

The current status of the educational system in Galapagos

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"A population with a high level of education and training constitutes the first ally for the conservation of Galapagos."

The Special Law for Galapagos of 1998 calls for an Integrated Educational Reform for Galapagos (IERG) and a special model of education and training that involves the participation of the local community and takes into account the special needs and conditions in the archipelago. The IERG is currently being developed by the Provincial Directorate of Education (PDE) and has the support of the Ministry of Education, which incorporated the IERG into its Ten-year Plan for Education 2006-2015.

The IERG has as its goal the creation of an environmental consciousness in youth and adults. It seeks to implement a comprehensive educational model that will require technology and infrastructure that is on par with other parts of Ecuador. It is envisioned that the process itself will inspire proactive approaches and new teaching and curricular models based on scientific research.

To put the challenge associated with educational reform into perspective, this article presents basic data regarding the educational system in Galapagos from 2001 to 2008, a period of rapid population growth.

The current educational system in Galapagos

There are 29 educational institutions in Galapagos of different levels: pre-school, primary and secondary, with the majority in the canton of Santa Cruz (13 institutions), followed by the canton of San Cristóbal (11), which includes Floreana as a parish, and the canton of Isabela (5) (Table 1).



Table 1. Educational institutions in Galapagos by canton and type of institution, according to grade level in each. Code: PS = pre-school (3 and 4 years); P = Primary; S = Secondary.

| Type | San Cristóbal | | | | | Santa Cruz | | | | | Isabela | | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------|----------|-----------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------|----------|-----------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------|----------|----------|
| | PS & P to 7 th grade | PS & P to 10 th grade | PS, P, & S | P & S | TOTAL | PS & P to 7 th grade | PS & P to 10 th grade | PS, P, & S | P & S | TOTAL | PS & P to 7 th grade | PS & P to 10 th grade | PS, P, & S | P & S | TOTAL |
| Public* | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Public/Catholic Church* | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Municipal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Private | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Distance learning | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 4 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 11 | 5 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 13 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 |

* Public schools are financed by the government, while Public/Catholic Church schools receive funds from both the government and the Catholic Church.

The students and teachers

There are a total of 454 teachers in the three levels of education in Galapagos,

with an average student:teacher ratio of 14:1 (Table 2). The best student:teacher ratio is in San Cristóbal where there are only 11 students for every teacher.

Table 2. Total number of teachers and students and the student:teacher ratio by canton.

| Canton | Students | Teachers | S:T Ratio |
|---------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| San Cristóbal | 2115 | 188 | 11.3 |
| Santa Cruz | 3641 | 227 | 16.0 |
| Isabela | 522 | 39 | 13.4 |
| Total | 6278 | 454 | 13.8 |

Source: Provincial Directorate of Education

In the current school year (2008-2009), there are a total of 6278 students, with the majority (79.2%) in the primary educational level (1st to 10th year), followed by 14.4% in the secondary level (1st to 3rd

year), and 6.4% in pre-school (3 to 4 years old). From the school year 2001-2002 to now, there has been an increase of 1883 students, which corresponds to the general population growth (Table 3).

Table 3. Growth of the student population since the school year 2001-2002 and projections to the school year 2009-2010, at all levels (Pre-school, Primary and Secondary).

| School Year | No. of Students | No. increase per year |
|-------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| 2001-2002 | 4445 | |
| 2002-2003 | 4667 | 222 |
| 2003-2004 | 4900 | 233 |
| 2004-2005 | 5145 | 245 |
| 2005-2006 | 5402 | 257 |
| 2006-2007 | 5672 | 270 |
| 2007-2008 | 5956 | 284 |
| 2008-2009 | 6278 | 322 |
| 2009-2010 | 6567 | 289 |

Source: Provincial Directorate of Education



Photograph: Cristina López

The majority of students attend educational institutions that are within the public and public-Catholic church system (approximately 80%). Only Santa Cruz and San Cristóbal have private schools and locations for distance learning, both

with low percentages of students. However, unlike Isabela, these two islands have no municipal education centers (Figure 1).

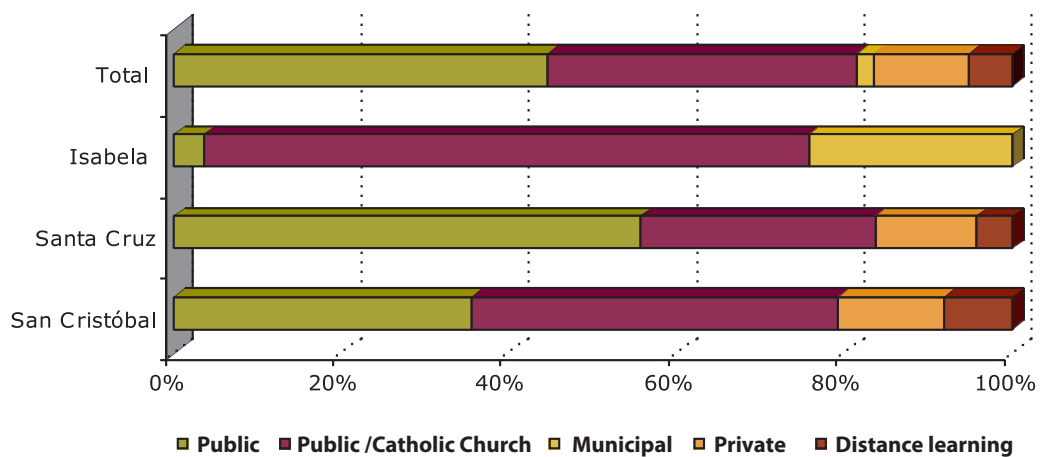


Figure 1. Percentage of students that attend the different types of educational centers, by island.

Source: Provincial Directorate of Education

The number of high school graduates has remained relatively stable in recent years, ranging from 193 to 235 per year. As expected, the schools on Santa Cruz graduate the largest number of students, with

the Colegio Nacional Galápagos graduating the greatest number in the entire province. In San Cristóbal, the Instituto Alejandro Humboldt graduates the most students (Table 3).

Table 4. High school graduates in Galapagos by canton and institution for each year from 2001-2002 to 2006-2007. Diplomas are in Sciences (physics, mathematics, chemistry, biology, general sciences) and Technical Fields (commerce, information management, accounting, tourism, and cooking).

| Canton Educational Institution | 2001- 2002 | 2002- 2003 | 2003- 2004 | 2004- 2005 | 2005- 2006 | 2006- 2007 | Total | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|------------|
| | | | | | | | No. | % |
| San Cristóbal | | | | | | | | |
| Inst. Alejandro Humboldt | 54 | 60 | 45 | 47 | 46 | 52 | 304 | 24 |
| Unid E. Liceo Naval | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 16 | 1 |
| C. Ignacio Hernández | 18 | 17 | 34 | 21 | 30 | 12 | 132 | 10 |
| Total | 72 | 77 | 79 | 68 | 76 | 80 | 452 | 35 |
| Santa Cruz | | | | | | | | |
| Nacional Galápagos | 60 | 65 | 61 | 80 | 69 | 48 | 383 | 30 |
| Miguel Ángel Cazares | 18 | 28 | 14 | 23 | 38 | 32 | 153 | 12 |
| Particular Loma Linda | 10 | 12 | 12 | 11 | 15 | 5 | 65 | 5 |
| U. Educ. Tomás de Berlanga | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 0 |
| Fisc. San Francisco | 24 | 18 | 15 | 35 | 20 | 13 | 125 | 10 |
| Total | 112 | 123 | 102 | 149 | 142 | 104 | 732 | 57 |
| Isabela | | | | | | | | |
| C. Agustín Azkunaga | 19 | 10 | 12 | 15 | 17 | 23 | 96 | 8 |
| Total | 19 | 10 | 12 | 15 | 17 | 23 | 96 | 8 |
| Total in Galapagos | 203 | 210 | 193 | 232 | 235 | 207 | 1280 | 100 |

Source: Régimen Escolar DPEG.

Moving Forward

The increase in the number of students in all educational levels in Galapagos represents a significant challenge for teachers who are aware of the importance of a new integrated curriculum and the difficulty inherent in creating a shared environmental consciousness.

Through its National Plan 2006-2015, the Ministry of Education has already begun to strengthen both the primary and secondary levels of education in Galapagos with additional, qualified professionals. Both primary and secondary education levels need teachers with academic profiles that are appropriate to the level of students being taught and the special academic needs described in the

IERG. High school graduates in Galapagos should be qualified to enter the current labor market and, if they choose, to continue on to higher education in priority areas such as research, conservation, and business.

But to achieve lasting conservation in Galapagos, citizens must be fully prepared to participate in sustainable economic development opportunities and be able to appreciate and understand the unique surroundings in which they live. We must construct a true learning community in Galapagos and serve as advocates of the IERG, which we believe will provide local citizens with the necessary tools to create and maintain a shared vision for Galapagos.

ⁱ Plan Regional para la Conservación y Desarrollo Sustentable de Galápagos. INGALA 24 October 2002, number 3.3 Directrices para garantizar la sustentabilidad socioeconómica.