Workshop on learning assessment policies

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During the workshops of the Regional Forum on Education Policy, entitled "How to address the learning crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean", representatives of the ministries of education of the region, international and regional organizations, and other actors of the education system worked in an articulated and participatory manner around four axes: curriculum policies, learning assessment, teacher policies and digital policies.
As a result, challenges and recommendations to address the learning crisis were identified.
This document brings together the main highlights on learning assessment policies.

CHALLENGES

Articulation
1) Need for an assessment system that is closely articulated and improvement-oriented, from educational practices to policies. In this framework, assessment should contribute to learning improvement, from the functions of each of the levels of the education system, classroom practices, and policy development.
2) Lack of a regular, sustained, and systematic implementation of standardized and independent assessment modalities (some more frequent, such as formative assessments, and others more spaced out, such as independent assessments).
3) Lack of articulation to create an assessment policy that integrates all modalities, since they complement each other. A good learning assessment policy favours such integration.

learning crisis

Leadership, culture, and governance
4) Lack of leaders in each level of the system that build trust in the quality and usability of assessment instruments, beyond institutional or governmental directors.

Capacity building
5) Insufficient development of technical skills, especially among instrument designers (in charge of creating the assessment and communicating results) and teachers, to use the assessments to improve learning.
6) Limited focus on technical capacity building (in individuals and institutions) for inclusive assessments, tailored to the needs of different types of learners and their starting points. One possibility is to transition to adaptive tests, which offer more or less demanding tasks based on the results achieved in the previous one.

Context
7) Lack of adaptation to make assessment policies more relevant to different communities and socio-educational realities, without discriminating against teachers' different levels of achievement.
8) Lack of adaptation in the delivery format and the communication of results to different target groups and users that enables the effective use of evaluation results.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Articulation
1) Improve the articulation of different assessment modalities in each educational centre, enabling a better integration and applying them to encourage pedagogical and learning improvement. This requires promoting several types of leadership in schools. At the same time, it implies empowering all actors to take ownership of the evaluations and offering adequate instruments, acknowledging the different capacities and resources that schools have at their disposal. From outside the schools, it is also necessary to accompany and support teachers.

2) Develop and combine evaluation modalities: ongoing monitoring of learning processes, formative assessments, summative assessments as the basis for accreditation, and standardized and independent assessments.

3) Incorporate formative assessment to provide feedback on the learning process, by giving teachers detailed information on areas for improvement (it may or may not be standardized).

4) Analyse the various modalities of learning assessment with their purposes and characteristics. This demands considering their different objectives, components, target groups, and institutional arrangements, in order to achieve the best combination to address the needs and capacities of each country.

Technical skills

5) Promote professionalization by prioritizing assessment skills and leveraging the diversity of tools — from continuing and academic training (undergraduate and postgraduate) to in-service training completed by teachers in their educational centres.

6) Train human resources on the different assessment modalities available to improve learning. These trained resources should include teachers, intermediate roles, and education authorities.

Leadership, culture, and governance

7) Always make assessment results known in order to improve learning. To this end, officials should optimize their dissemination and make them easy to understand for the various actors who may use them, such as students and their families, and teachers (working as a team in each school). Using assessments to improve learning requires building confidence in assessment processes.

8) Develop more comprehensive assessments, which – besides assessing cognitive components – increasingly include other dimensions (such as socio-emotional or environmental skills), while using a variety of resources for their application.

9) Include a fully independent assessment institution or agency in education governance.

10) Promote continuous collaboration between all actors in learning assessment, to ensure easy access to available information (under the conditions that apply in each case).
11) Progressively incorporate ICTs in education (both as a pedagogical resource and in educational management). Approach ICTs as a means to enable agile, systematic, and timely monitoring, offering opportunities at all levels and to every actor – students, teachers, families, supervisors and school authorities.
12) Build a culture of assessment as an unspoken rule of thumb, both for individual schools and for the system as a whole.

Context
13) Design and conduct assessments that are more inclusive and flexible, so as to better address the specific characteristics of different groups of learners and the conditions of educational processes. This does not imply that benchmarks or standards should be different for different sectors or situations.
14) Learn from the skills developed during the pandemic, recognizing the lessons learned outside of school and capitalizing on the various communication tools widely used due to the challenges and adverse conditions generated by the COVID-19 pandemic.