Workshop on digital 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 digital policies.

CHALLENGES

Innovation
1) Lack of universal access to quality equipment and connectivity for each student, in every region of each country, especially in remote, rural, or dispersed rural areas.
2) Limited digital skills among teachers to maximize the educational use of ICTs. This became evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. It can be improved due to demands of educational continuity. Cross-disciplinary approach
3) Lack of programmes, plans and projects with clearly designed objectives, intervention theories, and evaluation indicators that maximize the impact on the target population.

Articulation
4) Low association of digital education policies with learning assessment regulations or guidelines in national curricula.

Sustainability

5) Disruption in national initiatives due to changes in governmental authorities that bring different visions of how ICTs can impact education systems. As a result, it is impossible to continue building on previously established foundations.

6) Insufficient budget allocated by governments to start and maintain educational intervention initiatives using ICTs. There are also cases where budget is poorly distributed due to a lack of strategy and data.

Context

7**)** Educational gap not only among teachers, but also among families and students that prevents an adequate use of ICTs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Innovation

1) Use ICTs in educational interventions to clearly define the pedagogical axes that will help achieve results on specific populations, based on well-defined indicators. In this sense, it is useful to capitalize on examples of national initiatives in the region that ended up failing, that did not meet their goals and, most importantly, that did not improve student learning and quality education indicators.

2) Ensure that educational interventions have quality digital educational resources (software, e-books, videos, etc.) aligned with the pedagogical axes and the curriculum. In this sense, it is key to ensure not only that the proper tech equipment is distributed, but also that the initiatives support these educational resources – without leaving this responsibility to teachers. ICTs allow students to access knowledge in many diverse ways, so analysing resources and allocating budget – and hardware – to this end is a key for success.

3) Continue offering hybrid learning (in-person and online) to continue expanding learning opportunities that complement the face-to-face in-classroom work, in order to improve both learning and educational outcomes.
4) Broaden and deepen the way in which digital policies articulate with other relevant and current policies (including safe, responsible, and ethical use of ICTs; digital citizenship; digital skills; new pedagogies; cybersecurity; and learning assessment). This will enable relevant and up-to-date public policies. These public policies are expected to be updated periodically, to keep pace with evolving technological development.

Cross-disciplinary approach
5) Foster a country-wide vision developed and shared by the whole national community on the universal need for devices and connectivity. Articulate this with other public policies, especially those related to telecommunications, science, and technology.

Articulation
6) Approach educational interventions with ICTs by giving teachers an active role in developing initiatives. Consider initial and ongoing teacher training, including the skills to leverage of ICTs for education, as a key for the successful implementation of policies and initiatives.

Sustainability
7) Focus on building public technological infrastructure in all countries, complying with providing universal access to technology and connectivity in the education sector.
8) Allocate sufficient resources for meeting objectives. This requires sufficient financial resources and, most importantly, matching allocation to expected outcomes and needs. Data-driven decisions based on population and regional data are necessary for an equity-oriented policy.
9) Create longitudinal education initiatives, some with 5+ years plans. Public institutional mechanisms should be used in each country to identify how to “protect” the actions carried out (through decrees, laws, regulations,

active participation of civil society, etc.) from future changes, although this depends on the institutional and regulatory structure of each country.

Context

10) Take into consideration the needs and adaptations of each context (urban, rural). While this recommendation does not require one-size-fits-all approach for every context – as they do not require the same equipment, resources, training, etc. – policies should be based on the principle of equity.