

Venezuela

Demographics for Venezuela

Population:	25,375,281 (July 2005 est.)
GDP (by PPP method):	US\$145.2 billion
Currency (inc code):	Bolivar (VEB)
Language(s):	Spanish (official), numerous indigenous dialects
Internet country code:	.ve

The educational system in Venezuela is composed of four levels: pre-school education; basic education; middle, diversified and professional education; and high level education. This system is established in article 16 of the *Ley Orgánica de Educaciœn*, enacted in 1980.

On average, the Venezuelan child begins classes at three years of age, as an adult beginning the Master's program at 25 years of age and the Doctorate at 35 years of age, as shown in Figure 1.

Pre-school education

Venezuelan children up to six years of age attend pre-school education, which corresponds to the first level in the educational system, and in the current school system it is obligatory for a child to spend a year in pre-school. A total of 882,095 children were in pre-school education in the country in 2002-2003, representing 25.5 percent of the total population. This represents an increase in enrollment of 2 percent over the previous year, according to the figures provided by the Ministry of Education and Sports.

Primary or basic education

Primary or basic education is the second level of the Venezuelan educational system, with a duration of nine school years. This level is made up of three

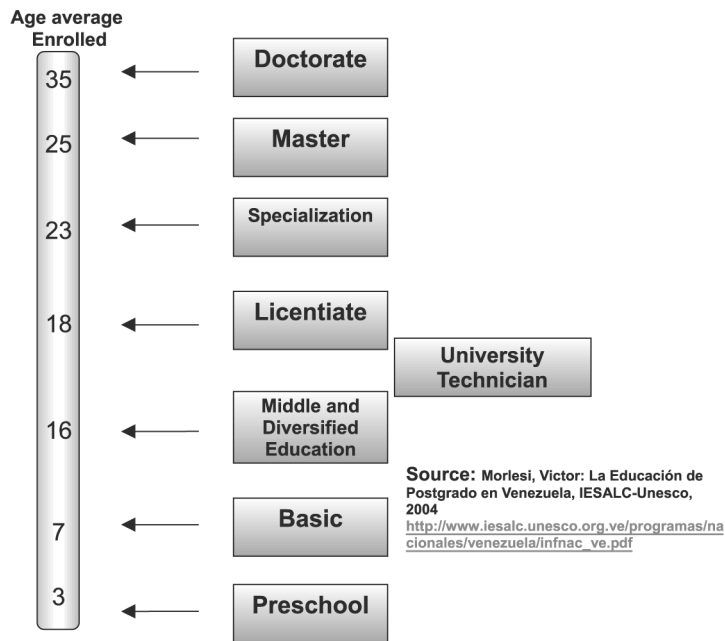


Figure 1. Levels of the educational system in Venezuela

required stages, three years of schooling for each level. Basic education begins from seven years of age. The number of children enrolled in basic education in 2002-2003 was 4,786,445, which represents 95 percent of the population in this age range, according to the Ministry of Education and Sports. In the Census (2001), there were 4,543,924 students registered in basic education.

Middle diversified and professional education

The third level of the Venezuelan educational system is made up of middle diversified and professional education. This level prior to higher education has a duration of two to three years. On terminating this level students graduate as high school graduates or middle-level technicians in their chosen specialty. According to the Ministry of Education, 512,371 students were enrolled at this educational level in 2002-2003, an increase of 3 percent over the previous year.

Higher education

Higher level education in Venezuela includes professional (undergraduate) and graduate education. These courses are studied in:

1. Universities:
 - Autonomous National Universities;

- Experimental National Universities;
 - Private Universities.
2. University Institutes and Colleges:
- Polytechnic Institutes;
 - Pedagogical Institutes;
 - University Institutes of Technology;
 - University Colleges;
 - University Institutes;
 - Ecclesiastical University Institutes;
 - Military University Institutes;
 - Research Institutes.

According to figures of the National Council of Universities, in Venezuela in 2000 there were 42 universities (21 public and 21 private); and 104 university institutes and colleges (41 public and 38 private). In Higher Education in 2000 there were 803,755 students enrolled.

In the statistics for 2002 of the Ministry of Education and Sports, it is observed that at the higher education level in Venezuela 370 different majors or professional disciplines could be studied: 163 long (five or six years of study), and 207 short (three years).

Professional (undergraduate) education

To gain admission to this level of education, it is necessary to have a high school degree and in order to graduate, it is necessary to have studied for between two and six years, depending on the specialty. This educational level is ruled by the norms and principles established in the National Constitution and by the following laws: “Ley Orgánica de Educación” and the “Ley de Universidades”.

Students must take a mandatory admission exam, called “Prueba de Aptitud Académica”, at the national level. This test is made up of two parts: reading comprehension and mathematical reasoning. The final score of a student is the result of a proportion of 40 percent of the average on the test and 60 percent of the GPA (starting from 7th Grade). The result is called the Academic Index, an indicator that determines whether the student gets the opportunity to enter higher education, especially in public universities and institutes.

In addition to this Academic Index, universities may require candidates to sit further, internal admissions tests.

In professional or undergraduate education there is a wide variety in the education on offer. The majors are two types: short technical majors with a duration of three years, the degree is “Técnico Superior Universitario” (TSU);

long majors with a duration of five to six years (equivalent to ten or six semesters); the professional degrees are licentiate, engineer, teacher and others.

The courses for which demand is highest in Venezuelan universities are social sciences: social communications, business administration, law, economics, accounting, psychology, industrial relations, sociology, among others. Demand by area of knowledge can be seen in Figure 2.

Graduate education

The universities, authorized by the National Council of Universities, are responsible for developing graduate studies and programs.

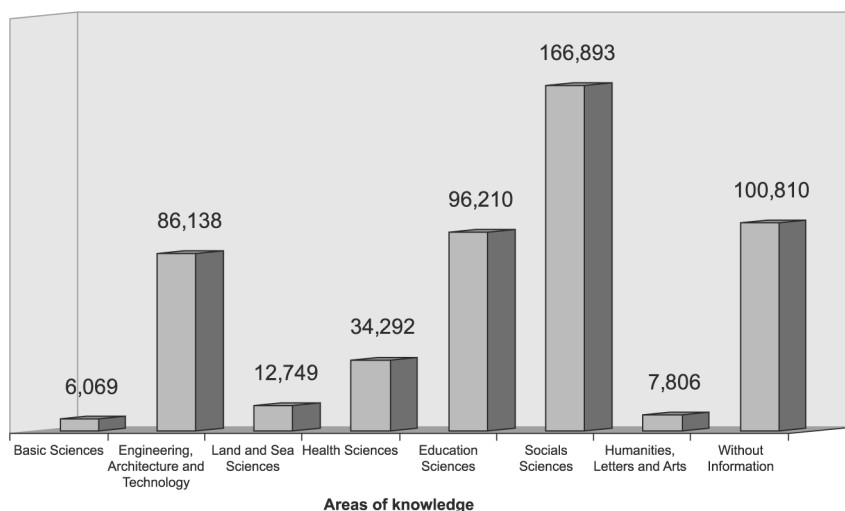
The purpose of graduate studies is to improve the academic ability and professional performance of higher education graduates. Graduate studies in Venezuela are divided into:

- specialization;
- Master's; and
- Doctorate.

Studies that do not lead to an academic degree:

- extension;

Number of university students according to areas of knowledge (ME 2000)



Source: Ministry of Education and Sports

Figure 2. Number of university students (short and long term majors) according to areas of knowledge

- refresher;
- professional improvement; and
- post-doctoral programs.

In Venezuela there are approximately 200 graduate specialties and more than 160 majors or professional orientations.

Business administration studies in Venezuela

Across the country there are different centers of business administration and management studies at undergraduate, graduate and doctoral levels. The degrees awarded are: superior technician in business administration, licentiate in business administration or management, specialist in management, Master in business administration and Doctorates in administrative or managerial sciences.

Every graduate program is carried out by a selection process and the requirements vary. These processes generally include the presentation of an internal test (four of the 17 institutions that offer Master's programs require candidates to sit an exam), a personal interview and the evaluation of credentials of the applicants. The candidate must have obtained an undergraduate degree to study a specialization or Master's in Venezuela.

The syllabi of the specialization and Master's programs vary among the different academic centers. In general, they have some introductory courses, and then in the first quarter or semester they offer basic and analytic courses such as microeconomics, macroeconomics, statistical methods and financial mathematics. Later elective courses and research seminars deepen students' knowledge of their chosen area of specialization.

Venezuelan law requires the presentation of theses to obtain an award in higher education. Therefore, specializations, master's programs and doctorates in business administration have theses within the structures of their syllabi, seminars and preparatory courses.

The systems of studies of specializations and Master's programs can be by semester or quarter. The length of the specializations is three semesters or five quarters. The length of the Master's degree programs is two years, four semesters or six quarters.

In the area of management and administration in Venezuela there are currently two doctorates, which grant the title of Doctor in Managerial Sciences and Doctor in Administrative Sciences. Both are focused on the development of investigations that generate contributions to the discipline. The entry requirements are: to have obtained a Master's degree; and to present and have approved a research project. Candidates are selected by an evaluation of their credentials, and they are then enrolled for five to six semesters.

At the moment an executive MBA is not given in Venezuela. Some universities and the Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Administración (IESA) offer advanced management programs. These programs are intended for executives in managerial positions with high levels of responsibility. These advanced management programs aim to update executives' knowledge of new managerial tendencies and offer a global perspective to doing business in Venezuela. These programs are certified by educational centers, but they do not lead to academic degrees.

Accreditation

The academic programs of specializations, Master's and Doctorates in the country must be authorized by the National Council of Universities (CNU). This organization is responsible for defining the orientation and development of the national university system and for guaranteeing compliance of the Law of Universities.

The National Graduate Council is an advisory body, created in 1983, to evaluate and consult upon the requests of the National Council of Universities for the creation, accreditation and renewal of graduate study programs.

Higher level administration studies have to follow the general guidelines for graduate studies. These guidelines establish that to authorize a graduate program, it is necessary to meet the following requirements:

- Presentation of the corresponding curricular design (profile, objectives, curricular structure and system of studies) as well as evidence that shows its justification or external relevancy (response to contextual needs) and internal relevancy (correspondence with the characteristics of the program that it is desired to develop).
- Selection of necessary academic personnel to meet the needs of an academic nature and research nature for the formation of applicants for which the program is intended.
- Disposition of a research, technical or artistic and service academic infrastructure that sustains the development of the program.
- Disposition of an administrative and technical infrastructure, consonant with the nature of the program to be created.
- Disposition of a physical infrastructure (seat for which the authorization of operation governs) in accordance with the needs of the program.

The IESA is the only institution in the country that has obtained international accreditation from AACSB and AMBA. The Master's in Business Administration of IESA is thereby recognized as offering an equal standard to a European or a US MBA program:

- Number of institutions that offer specialization in business administration and management: 5.
- Number of institutions that offer Master's in business administration and management: 17.
- Number of Doctorates in business administration and management: 2.

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