Workshop on curriculum 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 curriculum policies.

CHALLENGES

Legitimacy
1) Little participation of educational communities who can represent different actors and inform curriculum definitions.
2) Misalignment between decision-makers working on curriculum policy and actors in the education system (this is related to the lack of participation mentioned earlier).
3) Lack of a shared vision that adequately identifies and responds to different demands, contexts, and social changes, so as to make the curriculum appealing and meaningful for all actors, especially for people who were out of school during the pandemic.

Sustainability
4) Lack of a long-term perspective that takes into consideration the time needed to monitor and identify curriculum opportunities and limitations.
5) Lack of analysis and development of curriculum policies from a more comprehensive and collective perspective.

learning crisis

6) Allocating sufficient financial resources for curriculum implementation, considering the current status and associated factors.

Articulation
7) Little ownership of curriculum definitions by actors in the education system, especially teachers.
8) Misalignment between curriculum definitions, teacher training and teaching practices, in order to analyse and review practices from a pedagogical and didactic perspective.
9) Fragmented public policies, combined with curriculum definitions that are not aligned with policies that favour their proper implementation (e.g. policies related to teacher training, working conditions, digital connectivity, among others).
10) Lack of a comprehensive and collective approach that acknowledges that different sectors have different priorities (for example, education policy, management and unions, etc.).
11) Challenges to reframe curricular priorities to address the post-pandemic scenario, and to apply skills and reflect on how to organize the curriculum.

Context
12) Challenges to acknowledge the diversity and unique needs of different territories in terms of aspects that are closely related to the reality of each context.
13) Overloading the curriculum with content, which maintains high learning expectations, but without providing an over-detailed description.
14) Insufficient methods to articulate the ethno-linguistic differences between communities and to address the resistance to the curriculum due to cultural differences.
15) Challenges in attempting to decompress the idea of curriculum coverage and little flexibility for curriculum management in schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Legitimacy

1) Carry out curriculum reforms through extensive consultation processes with strategic actors (especially teachers, students, and their families), ensuring their involvement and participation in the different stages of the curriculum development process. Curriculum design should thus take into account all voices, based on broad social consensus. Pay special attention to the need to involve teachers from the start and throughout every stage.

2) Recognize and strengthen the role of teachers in curriculum policy-making, guaranteeing enough time and space to understand, appropriate and conduct planning for the curriculum (particularly, safeguarding exchanges with unions).

3) Ensure enough time for teachers, as well as a space for dialogue and participation in debates, which, although they are often technical, need to be open to input.

4) Offer comprehensive curriculum proposals focused on the entire learning journey.

5) Strengthen institutional capacities for curriculum development by creating dedicated teams that promote spaces for dialogue with teachers and principals; systematic and wide-ranging citizen participation mechanisms; regular curriculum monitoring and evaluation strategies for decision-making (that include school team members and address processes to systematize and document experiences to provide feedback on curriculum definitions).

6) Promote the involvement of different actors in designing and developing curriculum policies, in order to simplify their subsequent implementation in the education system.

Sustainability

7) Define curriculum development cycles that provide legal certainty, so as to have curricular continuity and a State vision based on broad social consensus (in this respect, some groups explicitly pointed out the need to avoid continuous changes linked mainly to changes in government).

8) Establish a comprehensive vision of curriculum definitions, explicitly focused on socio-emotional development, diversity, and a more humane take on development. This recommendation was considered especially relevant in several groups, given the importance of making curriculum definitions appealing and relevant to current challenges, especially from the perspective of young people.

9) Work on clearly designed principles for core knowledge and detailed learning (risk of overload), while maintaining the principle of fairness and high learning expectations.

10) Address associated factors (food, transport, care and welfare) and secure sufficient budget to address them and to create the necessary conditions for curriculum implementation.

Articulation

11) Ensure systemic coherence with other policies (teacher training, employment, school management, care, digital resources), with resources and with assessments, as well as between the different levels of technical-pedagogical support.

12) Reinforce teacher training in didactics, innovative methodologies, and active and contextualized learning.

13) Organize virtual spaces for dissemination of and training on curriculum issues (e.g. online teacher training institutes).

14) Develop teacher-training strategies that adequately consider time requirements, define realistic and progressive stages, and are accompanied by support units and resources for curricular appropriation available to every level of education.

15) Work on a curriculum with a proper balance of life skills and work-preparation skills, especially from the perspective of young people.

Context
16) Work on a curriculum structure and organization that enables a common foundation and a more flexible part, in order to allow for contextualization to territorial realities.
17) Develop guidelines for curriculum contextualization processes, articulating and illustrating common minimum learning outcomes and allowing for greater flexibility. This would allow for both appropriating the curriculum and identifying elements that can be contextualized to different realities, without compromising the equity of curriculum definitions.
18) Propose a flexible and articulated curriculum, which considers the diversity of contexts and the associated gaps.
19) Strengthen the technical-pedagogical support structures and the ministries' technical capacities to aid the contextualization of pedagogical proposals by understanding schools' needs.