Workshop on teacher-oriented 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 teacher-oriented policies.

CHALLENGES

Teacher performance

1) Limitations of initial training and continuing education. Initial training needs to consider the context of practice and address student learning, assessment, and knowledge, by engaging teacher-training institutions with local communities.

2) Training teachers for the future, integrating innovations and citizenship perspectives from a systemic view, strongly based on key subject areas (language, mathematics, science).

3) Need for increased investment in teacher training based on well-established standards and from a gender, diversity, and inclusion perspective.

4) Low value assigned to the teaching career, low salaries, and a lack of commitment of new profiles of teachers to cover the demand for qualified and dedicated professionals, especially specialists in different regions (mainly in the most isolated and rural areas where it is hard to find accommodation and adequate living conditions).

learning crisis

5) Lack of consistent national criteria for appointing teachers based on merit (years of experience, pressure from school boards, or political interference; all these factors affect teacher performance and continuity of employment).

6) Updating the teaching profession and ensuring unrestricted career access (upward mobility), with clear information and behavioural guidelines once they secure a position.

7) Need to reduce administrative burden and tasks to strengthen strategies for pedagogical support and avoid drop-out in the first years of the teacher-training course.

8) Integrating a culture of teacher-performance assessment into professional development policies, so that teachers do not see assessment as a disciplinary action and take ownership of their evaluation and self-evaluation process.

9) Reframing the culture of supervision, which is associated with verifying and controlling bureaucratic issues, towards an approach to pedagogical support.

Articulation

10) Lack of synergies between teacher-oriented policies and those related to teachers' emotional well-being, health, safety, financial well-being, etc.

11) Insufficient engagement and involvement of different levels and actors in the education sector, through networks, peer exchange, and other measures.

Context

13) Insufficient efforts to enable inclusive working conditions and infrastructure (facilities, educational resources, and furniture) that can make schools safe for the whole community and can improve learning and pedagogical work

Sustainability

14) Lack of funding for effective education policies and strategies.

15) Lack of contextualized teacher-oriented policies based on school autonomy and students' needs diagnosis, and which take into account different stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Teacher performance

1) Establish and monitor initial training and continuing education benchmarks to standardize quality, certify teachers, help them complete their training, and set up training networks to build upon collective knowledge.

2) Provide training based on soft skills, to help teachers adapt to changes and to the future, focusing on diversity, gender, and inclusion.

3) Update the curricula and teacher training in line with classroom needs through participatory and technical spaces and an open dialogue with various actors in the education community.

4) Offer hybrid formats with a wider range and scope, together with continuous training courses for different subject areas; through pedagogical support and in-situ training, with a greater focus on new teachers and teachers in rural, vulnerable, and high-risk areas.

5) Ensure continuity of training after their initial degree, so that the lack of update does not restrict the impact of policies promoting new visions and innovations in teaching.

6) Provide mental health training and support strategies for teachers and principals.

7) Work on improving continuing teacher training opportunities – through partnerships with universities – to expand and improve the offer (peer-to-peer training, consultancies, exchanges).

8) Promote community work in teacher education and leave room in the curriculum for in-situ work in education.

9) Strengthen the career ladder and teacher assessment using pre-set requirements to create consistent selection criteria, based on their merits.

10) Respond to specific needs, such as education in Indigenous languages, special needs, remote locations, vulnerable population.

11) Implement teaching standards and provide incentives to attract teachers to work in remote areas offering better working conditions, good school infrastructure, and teacher accommodation.

12) Promote participatory and consultative spaces with teachers and other actors in the education system to propose

curricular transformations: effective spaces for listening and technical spaces to learn about their interests and needs.

13) Provide processes and strategies so that teachers can leverage in the classroom what they have learnt in their trainings. The trainer must establish trust, value and understand the teachers' know-how, and set challenges for them. These challenges can address how to apply a task-based approach, as well as pedagogical strategies aligned with active and meaningful learning processes.

14) Generate monitoring and support mechanisms to enable regulation enforcement and alleviate the administrative burden, so that teachers can devote more time to teaching.

15) Ensure a proper structure and channels for handling complaints, conflict resolution, and enforcing the teaching code of conduct to protect students and teachers from abuse.

16) Provide feedback to improve classroom practices and reframe strategies.

17) Standardize assessment criteria to recognize trained and accomplished teachers based on educational achievements (such as salary enhancement, exchanges, scholarships, bonuses).

18) Strengthen training for principals and educational leadership.

19) Promote exchanges, scholarships and international mobility, based on performance assessments and educational achievements with indicators that are relevant to the skills individuals need for their roles.

20) Provide continuous support to teachers, aligned with the results of the teacher assessment, and articulate the assessment with training, learning improvement, and job improvement.

21) Create standardized benchmarks for assessing teacher training and performance, including recognizing good practices in the classroom, in order to have effective experiences to help reduce resistance to change from other teachers.

Articulation
22) Strengthen the synergy and the systemic articulation between education policies and other government sectors and civil society, such as health, finance, technology, production, entrepreneurship, among others.

23) Make the curricula compatible with the different educational levels. Also strengthen articulation at the teacher-training levels.
24) Establish management models to strengthen the bonds and the joint efforts between families and the school to improve their mutual appreciation and the educational achievements, in terms of the role they play in the education of children.
25) Organize communication campaigns that revalue the teaching career to improve empathetic and effective communication between teachers and other actors in the system (supervisors, authorities, families, academia).

Context
26) Generate and implement flexible, contextualized, and targeted policies and strategies (with clearly defined roles, functions, and expectations for each of the key actors).
27) Promote a teacher training model based on community work and practices in real-life contexts.
28) Create specially targeted offers to serve communities with specific needs.
29) Promote better working conditions and an inclusive infrastructure, in order to have safe places that favour pedagogical and school work.
Sustainability
30) Ensure the financial capital for enforcing policies, by creating funding mechanisms, and allocate funds through an agreement between all relevant parties.
31) Monitor and assess the impact of policy implementation for funding and continuity purposes, thus making them sustainable and independent of political interests.
32) Open education policy up for dialogue and discussion, not only among education policy-makers and teacher representatives, but also among other key stakeholders, to build social consensus on teaching and education.