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OUTCOMES OF THE INTER-SECTORAL WORKSHOP ON “SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE:
COORDINATION BETWEEN MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION AND LABOR”

Santiago, Chile – May 16 and 17, 2019



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BACKGROUND

The Organization of American States has taken major steps to strengthen dialogue and coordination between the Ministries of Labor and the Ministries of Education in the Americas, recognizing that it is indispensable to remedy historical lags in the quality, equity, and inclusion of education, and to tackle new challenges and opportunities arising from increasingly rapid changes in technology. The section “Conceptual Framework” of the present document examines these issues in greater depth.

The OAS is in an excellent position to promote coordination between education and labor, because of the permanent ties it has with the Ministries of Labor and Education in the region, on the basis of its specialized ministerial meetings, as well as the implementation of the Inter-American Education Agenda and the operation of the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL).

At the OAS Inter-American Meetings of Ministers of Education held in 2015 in Panama City and in 2017 in Nassau, Bahamas, an exchange was held with the Ministers of Labor spearheading the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor (IACML). Likewise, at the 19th and 20th IACML, held in Cancun, Mexico, in 2015 and Bridgetown, Barbados, in 2017, panels were organized on “Education and Labor: Building Integrated Public Policies to Promote Effective Labor Coordination,” with the intervention of the Chairs of the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE) on behalf of the Ministries of Education of the region. These exchanges have made it possible to confirm the commitment, at the highest level, to achieve greater coordination.



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ¹

Coordination between education and labor is a priority subject for the region and has led to an ongoing discussion inside their policies for education, employment, development, and productivity.

Education is an essential process for the development of human capital, as it provides children, adolescents, and young people with skills and knowledge that make it possible for them to participate actively in the comprehensive development of their countries, have a productive and fulfilling life, and build more democratic, inclusive, and socially fair societies.

As for work, it is a means of ensuring self-fulfillment and contributing to society, which enables individuals to develop the skills they have acquired and learned throughout their life. **Both in the Americas and in other regions, the quality of jobs and the probability that these jobs will be decent, productive, covered by social protection, and well-paid depends, to a large extent, on the level and quality of education.**

The region has recognized that, although major strides have been taken in terms of coverage and public investment in education, there continue to be important challenges in terms of quality, equity, and inclusion. These challenges are more pressing for groups living in situations of poverty and vulnerability, who have fewer opportunities to enforce their right to access and complete a quality education. Indeed, students from the lowest-income quintile show less proficiency in mathematics and language and complete far fewer years of schooling than students from the wealthiest quintile.² As a result, they have fewer possibilities of gaining access to well-paid quality jobs. Statistics highlight, for example, that young people with lower levels of education face higher rates of labor informality (68% for young workers having completed or failed to complete primary schooling, compared to 24% for workers holding a college or graduate degree).³ In other words, in most cases, they work at precariously lower-earning jobs, repeating a vicious circle that furthers poverty and inequality in the region.

Along with the above, there is a major paradox in the region; on the one hand, there are millions of persons who cannot find a job and, on the other hand, there are companies which state that they cannot find the talent they are looking for. This mismatch, which has been labelled as the occupational mismatch or the skills gaps, has been documented in recent studies⁴, and is undermining employment, productivity, and greater social inclusion in the region.

The skills gap is affecting mostly young people in the region, who are now encountering an

¹ It takes up ideas from “Outline for the Dialogue between Ministers of Labor and Ministers of Education in the framework of the XIX OAS Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor,” October 2015 – OEA/Ser.K/XII.19.1, CIDI/TRABAJO/doc.6/15.

² Inter-American Dialogue (2016). “Construyendo una educación de calidad, un pacto con el futuro de América Latina”. [Building Quality Education: A Pact with the Future of Latin America]

³ OECD (2016). “Latin American Economic Outlook 2017: Youth, Skills, Entrepreneurship.”

⁴ See, for example, OECD (2016), op. cit., Manpower Group: Talent Shortage Survey, 2015, and World Bank Enterprise Surveys.

unemployment rate of 19.6%, which is doubling or tripling unemployment among adults in every country. In addition, young people are over-represented in the informal economy – with an informality rate of 62.6% - and are encountering high rates of inactivity, the latter higher than 20%.⁵ In all of these variables, the situation is even more precarious for young women.

The above accounts for some of the region’s historical lags in education and employment, which disproportionately affect young people living in situations of poverty and vulnerability and which highlights a disconnection between the sphere of education and the sphere of labor. The challenges and opportunities arising from breathtaking changes, driven by technological breakthroughs in the framework of the so-called fourth industrial revolution, must be added to those historical lags.

Today, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and the analysis of big data are aspects permeating all spheres of life in society. New occupations are emerging, while others are becoming obsolete. In fact, according to a study of the World Economic Forum in 2016, 65% of children who are now enrolling in primary school will have jobs that do not yet exist.⁶

Today, the discussions and analysis on the future of work are a global trend. It is recognized that multiple factors are and will continue to transform the world of work, including technological change, new forms of economic interaction – among them, the gig economy -, climate change, talent mobility across geographical borders, and demographic transitions that, in our region, represent an accelerated aging of the population.⁷

In the dialogues between Ministers of Labor and Ministers of Education, as well as in the 2016 Inter-Sectoral Workshop, it was recognized that these changes are exerting even greater pressure on education and training systems - which are already under pressure to ensure quality and inclusion of education -, as well as on labor institutions. In addition, these changes make it more urgent and necessary to achieve greater coordination between education and employment policies, as well as greater coordination between government institutions. To this end, the OAS intends to continue working with the Ministries of Labor and the Ministries of Education in the Hemisphere, through debate and exchange of knowledge on matters in which their interaction is essential, in order to materialize more concrete and effective actions of inter-sectorial coordination. In this context, a partnership with ILO / Cinterfor⁸ - as the nucleus of a network of technical education and vocational training institutions - is fundamental. Although the majority of these institutions respond to the Ministries of Labor, several depend on the Ministries of Education and in several countries have advanced joint efforts to facilitate lifelong learning routes and mutual recognition of certifications. In this area, however, there is much to be done and precisely an inter-sectorial event such as the one proposed in this document will allow the definition of roads and an agenda in this regard.

⁵ ILO (2018). “2017 Labor Overview of Latin America and the Caribbean”

⁶ World Economic Forum (2016). “The Future of Jobs”

⁷ See, for instance, the Report of the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work, as well as the 2019 World Development Report of the World Bank

⁸ The Inter-American Center for the Development of Knowledge in Vocational Training (CINTERFOR), is a specialized center of the ILO with a network of 42 public training institutions in the Americas.

In 2016, the efforts to strengthen the ties between the Ministries of Labor and the Ministries of Education focused on strategies for youth employment, recognizing that inter-sectoral actions in education and labor are required in order to improve the employability of young people. On this solid initial basis, **the OAS proposes to continue supporting the coordination between these ministries regarding another core matter that requires joint and systemic action: the development of “skills for the future.”**

Skills development in the context of the future of work involves addressing the challenge of identifying the main trends and demand for skills in the medium and long term, as well as addressing the gap between the most demanded skills in the labor market and those that current education and training systems continue to develop.

Skills for the future encompass technical skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), fields where higher growth and more job creation are expected, but it goes beyond that. Socio-emotional and non-cognitive skill sets are also key to enhance employability and occupational mobility, and they are being increasingly prized by employers. Critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, leadership and communication skills are emerging as some of the skills for which there will be the highest demand in 2020⁹ worldwide. A discussion on what the skills for the future shall be in the region is needed.

The main responsibility and mission of Ministries of Education is to guarantee education and training by creating opportunities and quality education outcomes as a driving force behind human development, one that promotes a society that is committed to its community. As part of their vast duties, the following key elements can be mentioned: policymaking for education and basic curriculum designs for the various levels of the schooling system. These and other elements constitute a core subject of the debate on the impact they are exerting on the training of future generations in a participatory and global environment, training citizens of the future for continuous lifelong learning.

As for the Ministries of Labor, they have various responsibilities on the basis of which they contribute to identifying and developing skills for the future: as implementers of active labor market policies, especially vocational training and apprenticeship programs, as permanent partners with employers and workers, and as operators of labor market information systems. In addition, in nearly all the countries of the region, there are training institutions specialized in professional training or training for work. The private sector and civil society organizations are also developing training initiatives where technical and socio-emotional skills are being developed.

There are several coordination efforts between Ministries of Labor and Education in the region to close gaps in human capital and align educational and training offers to the current and future needs of the world of work, among which it is worth highlighting, the labor skills certification systems, employment or labor intermediation services, as well as the design and implementation of National Qualification Frameworks.

⁹ World Economic Forum (2016). “The Future of Jobs”

This is the landscape on which the future action of OAS is based – under its education and labor ministerial processes - in order to continue facilitating the coordination of these sectors in the region.

DESCRIPTION OF THE WORKSHOP

The Inter-sectoral Workshop on “Skills for the Future: Coordination between Ministries of Education and Labor” took place from May 16 to 17th, 2019, in Santiago, Chile, and had the participation of 18 countries represented by Ministries of Education and/or Labor, international organizations, private sector, academic institutions and workers’ and employers’ representatives. It was co-organized by the Organization of American States and the Ministries of Education and Labor of Chile, and had the support of the International Labour Organization (ILO) through its Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training.

Aligned with its background and conceptual framework, the main purpose of the Workshop was to promote a greater dialogue and coordination between the Ministries of Education and Labor regarding the identification and development of the skills for the future. The specific objectives of the Workshop were the following:

- Achieve a greater understanding of the challenges that accelerated technological change and the transformation of the world of work are posing in the education and training systems.
- Discuss trends and methodologies for the development of skills of the future (technical and socio-emotional), considering specific experiences within the education and training for work systems.
- Analyze experiences of joint efforts and / or coordination between Ministries of Labor and Education, as well as with other public and private sector actors, in identifying and developing skills for the future.
- Identify lessons learned and policy recommendations to improve education-work intersectoral coordination.

The Workshop was structured around five panels, that allowed the various stakeholders involved to share relevant information and pose their perspectives on identifying and developing the skills for the future, as well as the coordination between education and labor. All presentations and relevant documents shared during the Workshop are available on the web page of the OAS Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL), at: <http://www.rialnet.org/en/skills>

The first panel brought together international organizations, who shared updated information and provided conceptual bases for the discussions that followed. Some of the issues covered included the changing characteristics of the world of work and the impacts of the 4IR – automatization, technological change- in employment and education, as well as skills for the future. The presenters included experts from the OAS, ILO – CINTERFOR, Inter-American Development Bank

(IADB), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), World Bank and CAF – Development Bank of Latin America.

The second panel allowed Ministries of Education and Labor to present their approaches and responses on the changing reality of the world of work, with special emphasis on interinstitutional coordination efforts. The delegations of Chile (represented by the National Service of Training and Employment (SENCE) and the Ministry of Education), Argentina (represented by the National Institute on Technological Education (INET) and the Ministry of Labor), Colombia (Ministry of Labor) and Jamaica (Ministry of Education) shared their experiences. These presentations provided a starting point for the dialogue that followed, were different governments also shared their challenges, successes and lessons learned.

The third panel was focused on the perspectives and views from the private sector and non-governmental institutions. Google, Telefonica Foundation, Laboratoria, Nestle and Ford shared their vision on the skills for the future, highlighting the importance of socio-emotional skills and the need to re-think education and training. In addition, they showcased some of their current initiatives to identify and develop such skills, including a system to analyze and map out current and future skills demands, as an input to guide education and training.

The fourth panel opened the floor to the academia with presentations from the Catholic University of Chile (through the University Workers Department – DUOC), Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the Inter-American Organization for Higher Education (IOHE), and the Technical Training Center CEDUC UCN. The presentations evolved around strategies and initiatives.

The fifth and last panel presented the views of workers' and employers' organizations, through the Trade Union Technical Advisory Council (COSATE) and the Business Technical Advisory Committee on Labor Matters (CEATAL).

During the second day of the event, participants broke into 3 sub-regional groups: South America, Central America and the Caribbean -that included the participation of the United State-, to engage in deeper discussions and extract lessons learned and policy recommendations. Their conclusions are presented below.

OUTCOMES: LESSONS LEARNED AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The main outcome of the Workshop was the identification of lessons learned and policy recommendations to strengthen the coordination between Ministries of Education, Ministries of Labor, and professional training institutions, develop the skills for the future, address the human capital gap, and align educational and training offers to the current and future needs of the world of work.

The lessons and recommendations identified by each of the sub-regional groups are presented below.

1. WORKING GROUP: SOUTH AMERICA

Participants: Governments of Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay and Peru. Academic institutions from Brazil, Chile and Uruguay. Representatives of Trade Union Technical Advisory Council (COSATE) and youth (YABT).

Moderator: Adriana Lechuga, Director of Technical, Technological and Artistic Education, Ministry of Education of Peru

Lessons learned:

- The Fourth Industrial Revolution is happening now and demands from Member States the implementation of sustainable policies, involving the academia, private sector, workers and employers, for the development of the so-called skills for the future, through an ecosystem scope. This implies that both education policies and strategies to develop skills for the future must be State policies and not governmental policies.
- Although technical and technological education represents the greatest response to the productive sector, they are still undervalued if compared with university education.
- The importance of teachers in the teaching-learning process is recognized. The accelerated technological change obliges to think about new capabilities and the need for their continuous training and life-long learning.
- Women and at-risk, vulnerable groups continue to face disadvantages for their labor inclusion.
- Demographic change (aging of the population) demands greater efforts for labor reskilling.
- Entrepreneurship should not be seen only as a tool for self-employment, but also as a skill for the future that promotes innovation and creativity.

- Socio-emotional skills have become increasingly important in the context of accelerated technological changes and the so-called "future of work". The importance of their development from an early age is recognized.
- National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) are a tool to support transitioning to higher levels of training for those who are in both the education system and the training for work system, as well as for those who achieved their learning through practice.
- The NQFs must be flexible and dynamic for the fulfillment of their objectives; thus, the development of a National Qualification System must address and respond to the challenges and the reality of labor markets at the national and local levels, including employability and wages.
- Sectorial Councils are an important tool to identify the needs of the productive sector and guide the training offer, in order to ensure that training provided is relevant.
- Migration poses the challenge of thinking about the articulation of national qualifications frameworks at the regional level.

Policy recommendations at the national level:

- Place technological and technical education as a valid and valuable life option; to do so, it is important to continue strengthening education and training quality assurance systems with the participation of the education and labor sectors, and the productive sector.
- Establish mechanisms to strengthen the link between the education system and the professional training system, with the objective of facilitating people to transition between both of them.
- Governance of the NQFs must involve the Ministries of Education, Ministries of Labor, the private sector and workers' representatives. Furthermore, NQFs must include systems of recognition of previous learnings, in order to democratize access to the corresponding training levels. Ownership of NQFs by the productive sector and the population in general must be promoted.
- All efforts regarding skills identification and development must include a component of inclusion and gender equality. Likewise, it is necessary to work in the training and inclusion of women in traditionally masculinized sectors.

- It is important to continue developing and strengthening labor market information systems, both to minimize information asymmetries in vocational guidance, and to support policy making. Use traditional and non-traditional information bases (taking advantage of big data technologies), as well as strengthening the prospective capabilities of observatories and information systems in order to identify human capital gaps and guide training offerings.
- Incorporate domains in the capacity-building programs of teachers / instructors that allow them to optimize technologies in the training processes, as well as having a greater capacity to develop 21st century skills, which strongly include socio-emotional skills.
- Strengthen dual education programs, through awareness-raising in the productive sector, incentives, or other strategies.
- Generate or strengthen internship and mobility programs for teachers and instructors with the goal of developing pedagogies to facilitate the acquisition of meaningful and life-long learnings, with emphasis on the development of skills for the future.

Recommendations for actions at the regional level:

- Work towards an equivalence of the National Qualifications Frameworks at the level of the Americas (as a response to growing intra-regional migration)
- Develop a common glossary of relevant terms in the discussion of the education-labor coordination and skills development.
- Define XXI Century skills for the region and prioritize them at the national level.
- Generate a student mobility pilot at the regional level (emphasis on technical level).
- Review the actions that are being carried out within the countries of the Pacific Alliance and in the different sub-regional groups on education, to complement and strengthen proposals.

2. WORKING GROUP: CENTRAL AMERICA, THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC AND MEXICO

Participants: Governments of the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Nicaragua

Moderator: Olvin Villalobos, Deputy Secretary of Labor of Honduras

Lessons Learned:

- There is a marked disconnection between the efforts on education and labor.
- Current training does not provide answers to the demands of the labor markets and the demands of the productive sector.
- The private sector is developing its own training processes because education institutions and training centers are not adequately responding to the demands of the labor markets.
- The Ministries of Labor should focus more in intermediation, and not acquire trainer roles. They were not created to train, but to guide and facilitate entrance into labor market.
- There is a disconnect between decisions taken at the highest political level and technical approaches.
- One coincidence among the countries of the region is that they are developing, or are planning to develop, National Qualifications Frameworks which are seen as long-term solutions for the disarticulation between education and labor.
- There is weakness in youth training because of the demotivation and absence of support to teachers.
- The lack of strengthening of Basic Education generates negative consequences in labor competencies.
- Labor Market Observatories must migrate towards an approach that allows them to identify real employment opportunities and, through this, strengthen decision making regarding the labor market.

Policy Recommendations:

- Strengthen a qualifications scheme focused on the current demands of the labor market, and with the ability to anticipate the demands of the future.

- Governments must provide the legal underpinnings, as well as administrative simplification, to promote a massive creation of jobs by the private sector.
- The skills for the future must be developed in function of the countries' potentialities, both visible and not visible.
- Harmonize national employment policies and national education policies to strengthen professional training schemes.
- Promote the creation of tripartite bodies that facilitate the governance and functioning of professional training systems, with the objective of regulating national qualification frameworks.
- Establish the bases to create a regional mechanism to standardize skills certification, beginning with the homologation of concepts and terminology.
- The countries of the region must work in articulating labor, education and economic observatories in a single effort, with the support of multilateral organizations, taking advantage of the tools and methodologies that have already been developed by these institutions.
- Harmonize the basic and intermediate training curriculums in such a way that they lead to an improvement in labor competencies.
- Deepen the dual training initiatives with a focus on learning by doing.

3. WORKING GROUP: CARIBBEAN, WITH PARTICIPATION OF THE UNITED STATES

Participants: Governments of Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and United States

Moderator: Cadelia Ambrose, Ministry of Infrastructure, Ports, Energy and Labour of Saint Lucia

Lessons Learned:

- Strengthening of tripartite approach to help inform policy development.
- Implement apprenticeship programs with the appropriate legislative, industry and curriculum support.
- Strengthen TVET systems to align with labor market needs.

- Strengthen the relationship between Ministries of Labour and Ministries of Education to support the accreditation and parity of all national training initiatives to the Caribbean Regional Qualification Framework.

Policy Recommendations

- Consider revising existing apprenticeship legislation and policies within member states to reflect the development of the skills for the future.
- Increase sharing of information/impact of lesson learned in implementing apprenticeship programs in the different sub-regions.
- Develop a Regional Qualification Framework to strengthen and support the development of the skills for the future.
- Strengthen data collection methods through technological and training initiatives to help ensure captured data are relevant to and reflective of national realities.
- Explore accreditation of training programs at the national, regional and international levels.
- Strengthen mobility for students and faculties between sectors, as well as within academic and technical institutions of learning, as appropriate.
- Promote appropriate curriculum reform to reflect labor market needs and strengthen institutional capacity to respond to the need for data management, data literacy and artificial intelligence skills.
- Shape learners who are able to adapt to future changes by empowering instructors to function as agents of change.
- Conduct skill audits across the region to facilitate the development of projects relating to skills for the future.
- Align educational and employment pathways to fill skill-gaps identified in the regional skills audit.
- Develop and implement workforce development programs to help ensure the relevance of training for at-risk youth.
- Embed digital, soft skills at all levels of training – emphasis on the early childhood level.

ANNEX 1

MANDATES: COMMITMENTS AT THE HEMISPHERIC LEVEL

In the Declaration and the Plan of Action of Bridgetown, approved at the 20th IACML in 2017, the Ministers of Labor decided the following:

- “We will place special emphasis on meeting the new challenges of the future of work in the face of the fourth industrial revolution, and on addressing them with multiple actions, such as incorporating them into the design of modern and relevant curricula and training trajectories in education and training systems. We also assume the need to approach the business world with this new conception of work, in order to ensure for youth a successful entrance into the labor market. We acknowledge the trends and developments in this digital age where traditional approaches to work are being reshaped. We recognize that these developments give rise to new challenges and **we shall strive to equip our workforce, particularly our youth, our less-skilled workers, and those workers displaced by new developments, with the technical and socioemotional skills needed to meet the new and emerging realities of the world of work.** These changes require social dialogue and proactive policies to guarantee benefits for all.” (Article 10, Declaration of Bridgetown)
- “We recognize the relationship that exists between decent work, productive employment, and education, and we celebrate the dialogue and cooperation that we have sustained since the XIX IACML with the ministries of education through the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE). Therefore, we will promote greater interministerial coordination to provide quality, inclusive, and equitable education, training, and learning that better respond to the new challenges and opportunities of the world of work, technological changes, and the demands of the various productive sectors.” (Article 7, Declaration of Bridgetown)
- “Continue furthering dialogue and cooperation between labor and education ministries under the aegis of the IACML and the Inter-American Committee on Education, in order to ensure greater coordination between education, labor, and employment policies and to improve labor insertion for youth and other vulnerable groups in each country, as well as their development in the world of work.” (Article 7, c, Plan of Action of Bridgetown))

In the Declaration of the Bahamas: “The Inter-American Education Agenda: Building Alliances and Advancing towards the Sustainable Development Goals,” adopted in February 2017, the Ministers of Education decided the following:

- To adopt and implement the Inter-American Education Agenda (IEA) (CIDI/RME/doc.6/17 rev. 1), and to explore and identify resources for its implementation, as may be required.
- To instruct the CIE and its authorities to continue to engage in intersectoral collaboration that emphasizes, inter alia, the link between education and labor for producing competitive economies and decent work, as well as the importance of promotion of science and technology.

The Work Plan of the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE) for 2017-2019 envisages the establishment of channels of communication between the authorities of the CIE and those of the IACML, as well as the drafting of a joint project proposal to be shared and discussed at the 10th Meeting of Ministers of Education to be held in 2019. The potential issues for discussion suggested by the member states during the consultation process are as follows: trends and skills for the future, youth employment and school-to-work transition, professional, vocational, and technical training, and modernizing the curriculum and training systems.

For its part, in its report to the ILO, the Global Commission on the Future of Work, stressed the need to increase investment in people's capacities, which includes the right to life-long learning that allows people to acquire skills, perfect them, and recycle professionally. This places a further challenge on the necessary articulation between education and labor; indispensable to set up opportunities for the development of skills throughout life.

ANNEX 2

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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