficiency.

## IV. Teacher Qualifications

Teachers are essential to the daily activities of English language learning. Requirements to teach in K-12 education vary widely across the region. This section is concerned with the specific requirements to be a teacher of English as a foreign language, and will therefore focus on learning standards and proficiency requirements for English teachers. When measuring proficiency requirements for teachers, the same components of student achievement apply: a standard of measurement, proficiency goals, and a system of evaluation.

### *Most countries set standards for teacher education programs*

Teacher education program standards systematize what teachers are expected to learn in pre-service training. Eight out of the ten countries have set national standards for teacher education programs, while Panama and Costa Rica give more autonomy to universities to set requirements.

Ecuador and Uruguay both modeled their English language teaching standards off the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL) international teacher standards, which include the intersecting domains of language, culture, instruction, assessment, and professionalism (TESOL International Association, 2010). Both countries included the five domains, although with slightly different titles. Ecuador's standards include the domains of language, culture, curriculum development, assessment, and professionalism and ethical commitment, while Uruguay's include language; culture; planning, implementing, and managing instruction; assessment; and curriculum. Both countries include specific standards within each domain (Ministerio de Educación Ecuador, 2012; Kuhlman, 2010).

Argentina, Peru, Colombia, and Chile have similar teaching standards as well, although not as closely aligned to the TESOL standards. Argentina only has four domains: learning, citizenship, culture, and discursive practices (Ministerio de Educación de la Nación, n.d.). Peru's Ministry of Education developed a "Basic National Curriculum Design" for English language teacher training programs. The curriculum is guided by four principles: participation and flexibility, mediation of learning, reflection in and from the practice for social reconstruction, and evaluation with formative emphasis (Ministerio de Educación Perú, 2010). Colombia has only three basic competencies: teaching, training, and evaluation (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, 2014b). Chile, on the other hand, has ten disciplinary standards as well as ten pedagogical standards for both primary and secondary education (Ministerio de Educación Chile, 2014a).

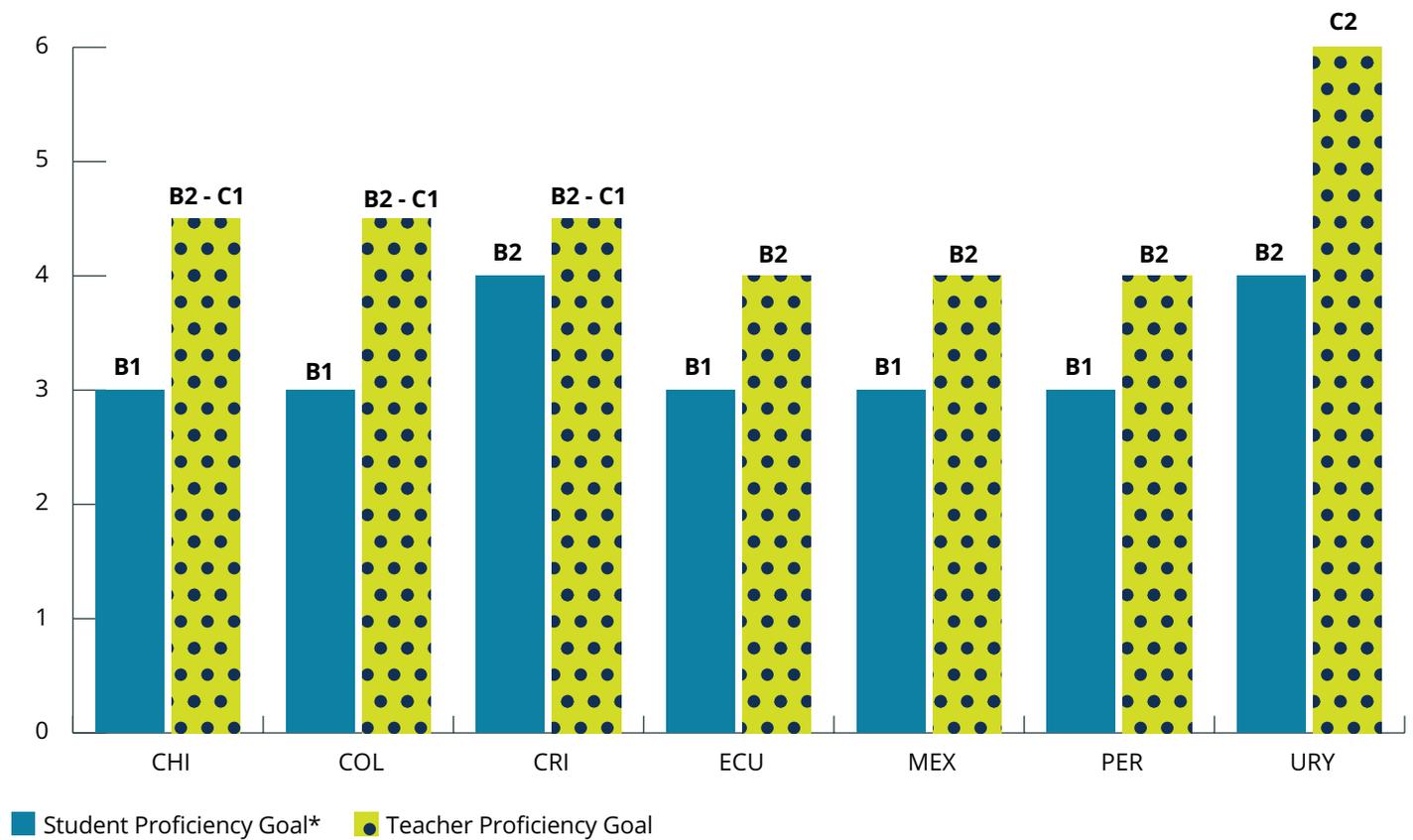
Panama and Costa Rica have developed teacher profiles for English teachers, which simply describe expectations without the use of formal national standards. Both countries include a general profile or description of expectations for English teachers in their national curriculum and also collaborate with universities to create teacher profiles at the university level (Ministerio de Educación Pública de Costa Rica, 2016; MEDUCA, 2014).

Mexico and Brazil do not have national teacher education standards. Mexico has a teacher profile used to design global selection, assessment and promotion instruments, but it is not directly linked with teacher education programs (SEP, 2015a). Brazil's *Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais (PCN)*, which guided learning prior to the adoption of the BNCC, discuss teacher competencies for various subject areas. Again, though, these documents are not directly linked with teacher education programs. (Ministério da Educação, 2016a).

### *Teacher proficiency requirements are increasing in several countries*

Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay again use the CEFR and set English teacher proficiency goals. Uruguay has the highest expectations for English teachers, with a current requirement of C1 and a goal of C2 by 2030 (ANEP/ CODICEN, 2013). In Chile, B2 is the current standard of the Ministry of Education for teachers in public and government-subsidized private schools, while C1 is the required level for newly trained teachers, according to the Standards for Initial Teacher Training in English (Ministerio Secretaría General de la Presidencia et al., 2014). Colombia requires all current primary and secondary teachers to have a B2 level and graduates of teacher-training programs must meet a B2+ level by 2018. (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, n.d.). These future goals demonstrate increasing teacher proficiency requirements. Costa Rica currently expects teachers to meet a B2 or C1 level, while English teachers in Ecuador, Mexico, and Peru must meet the B2 level (Ministerio de Educación Ecuador, n.d.b; SEP, n.d.). These requirements are put in place to ensure that teachers have the proper level of proficiency to teach students in K-12 education whose proficiency ranges from the A1 – B2 level, or even C1 level in Costa Rica. Graph 5 shows the differences between the student and teacher proficiency goals.

**GRAPH 5: STUDENT AND TEACHER PROFICIENCY GOALS**



Source: Educational Testing Service, 2016

Note: Student and teacher proficiency goals are aligned to the CEFR, which ranges from the lowest level of A1 to the highest level of C2.

\*The student proficiency goal is based on the highest goal set for at least 50% of students at the highest required grade level.

### *Most countries fail to utilize teacher proficiency assessments*

Although various countries in the region set goals for high levels of English proficiency, teacher evaluations to measure proficiency are poorly established in the region. This is true for both current English teachers and recent graduates from teacher training programs. Most countries in the region lack teacher proficiency requirements and exams. Chile, Mexico and Ecuador, however, provide examples of how a country can institute a required proficiency exam for English teachers aligned to international proficiency standards.

Chile's *Examen Inicial de Conocimiento y Habilidades Docentes*, which is equivalent to Chile's previous exam, *Inicia*, provides an example of a national exam for teacher evaluation in the region. It tests four components of English teaching: listening, reading, language analysis, and teaching English as a second language. The objectives differ slightly for those wishing to teach at the upper secondary versus the primary or early secondary level (Ministerio de Educación Chile, 2016c). The exam is administered by the Centro de Perfeccionamiento, Experimentación

e Investigaciones Pedagógicas (CPEIP) of the Ministry of Education and is now a requirement to teach in public and subsidized schools (Ministerio de Educación Chile, 2013). The *Inicia* exam, on the other hand, was administered from 2008 to 2015 and was voluntary (Ministerio de Educación Chile, 2016b).

Mexico's policy requires English teachers to assess their English proficiency. Teachers may choose from a variety of standardized international assessments aligned to the CEFR or take Mexico's own national CENNI exam. Standardized international assessments accepted include the First Certificate in English (FCE), the Certificate in Advanced English (CAE), the Certificate Proficiency in English (CPE), and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), all of which are part of the University of Cambridge ESOL examinations, the Integrated Skills in English Examination (ISE) through Trinity College London, the Pearson PPD General English Diagnostic Test, the TOEFL iBT Internet Based Test, and the Diagnostic Test for English Students 3 (DTES 3), among others. All of these exam results are or can be aligned to the CEFR measurement standards. The CENNI levels of proficiency can be aligned to the CEFR measurement as well. Although this is a requirement for English teachers, Mexico's authorities have made no specific effort to ensure that all English teachers comply.<sup>18</sup>

Ecuador's system of teacher proficiency assessments is similar to that of Mexico. While Ecuador does not have its own national exam, teachers may choose among various standardized international assessments to certify their proficiency level. Standardized international assessments accepted include the Pearson Test of English (PTE), the FCE, CAE, CPE, and IELTS, and the TOEFL iBT, among others. Teachers must reach a minimum of a B2 proficiency level (Ministerio de Educación Ecuador, n.d.a).

Overall, countries in Latin America fall behind in teacher proficiency evaluation. In reality, as long as the necessary political will is demonstrated, countries can easily adopt already established and well-respected standardized international assessments to evaluate teacher proficiency.<sup>19</sup> From there, a country can examine the priorities of its English language learning policy framework to determine the necessity and value in creating its own standard teacher assessment.

## Chapter 3: English Teachers in Latin America

Teachers are essential to the implementation of national strategies for ELL. Governments can propose new policies to expand access and improve proficiency levels or create new standards and curricula, but teachers must carry out these changes in the classroom on a daily basis. However, English teachers in the region demonstrate poor qualifications. A majority of English teachers do not demonstrate the necessary proficiency levels to impart classes. With increasing demand in the region for ELL, there is a greater strain on the limited availability of quality English teachers. Three factors appear to be critical: poor pre-service training, insufficient professional development, and weak implementation of policy frameworks.

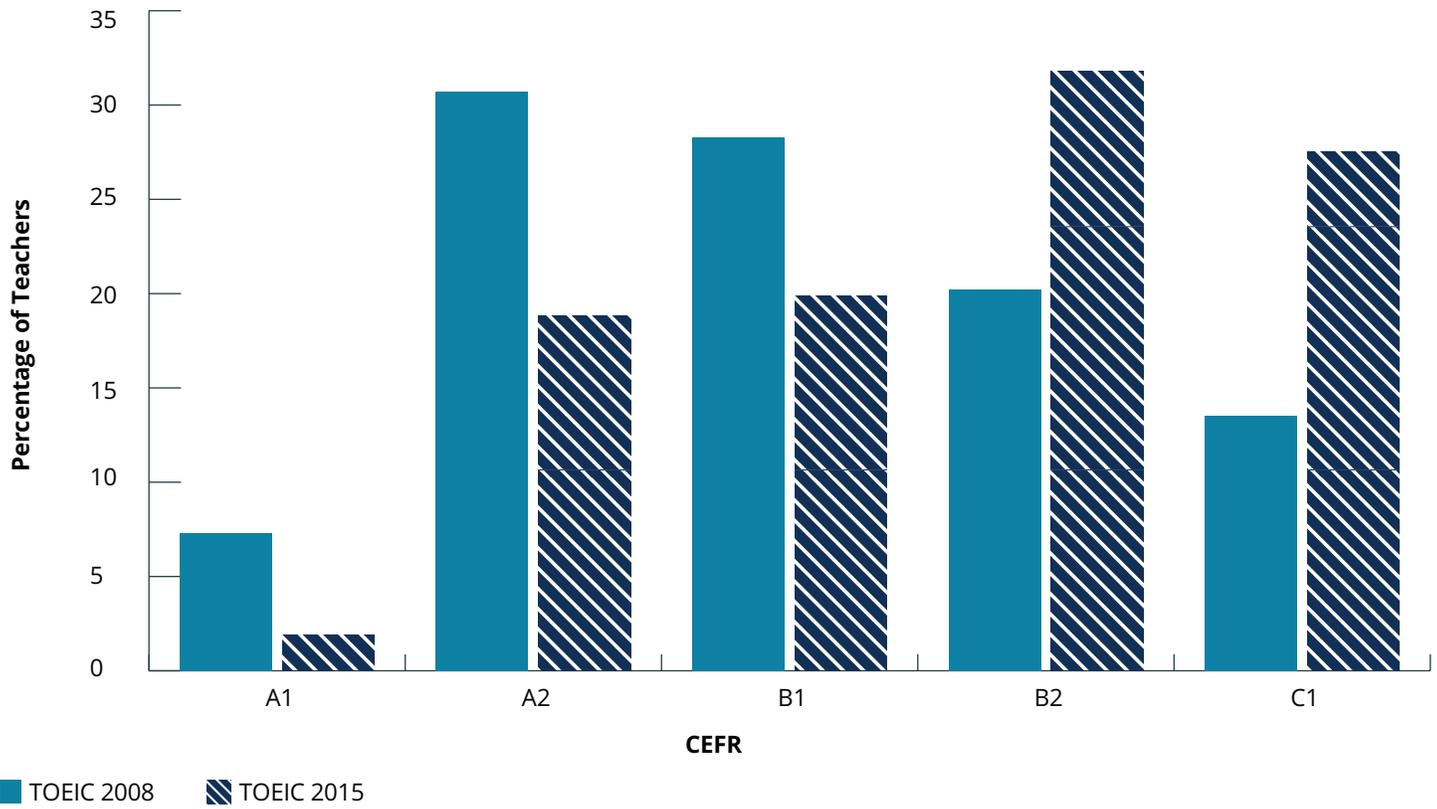
### *English teachers in Latin America demonstrate low proficiency.*

Practicing English teachers throughout Latin America demonstrate low levels of proficiency in the language. ELL policies in most countries establish proficiency requirements or expectations that range from B2 – C2 on the CEFR. According to available diagnostic tests and other studies, however, many English teachers do not reach these minimum levels. Many do not even meet the expected level of their students, ranging from A1 – B2.

Costa Rica and Chile are the two countries where English teachers have demonstrated the strongest performance. Costa Rica tested its practicing English teachers in 2008 and again in 2015. Chile has tested the English level of just over half of its practicing English teachers since 2012 through placement and certification tests. The highest percentages of teachers are found in the B2 or B2+ proficiency levels on the 2015 TOEIC assessment in Costa Rica (Diaz Rojas, 2016) and both the Cambridge Placement Test (CPT) and the First Certificate in English (FCE) test in Chile.<sup>20</sup> The results demonstrate adequate levels of proficiency for many, but numerous teachers are still performing at the A1 – B1 proficiency levels. This means that many teachers cannot even engage in basic conversations in English and yet are tasked with instructing students to much more complex levels of fluency.

In the case of Costa Rica, however, there was a noticeable improvement in proficiency levels between 2008 and 2015 (Graph 6). The percentages of teachers at the lowest levels of A1, A2, and B1 all decreased, while the percentages of teachers at B2 and C1 both increased. Less than two percent of teachers measured were at the lowest level in 2015, while almost 60% attained B2 or C1, the levels established to teach English in Costa Rica. The 2015 results are a positive sign for proficiency in Costa Rica. Teachers who did not reach the desired proficiency level in 2008 went through training courses to improve their English proficiency. However, there are still a large percentage of teachers at the A2 and B1 levels, indicating a continuing need for further training (Diaz Rojas, 2016).

**Graph 6: Costa Rica Results of TOEIC for English Teachers, 2008 - 2015**



Source: Diaz Rojas, 2016.  
 Note: TOEIC is the Test of English for International Communication.

Teachers can take a diagnostic test through Chile’s *PIAP*. The Cambridge Placement Test (CPT) provides a preliminary measure of a teacher’s level of English, as it only measures reading and writing. From 2012 to 2015, 5,220 individuals teaching English took the CPT and about two-thirds of them placed into B2 or higher (Table 4), B2+ being the standard established by the Ministry of Education to teach English.

**Table 4: Teacher Proficiency Levels in Chile**

Cambridge Placement Test (CPT) (2012-2017)			Cambridge First Certificate in English (FCE) (2012-2015)	
CEFR	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Pre-A1	39	0.6%	--	--
A1	218	3.4%	--	--
A2	686	10.7%	--	--
B1	1408	22.0%	125	7.2%
<b>B2</b>	<b>2328</b>	<b>36.5%</b>	696	40.2%
<b>B2+</b>	--	--	<b>617</b>	<b>35.6%</b>
<b>C1</b>	<b>1367</b>	<b>21.4%</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>17.0%</b>
<b>C2</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	--	--
Total	6386	100.0%	1733	100.0%

Source: Ministerio de Educación Chile, personal communication, April 13, 2017; Karina Piña Pérez, personal communication, May 24, 2017.

Those that performed at the B2 level or above since 2012 were then invited to certify their English proficiency through the Cambridge First Certificate in English (FCE). The FCE tests four skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The results of this exam (Table 4) taken from 2014 – 2015 show that only 52% of those who took the exam (approximately 20% of all those teaching English in Chile) attained the required proficiency level of B2+ or higher to be certified. Considering that this was already a group that performed well in the CPT and that it was a self-selected sample of teachers to start, it is reasonable to assume that only a minority of English teachers met the required level of proficiency.

However positive the picture from Chile and Costa Rica, data from other countries show less promising results of English teacher proficiency. English teachers in Colombia and Ecuador demonstrate low levels of proficiency in relation to the policy framework requirements and expectations of a B2 proficiency level. In 2013, Colombia tested the proficiency level of 50% of its 15,300 English teachers through a diagnostic exam. The Ministry of Education set a standard of B2 on the CEFR for English teachers, but less than half, or 43%, of those tested reached this level (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, n.d.). A study in Ecuador shows a much lower percentage of teachers reaching the B2 proficiency level, which is the level required by the country's policy framework.

In a 2012 study, only 2% of Ecuador's English teachers in public schools passed the TOEFL iBT exam with a B2 proficiency level (Cumsille & Fiszbein, 2015).

In Peru, many English teachers are performing at the level expected of their youngest students, far below the expectations of the policy framework. A UNESCO study assessed the proficiency of 3,356 English teachers in Peru and found that about 1/3 perform at the A1 level, the beginning level designated for primary students (Ministerio de Educación Perú, 2016b).

In Mexico, a study on teachers conducted by *Mexicanos Primero* measured the proficiency level of a sample of 504 current English teachers in specific urban areas. The policy framework in Mexico requires a B2 proficiency level for lower secondary teachers. However, 52% of those tested did not even reach B1, which is the level expected of 9th grade students. Only 12% of teachers reached A2, the level expected of 7th grade students, while a quarter of the teachers assessed only reached A1, expected of 4th grade students. Some teachers did not even reach A1, the most basic level on the CEFR (Mexicanos Primero, 2015).

Brazil does not set proficiency requirements for English teachers at a national level, and does not conduct a national proficiency assessment of its teachers. The *Censo Escolar 2013* conducted by the *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE)* found that only 33% of English teachers had certificates of proficiency. However, some teachers stated they do not have a certificate because they are never expected to show proof of this qualification (British Council, 2015h). Argentina, Panama, and Uruguay also do not measure teacher proficiency.

Overall, data shows a rather negative picture of the proficiency levels among English teachers in the region.

### *The issue: growing demand with basic quality*

There is a growing demand for English teachers in Latin America. Expansion plans in many countries throughout the region call for thousands of additional English teachers in the next few years. Mexico provides a clear example of the seriousness of this challenge. It currently fails to provide English teachers for all of its students. Only one out of every seven public basic education schools has an English teacher. This contrasts with the situation in private schools: nine out of ten private lower secondary schools have an English teacher. There also exists a geographical disadvantage: half of the public schools in Mexico City have an English teacher while English teachers are present in less than 10% of public schools in Tabasco and Veracruz. It is estimated that an additional 80,000 new teachers are needed to offer English classes throughout the country (British Council, 2015f).

But Mexico is not alone in facing this challenge. Colombia also has a shortage of English teachers, failing to reach students in lower and upper secondary education. There are currently 15,300 licensed English teachers in the public sector of Colombia. Colombia recommends three hours of English classes per week in secondary education, but an estimated 36% of enrolled students in lower and upper secondary education are not taking the recommended hours (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, 2014a). There is a deficit of 3,200 English teachers to fulfill this recommendation (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, n.d.), which demands a 20% increase in the current teacher supply.

Ecuador's demand for English teachers is also growing. The country recently implemented a law mandating that students begin English instruction in primary education rather than in lower secondary education, as was previously required. The law went into effect in the Sierra region in the 2016-2017 school year and will go into effect in the Coastal region in May 2017 (Acuerdo No. 0052-14, 2014). There are currently 8,400 English teachers in Ecuador (Andes, 2016). However, the country requires 7,000 more in 2017 in order to expand English classes to primary education (Ministerio de Educación Ecuador, 2014), or an increase of more than 80% of the current supply.

Peru's demand for English teachers will continue to grow over the next five years. It recently extended the school day in many of its schools, increasing the previous school week by 10 hours. English is one of the subject areas receiving more time in the new school day (Ministerio de Educación Perú, 2017c). Similar to the case in Ecuador, this new plan increased the need for English teachers. In the *Censo Escolar 2013*, Peru had 15,144 teachers teaching secondary English classes. The Ministry of Education in its national English plan estimates a need for 2,000 additional English teachers each year and around 30,000 English teachers by 2021 to cover the increasing demand (Ministerio de Educación Perú, 2016b). In a period of only eight years, Peru hopes to double its supply of English teachers.

There is a high need for English teachers in Brazil as well. According to the *Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais (INEP)*, the country requires an estimated 16,780 additional teachers of Foreign Languages in secondary education (Ministério da Educação, 2015). Data from São Paulo demonstrates a particularly high need for English teachers over other foreign languages, with 453 vacancies for English teachers and only three for Spanish teachers (Secretaria de Educação do Município de São Paulo, 2016).

The evidence is clear; in most countries in the region, there is a growing need for English teachers, with percentage increases ranging from 20% to more than 100% of the current English teacher supply. If teacher quality is left unchecked, however, student learning will not improve no matter how many new teachers enter the classroom.

### *Quality assurance of pre-service training programs is weak*

Although there are many options throughout the region to pursue a degree in English teaching, few are high quality. While many countries have instituted national systems of accreditation to ensure quality, many non-accredited programs continue to enroll and train future teachers.

Almost half of the teacher training programs in Argentina lack accreditation. Argentina has experienced a rapid expansion of teacher training colleges, or *Institutos Superiores de Formación Docente (ISFD)*, in recent years, with 60% created in the last 30 years. Prior to 2008, only 54% of these institutions obtained national accreditation. In 2013, there were 3,146 teacher-training programs in the country, spanning 41 different subjects. English teacher training occupied the sixth place for highest number of programs, with 173 separate English teacher-training programs throughout the country. Only language and literature, mathematics, music, and initial and primary education training programs surpassed the number of English teacher training programs (Ministerio de Educación de la Nación, 2015).

In Chile in 2014, approximately 30% of the higher education institutions (covering 15% of students studying English) that offered English teacher training programs were not accredited. Since then, the National Accreditation Commission (*Comisión Nacional de Acreditación* or CNA) greatly expanded the number of accredited institutions. Today, 29 out of the 35 universities with English programs are accredited.

Sixty percent of public universities in Costa Rica offer accredited English teaching programs, but few private programs have national accreditation. There are 17 private universities recognized by the *Consejo Nacional de Enseñanza Superior (CONESUP)* that offer degrees in English teaching (Quesada Pacheco, 2013; Ministerio de Educación Pública de Costa Rica, 2017b), but none of their English teaching programs are accredited.

In Peru, the majority of pedagogical institutions lack accreditation. For example, only 34 out of the 285 pedagogical institutions of higher education (*IESPs*) were accredited in 2016. In a sample of 20 accredited institutions, seven offer accredited English teaching programs, while one offers an English program that did not receive reauthorization. In a sample of 25 non-accredited institutions, two offer English teaching programs (Ministerio de Educación Perú, 2017b).

Ecuador offers various paths for English teacher training. Students may pursue a degree through *Institutos Superiores Pedagógicos Interculturales Bilingües (ISPEDIB)*, *Institutos Superiores Pedagógicos (ISPED)*, and universities. All five ISPEDIBs received accreditation in 2015. However, not one of the 23 ISPEDs

complied with the necessary conditions to receive accreditation. The conditions included a 60% score or higher on the institutional evaluation and a 60% average score or higher on learning outcomes (CEAACES, 2014). At least two universities in Ecuador continue to train English teachers without accreditation.

While some countries (Mexico, for example) have instituted national entry examinations for students entering teacher-training programs, in general universities have significant autonomy to set their own entry (and exit) requirements. This undermines quality assurance, as there is no national verification of a new teacher's English proficiency level or pedagogical knowledge.

Many universities in Chile and Peru determine their own internal examinations to administer to those students already in English teaching programs. These examinations do not prevent students from entering the program, but instead are used to determine what level of English students will take.

Exit requirements at the higher education level vary widely in the region with few countries having a standardized approach (Fiszbein, Cosentino & Cumsille, 2016). Even when such requirements exist, they do not specifically measure English proficiency. The reality is that English training programs must set their own exit requirements in order to measure both English proficiency and pedagogical skills in relation to teaching English as a foreign language. In Chile, for example, exit profiles from English teaching programs are mostly unknown (British Council, 2012a). The process of linking officially set standards (when they exist), curricula and exit requirements is, in the best case, a slow one.

### *A growing number of professional development initiatives but with limited evidence of impact*

Professional development opportunities for teachers are growing in the region. Many countries offer study abroad programs in English-speaking countries, while in-country training programs are also present throughout the region. While there is a growing number of initiatives being implemented, there is little evidence of the impact and cost of the programs. Furthermore, many programs are new and give little continuity to previous professional development opportunities.

Chile, Colombia, Panama, and Peru all have ongoing programs for English teachers to receive training abroad. Chile offers a scholarship for a semester abroad for students enrolled in English teaching programs in accredited universities. Since 2006, 1,200 students have been awarded this scholarship. Students must be in the last or second to last year of study and must certify their English proficiency level through the TOEFL iBT, TOEFL ITP, or the IELTS exam with minimum scores of 80, 500, or 6.0, respectively. Students receive training in English proficiency as well as English teaching pedagogy (Ministerio de Educación Chile, n.d.).

While Chile's program is limited to individuals in pre-service teacher training, Colombia, Panama and Peru all have options for current English teachers to study abroad in an English-speaking country. Colombia and Panama's national English programs both have an international teacher-training component through which current English teachers travel abroad as a group to study in a foreign university. Peru's *Inglés, Puertas al Mundo* national program offers scholarships for current English teachers in public schools to study abroad for a semester. Requirements include a B1 proficiency level as well as at least two years of English teaching experience. By September of 2016, more than 600 teachers had studied in universities in English-speaking countries (Ministerio de Educación Perú, 2016d). In 2017, 180 teachers will receive the scholarship to study abroad (Ministerio de Educación Perú, 2017a).

*Colombia Bilingüe* developed an incentive plan in 2015 to give outstanding teachers the opportunity to participate in immersion programs both in Colombia and abroad. The 2015 program trained 130 teachers in Colombia with native English speakers, sent 70 English teachers to the United States, and 24 to India (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, 2015). The programs require teachers to have a B1 or B2 proficiency level (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, 2016a, 2016b).

*Panamá Bilingüe* offers an ambitious program in which a group of teachers travel abroad for a study period of 8 weeks. The program has already sent thousands of teachers abroad. By the end of 2016, 2,400 Panamanian teachers had traveled abroad to participate in these trainings (MEDUCA, 2016). Teachers attend trainings on teaching methodology and English language skills in universities in the United States and the United Kingdom (MEDUCA, 2017). *Panamá Bilingüe* had a budget of \$30 million in 2016. This covered the international teacher component and the local teacher training, as well as programs for students learning English (MEDUCA, 2015). The program started in 2014 with a budget of \$20 million (MEDUCA, 2017).

Chile, Colombia, Panama, and Peru all have in-country trainings that supplement their study abroad offers through their national English strategies and plans. Chile's *PIAP* offers various professional development opportunities to English teachers. Training is not limited to improving English proficiency but also covers pedagogical support and allows for collaboration among a network of teachers. One component of the program offers workshops in methodology and curriculum development in all regions of the country. Two programs, English Winter Retreat and English Summer Town, are also offered in the regional capitals, where English teachers participate in 2-day workshops on active learning, methodology, and reflection on the teaching practice. Since 2005, more than 3,000 teachers have benefited from these professional development workshops (Ministerio de Educación Chile, n.d).

Colombia also has various in-country professional development opportunities.

Apart from the in-country immersion program, *Colombia Bilingüe* also developed the “Teaching English” project in collaboration with the Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana (UNICA). The objective is to strengthen the teaching skills of public English teachers through classes on English for teaching and professional knowledge. In 2015, the program reached 275 teachers from 11 secretariats of education and 252 schools (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, n.d.).

The local component of *Panamá Bilingüe* teacher training involves an initiative known as Back to Basics, which offers 40 hours of English to identify, evaluate, promote and develop English teachers’ skills. In 2016, 3,780 teachers had already benefited from this component (MEDUCA, 2016). Peru’s *Inglés, Puertas al Mundo* also offers in-country training in addition to its study abroad program. English teachers in full-day schools are trained in blended learning, which incorporates the use of technology in the classroom. They also have the support of an English specialist once a month. Approximately 4,500 JEC teachers have benefitted from this training. Another option for professional development is training with British experts in summer and winter schools. Almost 800 teachers have participated in these trainings (Ministerio de Educación Perú, 2016c).

These initiatives, some of them ambitious in size and approach, show the growing recognition of the importance of expanding opportunities for professional development as part of efforts to scale up ELL in schools. There is, however, limited evidence so far of the effectiveness of these efforts, many of which are too new to have been evaluated. For example, *Panamá Bilingüe*, which started operating in 2014, will go through its first evaluation in 2017 (Simmons, 2016). The experience of Costa Rica provides a good example of how professional development and evaluation can reinforce each other. A training program that benefitted 3,285 teachers followed the 2008 diagnostic test of English teachers. The 2015 evaluation of teacher proficiency showed a very significant improvement.

Non-state actors who utilize international connections to train English teachers run several programs. In Mexico, Worldfund, an international NGO, sponsors a program known as the Inter-American Partnership for Education (IAPE), which consists of two in-country training programs for English teachers and one training program held in the United States. English teachers learn through the Rassias Method, an interactive system for teaching languages that banishes inhibitions and fosters authentic communication (Worldfund, 2013). Launched in 2007, this program has reached 2,133 teachers. Both *Panamá Bilingüe* and IAPE look to connections with other countries to train English teachers.

### Box 3: Integrated English Program for Public Schools Teachers

Pearson is leading a large-scale teacher professional development initiative for English teachers in Brazil known as the Integrated English Program for Public Schools Teachers. This program is sponsored by the UK Embassy through the British Prosperity Fund and involves language teaching and methodology certification for teachers from the secretaries of education in the states of Mato Grosso, Minas Gerais and São Paulo.

At the start of the program in 2016, approximately 2,000 English teachers took the Pearson English Placement Test. While 22.3% of teachers estimated their proficiency level to be advanced, only 5.9% achieved at the B2, C1, and C2 levels. Similarly, 36.6% of teachers estimated their proficiency level to be intermediate, while only 24.5% achieved B1 level proficiency. The majority of teachers performed at the A2 and A1 levels, with 29.9% of teachers at the A2 level and 40.6% at the A1 level.

The results indicated that many English teachers in these Brazilian states still needed to improve their English proficiency, and that there are large gaps between those teaching in urban and rural areas. While 50.8% of teachers in Centro Paula Souza in São Paulo performed at the B1 level or higher, only 19.9% of teachers in the states of Mato Grosso, Minas Gerais, and other areas of São Paulo reached these levels. The majority of teachers (51.9%) in these more rural areas tested at the A1 level.

Following the placement tests, approximately 1,200 English teachers entered into the online professional development program. Those that reached a proficiency level of B1 or above were admitted into the Teacher Development Interactive (TDI) course focused on instruction techniques for teaching English as a foreign language. Those that did not achieve this proficiency level instead must take the Pearson English Interactive course, an online language course to improve proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. They also take Progress, an online adaptive test that highlights strengths and weaknesses throughout the language course. This exam is taken at the beginning, middle, and end to compare results and monitor the success of the course.

Given the growing demands for teacher professional development, having a more systematic approach to evaluating both the impact and cost-effectiveness of these initiatives, and using that information to improve and adapt their design and operation, is of critical importance.

#### *Weak implementation of the policy framework*

The weaknesses in teacher training and professional development—many of which are not specific to English language teaching—combine with a weak implementation of the policy framework regarding teacher qualifications for ELL. The policy framework for many countries requires teachers to demonstrate proficiency of the English language and to be certified in teaching English. However, evaluation of proficiency is scarce in many countries, and many teachers lack certification and training.

Regularly administered, standardized examinations are not in place to evaluate English proficiency of new or current teachers. Given the poor results found in those assessments that do take place, this lack of a consistent assessment policy represents a major problem. The reality is that a high percentage of teachers work without certification or evidence of proficiency. A certification to teach English often requires a degree from a university or teacher training institute in English teaching or a related subject. However, many individuals teaching

English throughout Latin America do not have this degree. English teaching positions are often covered by teachers of other subjects or individuals who speak English but are not trained in the pedagogy of teaching a foreign language.

Argentina turned to under-qualified English teachers to cover the increasing need for teachers when foreign language requirements expanded to primary education. These teachers are often uncertified or unprepared, or both (Porto, 2016). This is the case in many other countries as well. For example, few teachers in Peru have the required certification to teach English. Only 4,118, or 27%, of Peru's 15,144 teachers teaching secondary English classes are licensed to teach this subject. This means that 11,026 other teachers or individuals are covering the deficit of certified English teachers (Ministerio de Educación Perú, 2016b).

While many English teachers in Brazil have university degrees, not all are trained in teaching English. Only 13% of Brazil's English teachers do not have a university degree. However, out of those that do have a university degree, only 39% are trained in foreign languages. Teachers who lead English instruction are likely to have a university degree in the Portuguese language (27%), in pedagogy (14%), or in other disciplines (20%) (British Council, 2015h). While highly educated, the majority of individuals teaching English are not trained specifically in their subject area.

Chile's percentage of certified English teachers is higher than in other countries at 83%. The National English Strategy cites 7,990 teachers of English in the country, but only 6,649 qualified to do so. A majority (96%) of those individuals who are not qualified do not even have a command of the language (Ministerio Secretaría General de la Presidencia et al., 2014).

Latin American countries committed to improving the proficiency levels of English language learners must first commit to improving English teacher qualifications. Improvement requires addressing the quality of pre-service teacher training, expanding professional development opportunities, ensuring the quality of training through continuous evaluation and reforms, and enforcing the policy framework requirements of proficiency and certification.

## Chapter 4: Lessons from English Language Learning Programs

Latin American countries have implemented various ELL initiatives for more than a century. What do these programs need to consider to be successful? There are three key factors that ELL programs must address to be successful: ensuring continuity, developing a strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework that informs adaptation, and addressing the lack of sufficient quality teachers.

Ensuring continuity allows a program to reach the maximum number of beneficiaries and achieve long-term results. These programs also require M&E to ensure they are on the right track and continually improving. Effective teachers are essential to impart learning and improve English proficiency. In Latin America, however, English teachers are scarce and often unqualified. English language programs must address the teacher deficit in order to be successful.

Few programs in the region exhibit these three key factors to successfully impact the English proficiency levels. *PIAP* and *Ceibal en Inglés*, in Chile and Uruguay respectively, serve as examples of well-established programs in the region, while other programs demonstrate success in some areas but require improvements in others. While every country's needs differ in regards to ELL, new programs can learn from both the mistakes of past programs and the success of current regional programs.

### *ELL programs must ensure continuity to amplify reach*

Few ELL programs in the region have had the continuity necessary to achieve scale and develop the mechanisms and practices necessary for sustained results. *PIAP* and *Ceibal en Inglés* serve as examples of long-lasting programs with continuing support. Created in 2004, *PIAP* has spanned the terms of four presidents in Chile, continuing to hold political support with minor changes. The current English policy in Chile, *FEP - Inglés*, looks to *PIAP* to implement English language learning initiatives (Ministerio de Educación Chile, 2015b). This continued support has allowed *PIAP* to both endure for more than a decade and grow over this time period to reach tens of thousands of students. *Plan Ceibal* in Uruguay has demonstrated similar continuity: the program began in 2007 and has grown in capacity. While *Plan Ceibal* only incorporated ELL in 2012, the English component continues to grow and reach more students every year. *Ceibal en Inglés* began as a pilot project of only 20 schools. Four years later, the program reached 580 schools and approximately 87,000 students in grades 4 – 6 (Centro Ceibal, n.d.).

Within the range of factors affecting program continuity, one that appears to be important is having the right institutional setting. In particular, a critical question is the extent to which the program is embedded in the institutional structures of the schooling system. In Chile, the program falls under the purview of the Division of General Education of the Ministry of Education but involves Regional English Language Representatives (ERIs) to collaborate on the creation of plans and regional strategies to strengthen public education. They

also work on the design and implementation of local activities. ERIs serve as the link between *PIAP* and the regional educational authorities. They manage and lead the implementation of program activities and attract students and teachers to participate in the program (Ministerio de Educación Chile, n.d.).

In Uruguay, *Ceibal en Inglés* is part of *Plan Ceibal* together with the Council of Initial and Primary Education and the Council of Secondary Education. This collaboration with the public sector creates a strong institutional setting for the program. Peru's *Inglés, Puertas al Mundo* counts on the support of a multi-sectoral Commission (which includes representatives from the Ministries of Education, Interior, Foreign Trade and Tourism, and Ministry of Foreign Relations, among others). Each stakeholder is responsible for specific activities outlined in the Implementation Plan (Ministerio de Educación Perú, 2016b). Although the program is relatively new, this multi-sectoral collaboration creates a strong institutional setting to ensure continuity in the future.

In countries with decentralized schooling systems, the articulation between programs and sub-national authorities is also important. Colombia's national English programs have undergone four name changes in the past decade. However, there is substantive continuity among the programs. While the name changes may create confusion, *Colombia Bilingüe* counts on local and national support to create a strong institutional setting. Local secretaries of education choose to participate in the national program, while the National Ministry of Education incentivizes local secretaries of education to align actions and resources to the national program strategies (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, n.d.).

In Mexico, local educational authorities did not have the necessary technical and pedagogical conditions to implement ELL activities from the *Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica (PNIEB)*. The new program (PRONI) hopes to solve this issue by providing support to the local educational authorities through educational materials and processes of implementation (SEP, 2016a). Unlike the case of Colombia, where the local governments play an active role in implementing the national program, however, it is unclear whether the local institutional setting is strong enough to ensure national and local collaboration for program implementation.

The case of *Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (EILE)* in Costa Rica is illustrative of the difficulties in ensuring continuity. Started in 2010 with funding from the Inter-American Development Bank, the program used interactive software for students and teachers to guide language learning (Quesada Pacheco, 2013). The results were mixed. Of the two types of software tested, only one was found to perform better than a control group. Furthermore, the cost of the hardware maintenance and renewing software licenses also presented an issue, making the project un-scalable (Álvarez Marinelli, 2016). The program, however, had limited ability to respond. There was no plan in place to replace the failing language

learning software with the better performing software. No entity was assigned to deal with hardware maintenance and software licenses, and thus no entity took responsibility for the funding and necessary actions to remedy these issues. Without this proper institutional setting, the program only lasted a couple of years.

### *ELL programs must develop a strong M&E framework to ensure program effectiveness*

Without systematic efforts to measure results and to use that information to adapt and change, it is hard to ensure program effectiveness. *Ceibal en Inglés* and *PIAP* both have made extensive efforts in this critical area. Many other programs in the region are relatively new, and have not yet undergone evaluation. However, many have utilized monitoring to track their progress. This is essential to making sure a program is on track to achieving its goals.

Monitoring and evaluation is a key component of *Ceibal en Inglés*. The program monitors both implementation, through progress reports, and student learning, through an adaptive online assessment, which provides results in real time. The 2016 management commitment set a goal for *Ceibal en Inglés* to reach at least 90% of student groups in grades 4 – 6 in urban public primary schools without access to in-person English classes (Centro Ceibal, 2016). This goal was surpassed in the first half of 2016 (IDB, 2016).

*Ceibal en Inglés* utilizes an online adaptive assessment administered through the school system's regular online learning assessment system platform to evaluate student proficiency levels (in grades 4 – 6 and in the first year of secondary education). The exam has three components: Reading/Vocabulary/Grammar, Listening Comprehension, and Writing. The online assessment adjusts to a student's proficiency level as the student goes through the exam, depending on the previous answers given. The exam either gets progressively more difficult if a student answers correctly, while it also can get progressively easier if a student answers several questions incorrectly. This exam allows teachers to evaluate a student's English proficiency in real time (SEA, 2013). *Ceibal en Inglés* also uses the results to measure the program's impact on English language learning (*Plan Ceibal*, 2016).

## Box 4: Successes of *Ceibal en Inglés*

*Ceibal en Inglés* has been evaluated several times in the past five years. A preliminary, non-experimental assessment of the program showed that students with better performance had at least 6 months of exposure to the program, regardless of their socio-cultural background. For this evaluation, the students were divided based on their time of exposure in the program. The three groups were divided by: (i) students who participated in the pilot phase during the second half of 2012; (ii) students who started the program between March and April 2013; and (iii) students who joined between July and August 2013. The test (administered online through ANEP's online learning assessment system platform) had 40 multiple-choice questions, which were organized into three levels of difficulty: low (10 questions), medium (20 questions), and high (10 questions).

The students' performance on the 2012 and 2013 assessments shows a positive relationship between participation in *Ceibal en Inglés* and the results of English learning. Students who started the program in March or April of 2013 performed better than those who started in July and August in 2013. The students from the pilot group in 2012 also performed better than both groups of students who started *Ceibal en Inglés* in 2013. "Controlling for other factors, out of a total of 40 points, students who started the program in March scored an average of 4.4 points higher than those who started in June" (IDB, 2014).

A 2015 evaluation compared the assessment results of students participating in the English programs for *Ceibal en Inglés* and another program called *Segundas Lenguas*. For this evaluation, ANEP also divided the students participating in each program by their time of exposure in the programs. The 2015 assessment results also showed a positive relationship between the English programs and English learning. In terms of *Ceibal en Inglés*, 66% of the 6th grade students achieved an A2-level (high beginner level) in Vocabulary, Reading, and Grammar, while 40% of the students achieved an A2 (high beginner level) in listening. 12% of the students achieved A2 levels in writing (*Plan Ceibal*, CEIP, & ANEP, 2015).

Monitoring and evaluation is a key component of *PIAP* as well. More than 75 studies have evaluated the program since its start in 2004. A 2004 study consisted of a diagnostic to assess the level of student English proficiency in Chile. This study, with a representative sample of 11,000 students in grades 8 and the 4th year of upper secondary education, found that the majority of 8th grade students were below A1 proficiency, while the majority of students in the 4th year of upper secondary education concentrated in A1 and A1-. Other studies exist on student achievement, curriculum, planning and management, program coordination, support to schools in the form of volunteers or activities, semester abroad, and teacher training and professional development. Recent studies measured the impact of the volunteer program, assessed the National English Strategy 2014 – 2030, evaluated the implementation of *FEP- Inglés*, and analyzed SIMCE questionnaires and results, among others.

*Panamá Bilingüe*, as a new program in the region, will undergo its first evaluation in 2017. The evaluation will have two parts, evaluating both teachers and students. While teachers are trained both locally and internationally, students participate in a kids program (for primary students) and an after-school program (for secondary students). The student evaluation will measure the progress of student proficiency gained through these programs. Students will take a test at the beginning of the school year, another in the middle of the school year, and a final exam at the end of the year in order to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the program, and what adjustments need to be made (Simmons, 2016). Peru's *Inglés, Puertas al Mundo* program is also relatively new and has not yet undergone an evaluation. In monitoring its implementation, though, it has become clear that it

is far from achieving its initial goal of reaching 100% of schools by 2023 (Instituto Integración, 2016) and requires adjustments in its implementation process.

One of the three strategic areas of work of *Colombia Bilingüe* is monitoring and follow-up. Each participating secretary of education designates a team in charge of monitoring the actions of the program. The strategy states that a group of professionals will focus on tracking the participation of each school and student in grades 9 and 10. However, *Colombia Bilingüe* does not specifically discuss plans for evaluation, which are necessary for improving the program's outcomes.

Mexico's *Programa Nacional de Inglés (PRONI)* is the newest national English program in the region. The program's rules of operation outline plans for both internal and external evaluations. The local educational authorities have the power to conduct internal evaluations to monitor the program's performance by creating indicators relating to their specific objectives. The *Dirección General de Evaluación de Políticas* is responsible for the external evaluation of PRONI, while the program is then responsible for following up on improving aspects of the program based on the evaluations (SEP, 2015b). Both the internal and external evaluations will be particularly useful in improving the program in the future.

### *Innovating to address a lack of sufficient quality teachers*

As explained earlier, there is a significant shortage of high quality English teachers throughout Latin America, which constitutes a serious bottleneck for ELL programs. Efforts are underway to improve and expand teacher-training programs (see chapter 3). However, the effects of such programs will only be seen in the long-term, forcing governments to find alternatives for short-term results –and that possibly involve lower costs than massive efforts to train teachers. There are several innovative approaches to this issue already present in the region. However, there is no rigorous evidence demonstrating their impact, let alone cost-effectiveness.

For example, *Panamá Bilingüe* sends many of its own English teachers to English-speaking countries for training (see chapter 3), training thousands of teachers in a short period of time. This is meant to jump-start their professional development and, through what can be considered as a 'big-push' approach, rapidly enhance the quality of English teaching in the country. One concern of this program, however, is the cost. As shown in chapter 3, the budget increased from \$20 million in 2014 to \$30 million in 2016. Will this be a sustainable option? It depends on the effectiveness of this significant investment. If it results in a cadre of effective teachers that (possibly with light support over time) demonstrate high quality English teaching, the approach may be validated. But if enhancing teacher effectiveness requires significant efforts over time, this high cost may become a problem.

In contrast to Panama's teacher training program, Uruguay uses technology to leverage the proficiency skills of foreign English teachers. *Ceibal en Inglés* requires the collaboration of a remote teacher and a local classroom teacher. The teachers meet virtually on a weekly basis to coordinate lesson activities for the week. Remote teachers are already experienced English teachers who are prepared to teach remotely. Remote teachers teach one lesson a week at the primary level and provide support to the classroom English teacher at the secondary level (*Plan Ceibal*, 2016). This program utilized existing technologies of the *Plan Ceibal* program, proving a cost-effective option to provide quality English language learning.

A third creative solution to addressing the teacher shortage is recruitment of volunteers to serve as English teachers. Both Chile and Colombia utilize this strategy. *PIAP* recruits English-speaking volunteers to provide classroom support to current English teachers. Volunteers receive a small stipend, a low cost approach to attracting proficient English speakers to reinforce oral skills and content taught by the teacher. Volunteers benefit in other ways as well: they receive TEFL training, an online Spanish course, and the valuable experience of teaching abroad (Ministerio de Educación Chile & UNDP, n.d.). *PIAP* is currently expanding the program under the new English program, *FEP – Inglés*, with the goal of reaching 300 schools each year.

In a variation of the volunteer approach, *Colombia Bilingüe* collaborates with Fulbright Colombia to attract English teaching assistants to teach in universities, again resulting in a low cost option to support an increasingly important aspect of English teaching in Latin America: ELL at the university level. Volunteers benefit from having a tangible impact on students, opportunities for research, and cross-cultural interaction. The next program starting in August 2018 will offer 50 English Teaching Assistant awards.

There is limited evidence of the effectiveness of these various strategies. The Inter-American Partnership for Education (IAPE), sponsored by Worldfund, however, provides an exception. A 2014 study by the Inter-American Development Bank found that in comparison to a control group, IAPE teachers spent more time on engaging student activities, speaking English in class, and using didactic materials over textbooks. Students were more engaged in classes and were excited about learning. At the end of the evaluation period of approximately 30 weeks, the benefit of having an IAPE teacher was equivalent to having ten additional weeks of learning progress over the control group. This study shows strong evidence of the effectiveness of the IAPE program (Bando & Li, 2014).

## Box 5: Blended learning in the English classroom

Blended learning incorporates technology into the classroom to provide communicative support where teachers often lack the necessary proficiency requirements. This methodology combines in-person instruction with computer-mediated instruction.

A study on the use of blended learning in an English classroom in Thailand found that online practice was directly beneficial to improving English language skills as well as autonomous learning and motivation (Banditvilai, 2016).

A study in Chile compared blended learning to face-to-face instruction for English as a Foreign Language. The study utilized a pre-test and a post-test to measure reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. Students in the blended learning group improved their language skills by 18% compared to the control group, who improved their language skills by only 8% using the traditional face-to-face method (Morales Rios & Ferreira Cabrera, 2008).

Chile currently counts on a blended learning strategy with English courses and a student placement test aligned to the CEFR. Chile developed an English Coding Camp and will provide training to English teachers in this field. Teachers will also have access to curricular and methodology training through e-learning and blended learning, as well as an online placement test in 2018.

A study of 358 students enrolled in English I in Spain examined the potential of blended learning to impact English pronunciation. The study found that students were able to perceive and produce English more accurately. Students were also satisfied with the course and more interested in the subject (Pinto, Sánchez, García-Peñalvo, & Cabezas, 2017).

Peru's Ministry of Education utilizes the blended learning methodology through *Inglés, Puertas al Mundo*. Teachers are trained in the blended learning methodology and in how to use specialized software. Full-day educational institutions receive updated computer laboratories and specialized software to support English language learning. These schools count on the necessary infrastructure of laboratories with laptops, headsets, and software to offer this program. Part-day schools receive specialized software and flashcards to support English language learning. Through *Inglés, Puertas al Mundo*, more than 500,000 students in English classes at more than 1,600 schools have benefitted from Peru's use of the blended learning methodology. Peru has provided training in this methodology to 4,536 teachers (Ministerio de Educación Perú, 2016c).

Overall, the evidence on the effectiveness of these various strategies to deal with the issue of a teacher shortage is limited. Clearly, countries are following different approaches: *Panamá Bilingüe* has made a great investment in teacher training, while other countries have sought to leverage available resources (technology, volunteers) to improve results. Uruguay's experience with technologies to supplement in-person English classes is a particularly salient example. While many countries do not already have the necessary technology, smart investments could greatly impact educational outcomes. As the examples of Chile and Colombia suggest, leveraging the interest of foreigners in living and teaching abroad opens another potential approach as there appears to be substantial room for expanding volunteer programs.

### *A significant knowledge gap remains*

Many countries pursue the goal of increasing English language proficiency for students through a flagship initiative or program. This approach serves to concentrate resources and attention on a particular approach and represents, in practice, the implementation of a national strategy. The presumed benefits of having such a flagship initiative depend crucially on

the ability of the government to ensure continuity, which, as the experience of the initiatives discussed above suggests, is not without challenges.

But beyond the most basic challenge of ensuring continuity the benefits of such flagship initiatives depend on the extent to which they address the central issue of insufficiently qualified teachers. As the experiences reviewed demonstrate, most programs recognize this is a core bottleneck and have followed alternative approaches (training, technology, volunteers, etc.) to address it.

Perhaps the most striking feature of those efforts, however, is the relative weakness of evaluation systems. Given the centrality of the problem of insufficient quality teachers, one would expect a more consistent effort to measure the effectiveness of the approaches being followed. While a few of the flagship programs have indeed conducted impact evaluations (or have one planned), overall there remains a large knowledge gap on this critical issue. More generally, as the review of programs suggests, there is significant room for improvement in M&E systems across the board.

## Chapter 5: Recommendations

Given its increasing recognition as the lingua franca for business and communication in the global economy, it is not surprising to see the growing interest in English and ELL. As demonstrated in this report, Latin American governments are taking actions and making significant investments to improve ELL.

There is no silver bullet for achieving the goal of improving ELL in Latin America. Building on our assessment of the state of ELL in the region, we ask ourselves how governments in the region can overcome the obstacles affecting the success of their ELL programs and, in that way, improve English proficiency levels and further prepare the region for international competitiveness.

We believe there is a need for action to address weakness at various levels:

1. First, our analysis identified a series of weaknesses at the policy level. While there are, naturally, important differences across countries, many countries in Latin America share similar difficulties in designing and implementing an effective policy framework to guide ELL within their schooling systems. We believe that without correcting these weaknesses, improving the overall performance of ELL in schools will remain a challenge. The weak links in the policy framework are in the area of student and teacher evaluations and appear to be critical in many cases.
2. Second, the lack of sufficient, well-prepared English teachers represents a fundamental bottleneck in most countries. Unfortunately, rectifying this is not easy: it takes time and is costly. In our view, countries in Latin America need to explore innovative solutions that can yield results over reasonable periods of time at an acceptable cost. Those solutions will need to respond to local conditions and resources. As with any innovation, an experiment-and-evaluate approach is called for.
3. Third, while the focus of this report has been on ELL within the schooling system, it is imperative to look beyond formal education and consider ways of leveraging efforts at the school level with instruction in academies and independent training institutions, workplaces and households. Our understanding of how those mechanisms are currently operating (and how to enhance them) is extremely limited due to an almost complete lack of systematic information.
4. Finally, lack of data represents a major concern not just for these alternative ELL mechanisms but also more generally. As demonstrated throughout the report, information systems to monitor aspects as essential as number of teachers and their skills, or number of students of different characteristics taking English classes and their proficiency,

are inadequate in most countries. Thus, investments oriented towards strengthening information systems are a critical part of any effort oriented to improving ELL.

Given the common challenges, there is significant room for synergies across countries in Latin America. In particular, countries can learn from the experiences of others to improve their own ELL programs. The development of a regional learning community constitutes a promising way to foster this collaboration and knowledge sharing.

### **1. Address policy bottlenecks**

Having a well-developed and consistent framework to set strategic policy directions, including standards and expectations for ELL, is essential to guide efforts to improve English teaching and English proficiency.

A majority of countries in the region have taken action to improve their policies for ELL over the last decade. For example, laws mandate the teaching of English in schools in six out of the ten countries considered in this report, while in the others the mandate is for a foreign language with English being the most common one.

Our review of the policy framework (summarized in Table 2 and reproduced here for ease of reference) indicates that the two major weak links in English language learning policy throughout Latin America involve student and teacher evaluation. A majority of countries have defined learning standards and teacher education standards. A few of them have failed to develop accompanying standards of measurement and specific proficiency goals. But weaknesses are most obvious at the level of having functioning assessment systems (for both students and teachers), an area in which most countries are struggling.

## English Language Learning Policy Framework: Indicators of Progress

	Argentina	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Costa Rica	Ecuador	Mexico	Panama	Peru	Uruguay
<b>Legal Foundation</b>										
English Mandatory by Law	◆	✓	✓	◆	✓	✓	✓	✓	◆	◆
National Plan or Strategy	x	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	◆	✓	◆
<b>Standards for Learning</b>										
Learning Standards and Objectives	◆	◆	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Teaching Supports, Including Curricula and Programs of Study	x	x	✓	✓	✓	◆	✓	✓	◆	◆
<b>Student Achievement</b>										
Standard of Measurement	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
Proficiency Goals	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
Proficiency Assessment	x	◆	✓	✓	✓	◆	◆	x	x	✓
<b>Teacher Qualifications</b>										
Teacher Education Standards	✓	x	✓	✓	◆	✓	x	◆	✓	✓
Proficiency Goals	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
Proficiency Assessment	x	x	✓	◆	◆	✓	✓	x	x	x

✓ Yes, this topic has been successfully addressed

◆ There has been some progress in the right direction, but it is not yet sufficient

x The adequate conditions do not yet exist for this topic

Addressing these weak links is of critical importance. All countries committed to improving ELL must take the critical step of measuring student and teacher proficiency. Many countries utilize a standard of measurement and set student and teacher proficiency goals or requirements, but these actions prove futile without evaluation. As the Inter-American Dialogue's Commission for Quality Education for All writes, "without defined and measurable objectives, and without an assessment of the extent to which they are being met, it is very hard to have positive outcomes" (Commission for Quality Education for All, 2016). Without such assessments, there is no way to determine whether students and teachers are meeting proficiency expectations or even whether there has been improvement. The following two steps could address this bottleneck:

- *Countries should establish a standardized assessment to measure student proficiency.* Most countries set student proficiency goals based on national or international standards of measurement, but few measure progress toward these goals utilizing a standardized assessment. The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is already in use in seven of the ten countries surveyed here, including Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay, and many more throughout the world. The same seven countries have also established proficiency goals for students. However, only two have well-established proficiency assessments: Chile and Colombia.

Chile and Colombia lead the region in assessing student proficiency. Additionally, Colombia used data from its assessments to establish achievable goals for ELL proficiency. Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, and Uruguay have also made progress on this indicator, but it is not yet sufficient. Meanwhile, Argentina, Brazil, and Panama currently do not set goals using a standard of measurement nor assess student proficiencies on a national level. Peru only recently adopted the CEFR, but lacks a proficiency assessment to measure its goals. Many international tests are already aligned to the CEFR. Countries can adopt existing examinations or create their own. Either way, the data from these examinations is essential for achieving positive outcomes.

- *Countries should implement a national teacher assessment and ensure compliance with teacher proficiency requirements for both current and incoming teachers.* It is hard to imagine that teachers without a sufficient level of English proficiency can effectively teach the language. Many countries have proficiency goals or requirements, but do not assess teachers to ensure compliance. Therefore, many school systems place English teachers in front of students without knowing their true proficiency level. Addressing this serious bottleneck requires not only the adoption of a system to assess teachers' English proficiency but also to make assessments a requirement

for both current and new teachers. In other words, an effective strategy for improving ELL must require both new and current English teachers to pass these examinations, and offer courses to improve language skills if a teacher's proficiency is not at the required level.

Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Mexico are the only countries that have established teacher proficiency assessments. Costa Rica serves as a quality example of using assessment data to improve teachers' proficiencies. It tested English proficiencies of teachers in 2008, offered training to those that did not meet the required proficiency levels, and tested proficiency levels again in 2015. This is a path that all countries should follow.

A system to assess English teacher proficiency requires a two-track approach: one for current teachers and one for new teachers. The track for current teachers must allow for a period of time to comply with certification requirements and could include a diagnostic test, remedial courses when necessary, and a certification exam. A brief diagnostic test, such as the Cambridge Placement Test (CPT) utilized in Chile, is helpful: those that score below the required proficiency level can choose the appropriate remedial course, while those that score at higher levels can advance directly to certification. The track for new teachers, on the other hand, should allow for a direct transition to certification. Certification exams for new teachers should be available immediately upon completion of a teacher-training program, as training programs should prepare students for these exams.

Having a well-developed policy framework for ELL is half the answer. Sustainable implementation of that framework is the other half. As is often the case with public policies, grand designs suffer from implementation weaknesses and lack of continuity. As with education policies more broadly, a key challenge is the translation of high-level policies and regulations into practices that directly influence what happens at the classroom level. That translation involves a separate set of actions, including creating the instruments or tools necessary to support classroom practices and implementing the necessary outreach at the school level to ensure proper use of those instruments. These actions give specific attention to the issues faced in a classroom on a daily basis.

All ten countries considered in this report have developed learning standards for foreign language learning (eight of them specific to ELL) and have curricula to support English classroom practices. However, ensuring those standards and curricula are driving classroom practices demands that other tools, such as textbooks and technology, are in place and properly aligned. Ensuring the proper use of the curriculum and other instruments in developing and teaching lesson plans requires government outreach to classroom teachers. This demands a stronger focus on implementation:

- *Flagship programs can play an important role supporting the implementation of a national ELL policy framework.* For example, *PIAP* continues to serve as the main implementer of Chile's ELL activities. The program takes on a leadership role with committed efforts to implement policies and improve English proficiency. *Plan Ceibal* serves a similar role in Uruguay. This program is leading efforts to offer English classes in schools without access to English teachers, collaborating with the national government to guarantee commitment. Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, and Peru all have national programs leading ELL efforts as well, even though they are less well established. Consolidating their performance, instituting strong monitoring and evaluation systems and using that information to continuously improve is a critical step to ensure they play an effective supporting role for national policies.

## **2. Improve teacher training, while also looking for innovative solutions to address the teacher shortage**

Effective teachers are essential to improving ELL instruction. Even considering the lack of high quality data on the English language capabilities of teachers in Latin America, there is little doubt that countries in the region suffer from a large deficit of proficient English teachers. This makes teacher training and professional development efforts a key area of concern that all countries in the region must address. Those efforts can take time and be costly, particularly considering the growing interest in English language learning and the unmet need for proficient teachers. It is thus paramount to explore cost-effective, long-term solutions while at the same time innovating shorter-term solutions to address the current teacher shortage. Long term solutions require that countries:

- *Strengthen regulations of training institutions.* There are many institutions that offer degrees in English pedagogy, but there is little regulation to ensure pre-service teachers receive quality training. Simply producing more English teachers will not improve English proficiency if graduates lack meaningful qualifications. Institutions must ensure pre-service teachers have both the proper English proficiency level and the necessary pedagogical training to be effective in the classroom. Countries must have reliable data on institutional accreditation and quality in order to encourage and measure improvements.

As an example, Chile has an accreditation system with 70% of English teacher training programs in compliance. This is the highest rate in the region, resulting in only 12 unaccredited institutions training English teachers. Several other countries have systems of accreditation as well, including Argentina, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Peru. However, these countries have lower rates of accreditation, and these regulations are weakly enforced. Many training institutions still operate without national accreditation. A well-developed monitoring and

evaluation system is necessary to track the performance of these institutions. Governments must institute strong regulations (covering issues such as curriculum content, graduation requirements, and reporting requirements), ensure each program complies with accreditation requirements, and take action against non-compliance. As the Commission for Quality Education For All writes, “It is imperative to have systems to regulate pre-service training continuously, with significant consequences for institutions that do not meet the required standards, including preventing them from operating” (2016). Only then will countries ensure quality control of teacher training programs.

Beyond the long-term efforts to train (both pre and in-service) and recruit proficient English teachers, countries need to implement innovative solutions to address the teacher shortage over the short and medium term. Two areas with great potential involve:

- *The use of blended learning methods* allows technology to assist the classroom teacher in providing a quality English lesson. Research, including from Chile (Box 5), demonstrates the potential impact of blended learning methodology on English proficiency and student motivation to learn. These studies found that students were more interested in the subject and improved their English language skills when technology was incorporated into classroom instruction. The use of technology can both improve quality and provide a short-term solution to the lack of teachers with high English proficiency levels.

Perhaps the clearest example of effective technology use is the *Ceibal en Inglés* program in Uruguay, which utilizes a pre-existing platform to provide quality English lessons directly from native English teachers. Foreign teachers are able to connect to Uruguay’s classrooms from anywhere in the world via teleconference, providing both lessons and support to classroom teachers. In Peru, the application of the blended learning methodology also involves specialized software to deliver English lessons. Naturally, there is no guarantee that any and all uses of technology will yield positive results. The case of the EILE project in Costa Rica (Chapter 4), in which only one of the approaches proved more effective than in-person learning, provides a good illustration of the potential pitfalls of some blended learning approaches. Thus, it is essential to measure the effectiveness of these innovations, in particular in regards to their ability to complement more traditional teaching approaches.

- *International partnerships*. Rather than focusing exclusively on training their own teachers, Latin American countries can utilize the skills of native English speakers directly. Indeed, native English speakers can provide a quick response to the lack of proficient English teachers in Latin America.

This could happen in at least three ways: (i) Involving foreign teachers through distance learning; (ii) relying on foreign training institutions (instead of domestic one) for English teachers' professional development, and (iii) relying on international volunteers and exchange students to leverage local teachers. Efforts underway throughout the region can inform actions by other countries in all three areas.

*Ceibal en Inglés* is a good example of the first approach. Using a strong technological platform, it allows foreign teachers direct access to students in Uruguay. Most importantly, these foreign teachers collaborate with Uruguayan classroom teachers via videoconference to teach classes and assist classroom teachers in designing lesson plans. Very possibly, however, had the technological platform not already existed for the larger *Plan Ceibal* program, the cost of setting it up only for the purpose of teaching English might have been too high.

*Panamá Bilingüe* and the Worldfund IAPE program (Chapter 4) utilize international partnerships to provide short-term teacher training. In the case of Panama, through multiple partnerships with foreign training institutions, teachers travel in groups to English-speaking countries to receive training in teaching English as a foreign language. Through the IAPE, Mexican teachers travel to Dartmouth University for training in the Rassias method, while others receive similar training and support in Mexico. The potential for such partnerships is likely under-exploited at present.

Partnerships with other countries can also provide volunteer English teachers at a relatively low cost. Chile and Colombia recruit English-speaking volunteers to teach English in their schools and universities. Volunteers benefit from the international experience at little to no cost to the schooling system. *PIAP* counts on a large-scale volunteer program to attract English speakers to assist in English classrooms. This gives students access to native speakers to improve their own proficiency. Fulbright Colombia attracts English teaching assistants to support university-level English language learning. Other countries can adopt similar programs at relatively low cost, given the high interest in gaining international work experience and teaching abroad.

### 3. Looking beyond the K-12 educational system for learning opportunities

The growing interest in English language learning extends beyond the K-12 educational system. Adults in and out of the workforce are seeking learning opportunities outside the schooling system and, potentially, through the higher education system. Furthermore, many families continue to invest resources to offer their children English learning opportunities (through

private tutoring or in a variety of non-degree-granting academies), often as a complement to English classes at school. A comprehensive approach to ELL must therefore look beyond the K-12 educational system for learning opportunities. The following steps could help countries moving in this direction:

- *Establish a regulatory framework for private language institutions.* There is a proliferation of English language institutions throughout Latin America, but little assurance of quality learning. An effective regulatory framework must ensure quality but also allow for innovation. Its main role should be to help individuals and families make informed decisions when selecting the institution that best fits their needs. An effective regulatory framework is not meant to stifle innovation, but to provide information to the public and serve as a form of quality control through the establishment and monitoring of standards.

One standard to consider is teacher quality. Is it necessary for teachers at private language institutions to meet the same proficiency and certification requirements as teachers in K-12 education? Or are there alternative certifications that would equally ensure quality? It is hard to answer these questions without more detailed information and analysis of the conditions under which these institutions operate, including data on the proficiency levels of their students. Such information would also be useful to inform individuals in making decisions when selecting an institution. As a starting point, a more systematic survey of English training institutions outside the formal education system should be considered.

- *Encourage universities to establish language policies.* Many jobs that require English proficiency also require a university degree, so it is incumbent upon universities to support ELL as part of those programs. University entry requirements are important to determine a student's current English language level and should be used to determine the level of English classes a student must take to improve his or her proficiency. Exit requirements are particularly important, as they encourage students to continue learning and build upon the basic language proficiencies acquired in K-12 education.

In Mexico it is now common practice for public universities to require students to attain a minimum score in the TOEFL or other English test. Formal regulations on ELL in universities already exist in various countries. Colombia's standardized exit examination has a section on English that determines students' proficiency level from A1-B2. In Ecuador there is a requirement to graduate with at least a B1 English level, although those graduating from technical programs have to reach an A2 level. However, information on compliance with these regulations is scarce. Peru also sets a foreign language requirement, but does not have an examination to ensure compliance.

Countries should adopt more consistent policies requiring minimum levels of proficiency, perhaps with some differentiation by areas of specialty as in the case of Ecuador. At the same time, those requirements must be better publicized and regulated.

- *Foster the market for online services and media as a source of learning.* Many language learners already turn to apps (e.g. Duolingo and Busuu) and software (e.g. Rosetta Stone). Television shows and movies in English can provide informal sources of learning. Connectivity and access to technology is essential to take advantage of these learning opportunities. Only an estimated 50% of Latin American mobile phone users utilize a smart phone. More worrisome, though, is that 84% of smart phone users came from only six countries in the region in 2015 (eMarketer, 2015). Regarding access to media, there are still large sections of the population that lack access to the benefits provided by digital networks (Gobbi & Filho, 2015). Without access to these technologies, many people are unable to utilize this source of learning. The demand for learning already exists, and national governments can increase access by addressing the bottlenecks of connectivity and access to technology through policies, subsidies, and collaboration with service providers.

The lack of data for these various segments of the market for ELL is significant and more serious than those observed in the K-12 education system.

Information on proficiency levels is non-existent as is data on teacher quality in these training institutions. This can make the debate on the proper type of regulations a guessing exercise. Increased attention to these segments of the market and a more systematic data collection effort is thus paramount.

#### **4. Towards a regional learning community**

Improving the design of policies and programs for ELL requires action at the country level. But countries in Latin America share many similarities in the bottlenecks and difficulties they experience in seeking to improve ELL. As this report demonstrates, there is a lot of innovation and change taking place across the region. There is thus high value for countries throughout the region to learn from each other. Many quality strategies, approaches and actions already exist and could readily be applied across multiple country contexts. What is necessary, however, is coming together to share in this learning. A regional learning community to share challenges, experiences, and best practices could make important contributions to ongoing and future efforts to improve English proficiency throughout the region.

A learning community requires a commitment to knowledge sharing across countries both on policies and innovations, a common R&D agenda, and joint initiatives, such as in the critical area of teacher training:

- *Share information across ministries.* Learning from one another requires information sharing across ministries both on policies and innovations. Information sharing should include active discussions on issues as diverse as policy content and implementation, or the results of existing initiatives. Many countries have had ELL policies in place for decades, while others are creating new policy frameworks or modifying older ones. Sharing lessons learned is essential to developing quality policies to guide ELL activities. This is already happening to some extent. For example, Peru looked to policies in Chile and Colombia in developing its ELL policies. Establishing a more regular mechanism to facilitate those discussions and exchanges would increase the pace and efficiency of innovation.

Information sharing is also critical to finding successful and innovative solutions. Innovations must allow for trial and error, and incorporate monitoring and evaluation to ensure effectiveness. Learning from evaluation results and adapting a program is essential to its success. Sharing this information on challenges faced and possible solutions will benefit other initiatives throughout the region. A learning community would play a natural role in facilitating the flow of information and making it easier for countries to avoid making similar mistakes and, more importantly, learning from each other to incorporate best practices.

- *Advance a common R&D agenda.* While much can be gained from a successful exchange of lessons learned across countries, a focus on research and development is essential to make possible sustained improvements and pursue more ambitious and collaborative multi-country goals.

Critical areas to pursue under such an agenda include both ELL pedagogy (including the use of task-based learning for language acquisition) and the use of technology. Given how traditional teacher training tends to be in Latin America, there is an opportunity to explore more interactive and student-centered methodologies that can be applied to ELL. Research is essential to determining the most effective classroom technologies to provide quality lessons to students and support teachers in their practices. Costa Rica's EILE project serves as an example of studying the effectiveness of technology.

- *Develop joint initiatives.* A learning community allows for more than just information sharing. Countries can work together on joint initiatives and pool resources to undertake often-costly initiatives. This is particularly true when it comes to the critical area of enhancing teacher proficiency.

As countries innovate in the design and delivery of training and professional development programs for English teachers, economies of

scale could be gained by extending participation to other countries. The range of methods to achieve cost-savings is broad. Rather than traveling to English-speaking countries, English teachers could meet in the region for training. Native English speakers from other countries could still provide support and training along with trainers from the region. Colombia's teacher training immersion program serves as an example that could expand to incorporate teachers from throughout the region. Furthermore, distance-learning opportunities could be used for multi-country efforts. The point is to benefit from the higher quality programs. This is significantly easier for ELL than for other areas given the increasing alignment in learning standards across countries.

Similarly, existing volunteer programs, such as Chile's *PIAP*, could easily be expanded to other countries. Creating a joint initiative would allow volunteers to choose from multiple countries to offer their services. This could potentially attract more volunteers while countries could share learning experiences to improve the program.

Overall, the potential gains from a regional learning community appear to be significant and justify the necessary investments to make it happen as part of ongoing and future efforts to improve English proficiency throughout the region.

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## Annex A: English Language Learning Policy Framework: Methodology of Indicators of Progress

Legal Foundation		
English Mandatory by Law	✓	English is mandatory by law at various levels of K-12 education.
	◆	English is encouraged in K-12 education, either by law or through the national curriculum.
	X	English is neither mandatory nor encouraged in this country.
National Plan or Strategy	✓	There is a national plan or strategy in place to improve English language learning policies and activities.
	◆	There is development of a national plan or strategy to improve English language learning policies and activities.
	X	There is no national plan or strategy to improve English language learning.
Standards for Learning		
Learning Standards and Objectives	✓	There are national learning standards and objectives specific to English language learning in K-12 education.
	◆	There are national learning standards and objectives for foreign language learning in K-12 education, but are not specific to English.
	X	There are no national learning standards for foreign language learning in K-12 education.
Teaching Supports, Including Curricula and Programs of Study	✓	There is a national English curriculum or program of study that includes scope of content and sequence of material.
	◆	There is a national English curriculum or program of study, but it does not include a sequence of material.
	X	There is no national English curriculum or program of study. Countries instead provide curricular guidelines for foreign language learning, but lack sequence of material.
Student Achievement		
Standard of Measurement	✓	There is a standard of measurement in place to assess English proficiency.
	◆	There is progress in developing or adopting a standard of measurement to assess English proficiency.
	X	There is no standard of measurement in place to assess English proficiency.
Proficiency Goals	✓	National student proficiency goals are set at various levels based on a standard of measurement.
	◆	There is progress in developing student proficiency goals.
	X	No student proficiency goals are set.
Proficiency Assessment	✓	National or international assessment is in place to measure English proficiency in all, or a representative sample of, students at a specified grade level.
	◆	Assessment is optional or does not extend to all, or a representative sample of, students.
	X	There is no national or international assessment in place to measure student English proficiency.

Teacher Qualifications		
Teacher Education Standards	✓	There are national standards for English teacher education programs that apply to all programs.
	◆	National governments work with universities to establish teacher profiles for English teacher education programs. Profiles may differ by university.
	X	There are no national standards for English teacher education programs.
Proficiency Goals	✓	Teacher proficiency goals are set based on a standard of measurement.
	◆	There is progress in developing teacher proficiency goals.
	X	No teacher proficiency goals are set.
Proficiency Assessment	✓	Mandatory national or international assessment is in place to measure proficiency of English teachers.
	◆	National or international assessment is in place to measure proficiency of English teachers, but is not required.
	X	There is no national or international assessment in place to measure English proficiency of English teachers.

## Annex B: Glossary of National English Language Learning Programs

Country	National ELL Program	Year of Program Start	Status	Website
<b>Argentina</b>	--	--	--	
<b>Brazil</b>	--	--	--	
<b>Chile</b>	Programa Inglés Abre Puertas (PIAP)	2004	Active	<a href="http://ingles.mineduc.cl/">http://ingles.mineduc.cl/</a>
<b>Colombia</b>	Colombia Bilingüe	2015	Active	<a href="http://aprende.colombiaaprende.edu.co/colombiabilingue">http://aprende.colombiaaprende.edu.co/colombiabilingue</a>
	Colombia, Very Well!	2015	Inactive	
	Programa de Fortalecimiento al Desarrollo de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras (PFDCLE)	2010	Inactive	
	Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo (PNB)	2006	Inactive	
<b>Costa Rica</b>	Costa Rica Multilingüe	2008	Inactive	
<b>Ecuador</b>	Proyecto de Fortalecimiento de la Enseñanza de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera	2014	Active	<a href="https://educacion.gob.ec/fortalecimiento-del-ingles-prin">https://educacion.gob.ec/fortalecimiento-del-ingles-prin</a>
<b>Mexico</b>	Programa Nacional de Inglés (PRONI)	2016	Active	
	Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica (PNIEB)	2009	Inactive	
<b>Panama</b>	Panamá Bilingüe	2014	Active	
<b>Peru</b>	Inglés, Puertas al Mundo	2016	Active	<a href="http://www.minedu.gob.pe/ingles-puertas-al-mundo/">http://www.minedu.gob.pe/ingles-puertas-al-mundo/</a>
<b>Uruguay</b>	<i>Ceibal en Inglés*</i>	2012	Active	<a href="http://ingles.ceibal.edu.uy/en/">http://ingles.ceibal.edu.uy/en/</a>

\**Ceibal en Inglés* is part of *Plan Ceibal* together with the Council of Initial and Primary Education and the Council of Secondary Education.

## Annex C: List of Interviewees

**Lucía Acurio**, Adviser, Ministry of Education of Peru

**Dante Antonioli**, Pearson

**Cristina Banfi**, Director of Foreign Languages, Ministry of Education of the City of Buenos Aires

**Claudia Brovotto**, Coordinator of *Ceibal en Inglés, Plan Ceibal*, Uruguay

**David Calderón**, General Director, Mexicanos Primero, México

**Santiago Cueto**, Director of Research and Principal Researcher, Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo (GRADE), Perú

**Leonardo Garnier**, Former Minister of Public Education of Costa Rica

**Santiago Gutiérrez**, Market Director, Pearson

**Cyndi Smith**, Vice President, International Product Development, McGraw-Hill Education

**Fernando Morais**, English Language Teaching Specialist, Pearson

**Andrew Starling**, Regional Content Manager – English, Pearson

**Camila Pérez Torres**, Adviser, Colombia Bilingüe, Colombia

**Marelisa Tribaldos**, Executive Director, Unidos por la Educación, Panamá

**Fernando Valenzuela**, Former Director of McGraw-Hill Latin America, McGraw-Hill Education

# Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> It is hard to determine the nature of the bias. To the extent that it is those most interested in learning English that participate, the bias would be upwards. On the other hand, if those participating are individuals at the initial stage of their English training, results may be biased downwards.
- <sup>2</sup> The EF EPI is released every year since 2011. The most recent index was published in 2016 and ranks 72 countries and territories from the data collected through EF's online English tests taken throughout 2015.
- <sup>3</sup> A report published by Chile's Ministry of Education on the EF EPI points out that few countries maintain a steady trend and suggests that this could compromise the ability of the index to serve as a measure of comparison over the years (Carreño, 2016).
- <sup>4</sup> The Business English Index (BEI) published by Pearson English Business Solutions\* in 2013 was designed specifically to measure workers' English proficiency in the workplace. The BEI shows the results of 212,000 Pearson English Business Solutions\* subscribers from around the world who participated in the December 2012 analysis.
- <sup>5</sup> The TOEFL test was first administered in 1963, but has since undergone various changes. The most recent version of the test, first administered in 2005, is the TOEFL iBT test, which is taken online. The TOEFL iBT evaluates reading, listening, speaking and writing skills necessary for effective communication in an academic setting. The most recent data comes from test takers who took the exam between January 2015 and December 2015 (Educational Testing Service, 2016).
- <sup>6</sup> A report published by Chile's Ministry of Education on the EF EPI finds that EF EPI and TOEFL reflect different trends in English proficiency among regions and countries, presenting another caveat to these international assessments (Carreño, 2016).
- <sup>7</sup> According to ETS, the differences in the number of students taking the test in each country, how early English is introduced into the curriculum, how many hours per week are devoted to learning English, and the fact that those taking the test are not representative of all English speakers in each country or any defined population can make cross-country comparisons problematic.
- <sup>8</sup> Karina Piña Pérez, personal communication, May 24, 2017.
- <sup>9</sup> Out of the 109,517 primary students in grades 4 – 6 who take English classes, 61% took the exam in November 2016.
- <sup>10</sup> Administering this test at the secondary level was optional, not compulsory. This is not a representative sample.
- <sup>11</sup> The growth experienced in starting EFL in grade 1 began in 2013 as a consequence of the publication of an Optional Curricular Proposal and the distribution of free texts to interested schools. This initiative did not account for the lack of qualified EFL teachers to teach young learners (Karina Piña Pérez, personal communication, May 24, 2017).
- <sup>12</sup> Cristina Banfi, personal communication, February 23, 2017.
- <sup>13</sup> Dante Antonioli, personal communication, March 3, 2017.
- <sup>14</sup> Santiago Gutierrez, personal communication, March 3, 2017. Dante Antonioli, personal communication, March 3, 2017. Andrew Starling, personal communication, March 3, 2017. Fernando Valenzuela, personal communication, February 27, 2017.
- <sup>15</sup> Comparisons between results in SABER PRO and SABER 11 (exams at the end of secondary education) indicate that about 54% of students improved their English level, about 36% maintained the same English level, and about 10% decreased in their English level (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, 2014).
- <sup>16</sup> Claudia Brovotto, personal communication, April 29, 2017.
- <sup>17</sup> The SIMCE test is not adapted or designed according to Chilean students' reality, context and culture (Karina Piña Pérez, personal communication, May 29, 2017).
- <sup>18</sup> David Calderón, personal communication, April 28, 2017.
- <sup>19</sup> Costa Rica provides an example of a country that adopted an existing standardized assessment to measure teacher proficiency. See chapter 3 for a full discussion on this topic.
- <sup>20</sup> Ministerio de Educación Chile, personal communication, April 13, 2017.