unicef
for every child

The Importance of Transferable Skills Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Discussion paper

The Importance of Transferable Skills Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. Discussion Paper

Cover photo: © UNICEF/UNI264595/Meddeb

This publication was developed by the Education Section of the UNICEF Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office

Margarete Sachs-Israel (Regional Education Adviser)

General coordination: Vincenzo Placco (Education Specialist) and MiRi Seo (Education Officer)

Technical coordination: Daniela Rojas Chávez (Consultant)

Editorial coordination: Esther Narváez (Education Consultant)

Editing: Lisa Drysdale (Consultant)

The Importance of Transferable Skills Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Discussion paper

unicef | for every child

Contents

Abbreviations

ERCE	Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo)
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
GCED	Global Citizenship Education
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
NGO	non-governmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PLANEA	National Plan for Learning Assessment (Plan Nacional para la Evaluación de los Aprendizajes) (Mexico)
PLaNEA	New School for Adolescentes Programme (Programa La Nueva Escuela para Adolescentes) (Argentina)
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PISA-D	Programme for International Student Assessment for Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PISA-D	Programme for International Student Assessment for Development
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
TVET	technical and vocational education and training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Introduction

Skills development has become an issue of global interest for both UNICEF and the countries in which the organization works. This is reflected in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, Goal Area 2 and Outcome 1 of which are proposed to "increase access of children to skills for learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship and employability".[1]

The current global context requires children and adolescents, over the course of their educational and life trajectory, to acquire a set of skills that includes foundational skills (literacy and numeracy); transferable skills; job-specific skills; and digital skills.

Development of transferable skills, the subject of this discussion paper, allows children and adolescents to become agile learners and citizens capable of successfully navigating personal, academic, social and economic challenges in the contemporary and future world. Furthermore, transferable skills enable other skills to be developed, connected and reinforced.

At the global level, UNICEF has developed the *Global Framework on Transferable Skills*, to support the achievement of the *Strategic Plan 2018-2021* outcomes in this area, as well as *Every Child Learns: UNICEF Education Strategy 2019–2030*.[2]

The *Global Framework* is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, and in particular with its Target 4.7, which relates to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship Education (GCED). It is based on the Conceptual and Programmatic Framework at the core of the Life Skills and Citizenship Education Initiative developed by the UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office in 2017.[3]

This discussion paper has three main objectives. First, it aims to demonstrate the importance of transferable skills development, particularly in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region, highlighting the challenges the region's children and adolescents face in this regard. To this end, the current conceptual gaps that delimit what is understood by 'skills' and 'transferable skills' are addressed through a review of various definitions.

Second, the paper seeks to stimulate and inspire UNICEF Country Offices in the region to reflect on transferable skills development. Accordingly, this paper examines how the *Global Framework on Tranferable Skills* can be adjusted to fit the LAC context, using the core skills included in the global document as a reference. This discussion paper is not intended to indicate the skills that each country and education system should develop or invest in. Rather, it is expected that country offices will draw on the reflections presented here to analyse how transferable skills have been promoted and may be strategically developed in their countries.

The third objective is to support country offices in the LAC region in strengthening the design and implementation of transferable skills development programmes. To this end, some of the programmes and initiatives supported by UNICEF country offices are described. The paper also describes different programmatic entry points for contributions to the design and implementation of programmes that enable the development of transferable skills.

1 United Nations Children's Fund, Final results framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, E/ICEF/2017/18, New York, 17 July 2017, p.26.

2 United Nations Children's Fund, *Every Child Learns: UNICEF Education Strategy 2019–2030*, UNICEF, New York, 2019.

3 United Nations Children's Fund, *Reimagining Life Skills and Citizenship Education in the Middle East and North Africa: A four-dimensional and systems approach to 21st century skills – Conceptual and Programmatic Framework*, UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office, Amman, 2017.

Conceptual framework

What is understood by 'skills'?

No single authoritative definition of the term 'skills' has previously existed at either the global or the regional (LAC) level. Skills are related to concepts such as 'capacities', 'attitudes', 'abilities', 'competencies', 'trades' and 'experience'. As these concepts are seldom clearly defined and are therefore difficult to differentiate between, they are often used interchangeably, both in theory and in practice. Additionally, when trying to define specific skills, it is possible to encounter a wide spectrum of overlapping notions.

There are an ongoing discussions regarding concepts and definitions of 'transferable skills' – starting with the terminology used (for example, life skills, twenty-first century skills) – and the understanding of what is meant by transferable skills varies according to context.

Despite these difficulties, the concept of 'skills' has been employed over the years in initiatives or programmes led or supported by governments, UNICEF, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other multilateral agencies. Lack of consensus on a central concept can, however, lead to confusion when formulating, designing and implementing public policies and programmes. Consequently, to invest effectively in skills development – through a coherent strategy and mutually reinforcing coordinated programmes – it is necessary to clearly define and agree upon key concepts.[4]

UNICEF thus proposes a definition of skills based on the four pillars of learning: learning to know, learning to be, learning to do and learning to live together. These are identified in *Learning: The treasure within* and employed in the *Global Framework on Transferable Skills*, which uses aspects of the pillars to reconceptualize the dimensions of learning that lead to comprehensive human development.[5] UNICEF thus identifies four types of skills based on the pillars:

- **Foundational skills** are those essential for learning, civic engagement and productive employment, irrespective of the type of employment sought. Such skills include literacy and numeracy.

- **Transferable skills** are those skills that are needed to adapt to various life contexts and which individuals can potentially transfer to different work and social environments. Depending on the context, these are also known as life skills, soft skills, socio-emotional skills or twenty-first century skills – terms that are often used interchangeably. These skills enable children and adolescents to become agile, adaptive learners and citizens equipped to successfully navigate personal, academic, social and economic challenges.

- **Job-specific skills**, also known as technical and vocational skills, are those relevant for specific employments such as carpentry, plumbing, engineering or hairdressing. A certain skill may be associated with one or more occupations.

4 Jones, Stephanie, et al., 'What Is the Same and What Is Different? Making sense of the "non-cognitive" domain: Helping educators translate research into practice', Ecological Approaches to Social Emotional Learning (EASEL) Laboratory at Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA, 10 May 2016.

5 Delors, Jacques, et al., *Learning: The treasure within – Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century*, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris, 1996.

» **Digital skills** are those that allow children and adolescents to understand digital technology and use it safely, critically and ethically to search for and manage information, communicate and collaborate, create and share content, build knowledge and solve problems in a way that is appropriate for their age, local language and local culture.[6]

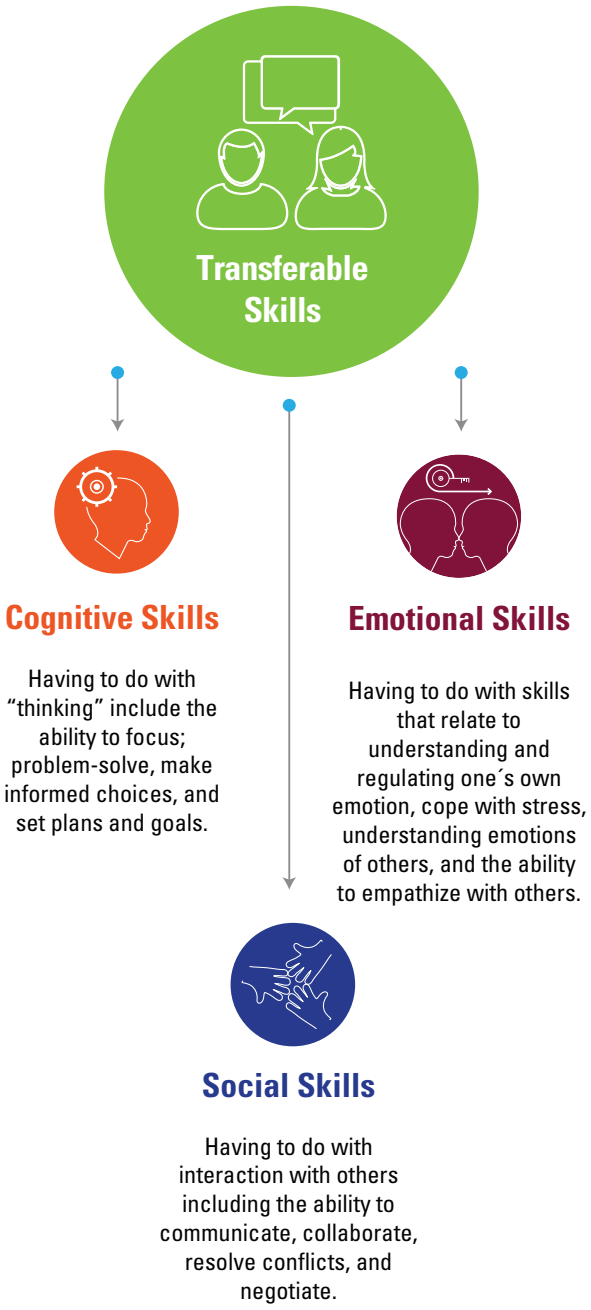
Despite the great variety and complexity of ways to define skills, a reductionist view of the concept has been dominant historically. For example, it is generally considered that skills are developed only at specific times of life and in certain settings.

Moreover, it is often thought that a skill can be learned only through a course, such as technical and vocational education and training (TVET), or in a formal education setting, such as secondary school. Skills are not generally understood as being acquired through lived experiences and developed in multiple environments, both in formal education systems and in informal settings. It is also common that the definitions used do not relate to values based on human rights and the specific needs of the twenty-first century, despite the importance of these approaches.[7]

Depending on the expected outcomes, skills can be developed through formal, non-formal and informal education. They can be developed in the workplace or during job preparation, as well as in spaces for social participation and female empowerment, in environments where child protection services are provided and in centres for the prevention of violence against children and adolescents.

Another example of how the reductionist view is applied to the concept of skills concerns the delimitation of the age range within which skills can be developed. While foundational skills such as literacy and numeracy are typically developed during primary education, transferable skills – which allow for successful

Figure 1. A working definition of transferable skills



6 United Nations Children's Fund, *Global Framework on Transferable Skills*, UNICEF, New York, 2019.

7 United Nations Children's Fund, *Reimagining Life Skills and Citizenship Education in the Middle East and North Africa: A four-dimensional and systems approach to 21st century skills – Conceptual and Programmatic Framework*, UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office, Amman, 2017.

education, employment and social integration – are developed throughout life, though mainly during early childhood and in adolescence and youth.[8]

Since cognitive, motor, emotional, linguistic and social skills are developed during the first three years of life, a comprehensive and quality education at this early stage is crucial for children to reach their full potential. Subsequently, secondary education represents a great second opportunity to foster and develop additional skills that were not acquired at earlier stages and which will have a significant impact on the lives of adolescents, "especially those from the most vulnerable families. Although the window of opportunity to influence skills related to cognitive development may be closing at this time, it is still possible to develop other relevant skills that can narrow the gaps faced by students from disadvantaged backgrounds".[9]

What are transferable skills and why are they important?

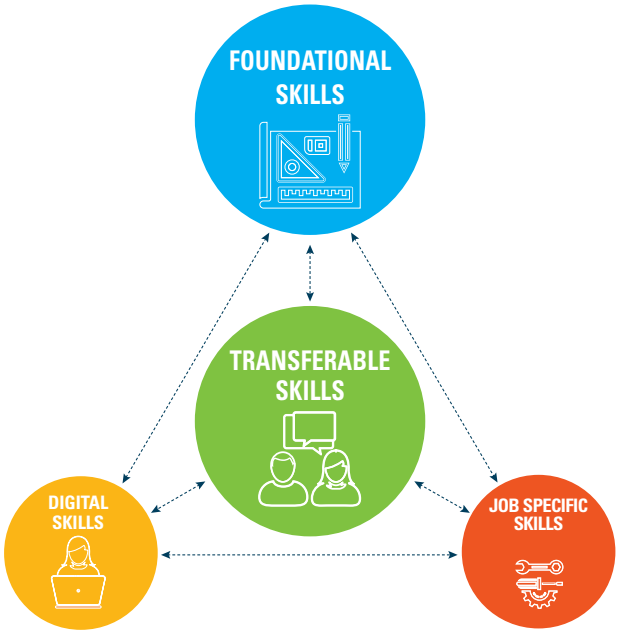
Transferable skills include cognitive, social and emotional skills, and their development enables children and adolescents to continue learning and become active and productive citizens.

Transferable skills operate in conjunction with other skills (foundational, job-specific and digital skills) and allow these other skills to connect with and reinforce each other.

Based on the aforementioned report *Learning: The treasure within*, UNICEF has identified four core dimensions for the development of transferable skills: cognitive, instrumental, individual and social. A set of 12 key transferable skills spans these dimensions, as follows:

- **Cognitive dimension** (learning to know): includes skills for learning such as creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving.
- **Instrumental dimension** (learning to do): includes skills for employability such as cooperation, negotiation and decision-making.

Figure 2. Skills needed for success in school, work and life



8 Novella, Rafael, et al., eds., *Millennials in Latin America and the Caribbean: To work or study?*, Inter-American Development Bank, n.p., 2018.

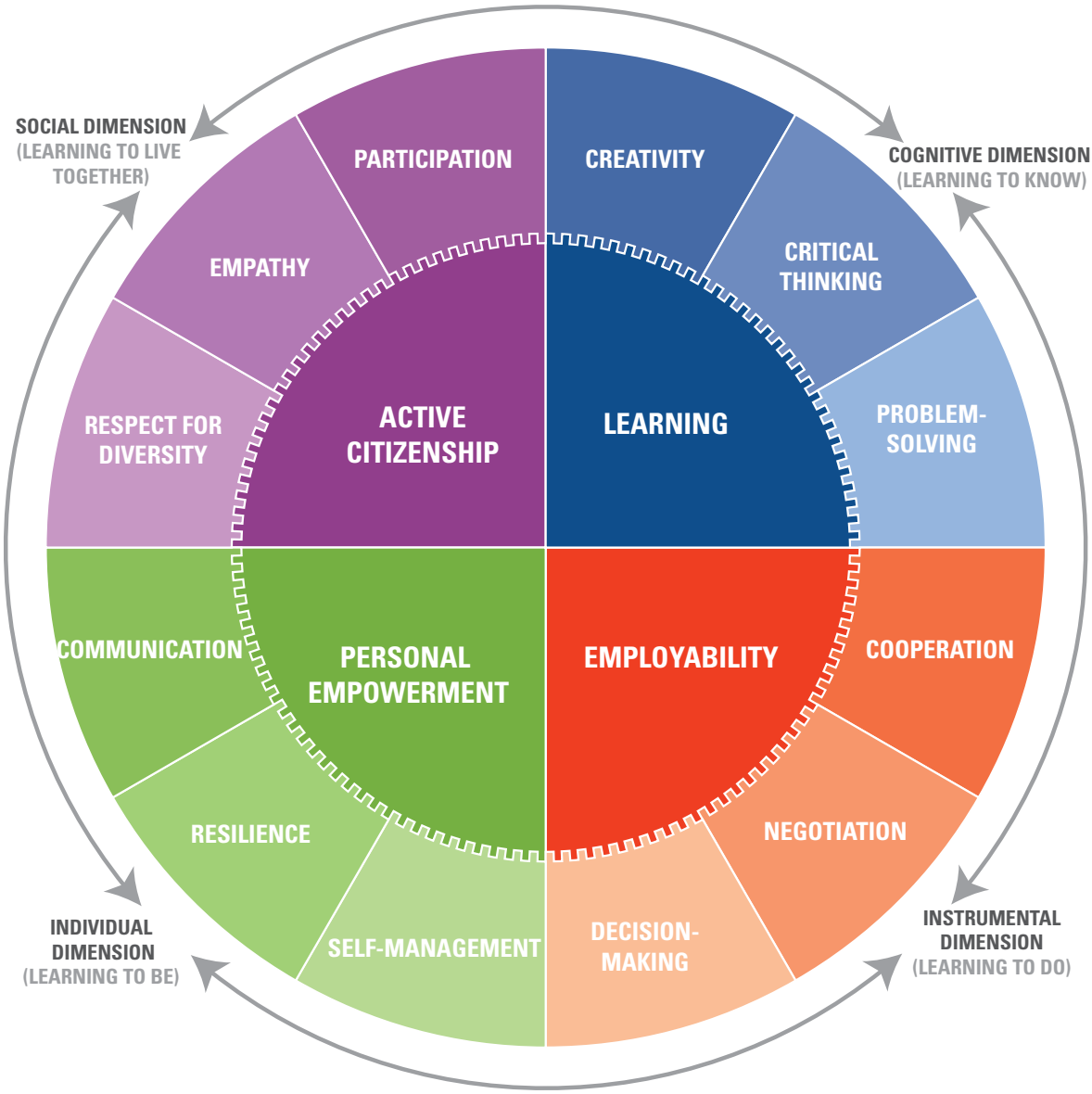
9 Bassi, Marina, et al., *Disconnected: Skills, education, and employment in Latin America*, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, D. C., 2011, p.5.

» **Individual dimension** (learning to be): includes skills for personal empowerment such as self-management, resilience and communication.

» **Social dimension** (learning to live together): includes skills for active citizenship such as respect for diversity, empathy and participation.

Figure 3 presents the categorization of the 12 key transferable skills. It shows that while each skill primarily relates to one particular dimension, all of the skills are relevant to all four dimensions.

Figure 3. Core transferable skills



Socio-economic and demographic context of Latin America and the Caribbean region

To effectively foster and develop transferable skills, it is necessary to consider the specific context and needs of the LAC region. Despite the diversity of countries in the region, there are common economic, social and educational factors, which are discussed in this paper.

Regional demographic changes, economic development and advances in digital technology mean that children and adolescents today live in a unique context, facing previously unseen challenges – often of a global nature. In the LAC region specifically, the predominant challenges include the economic and social inequality within countries; political, economic and social instability (which leads to higher migration flows within the continent); gender inequality; and high rates of teenage pregnancy.

In terms of skills development, the biggest challenges are related to low levels of learning outcomes in foundational skills such as literacy and numeracy; lack of prioritization of transferable skills development; limited opportunities for the development of job-specific skills aligned with labour market demands; and low digital literacy throughout all stages of life.

As a result of these many and varied challenges, children and adolescents in LAC countries are not developing the necessary skills to be successful in their learning, in the workplace and in life, and to become active citizens.

Socio-economic context

The LAC region has experienced sustained economic growth in recent decades. According to a study by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean spanning 18 countries in the region, poverty and extreme poverty "decreased in LAC from 2002–2014, then increased in 2015 and 2016".[i] The same study also demonstrates that poverty and extreme poverty mostly affect children, adolescents and young people, "represents major risks for the development of individuals and the region".[10]

Historically, poverty reduction in the LAC region has been the result of a combination of factors, such as the adoption of effective economic policies, the expansion of social protection programmes, an increase in the size of the working age population, and high commodity prices in the region.[11] Despite socio-economic progress, the region continues to face high levels of economic and social inequality; persistently high rates of poverty, unemployment and informal work; early labour market entry and high labour turnover; and high rates of adolescents and young people who are neither in education nor in formal employment.[12]

These challenges entail social risks for children and adolescents, in addition to creating income and social

10 Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, *Social Panorama of Latin America 2017*, ECLAC, Santiago, Chile, 2018, p. 12.

11 Cavallo, Eduardo A., and Andrew Powell, *2018 Latin American and Caribbean Macroeconomic Report: A mandate to grow*, Inter-American Development Bank, n.p., 2018; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and Corporación Andina de Fomento, *Latin American Economic Outlook 2017: Youth, skills and entrepreneurship*, OECD, CAF and ECLAC, Paris, 2016.

12 Novella et al., *Millennials in Latin America and the Caribbean: to work or study?*

inequality, poverty, lack of access to and poor quality of housing and food, and weak pension systems, which in turn generate more inequality. Among the social risks are high rates of teenage pregnancy,[ii] with consequent early entry into the labour market among males and absence of females entering the labour market;[13] involvement in youth gangs; high rates of violence, excessive exposure to violence, alcoholism and drug addiction; normalization of violence against women; and migration within the region, to North America and to countries on other continents.[14]

In this context, one element that takes on great importance is the rigid structure of society, a factor that limits social mobility, perpetuates inequality and hinders social cohesion. For a child to escape poverty, it is thus necessary for several generations to elapse – making the conquering of social inequality an intergenerational phenomenon. Within this rigid society, adolescents and young people with few connections to the labour market lack sufficient social capital to be successful, despite having the necessary foundational, transferable, job-specific and digital skills. In some cases, this could explain the high dropout rates in secondary education, due to "the perception that the labor market has little to offer young people", especially among those from lower socio-economic groups, regardless of the skills they have to offer.[15]

One of the persistent challenges facing the region's education systems concerns their ability to contribute to reductions in the inequalities that characterize the labour market. To rise to this challenge, "these systems must be integrated with other labour-market policy instruments and must develop effective ways of integrating into the labour market those groups now facing specific obstacles."[16] Consequently, there is an urgent need for transferable skills development in the region.

Demographic context

LAC countries have experienced a profound demographic transformation in recent decades. Today, many of the countries still enjoy the 'demographic dividend' that has contributed to economic growth in the region.[iii] Due to the gradual ageing of the population, however, this benefit is not guaranteed for the long term.

According to a 2017 study by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean covering 38 countries, territories and overseas departments in the region: "It is estimated that between 2015 and 2040, the region's population aged over 60 will increase by almost 87 million people, while the numbers of those aged 20 to 59 will rise by nearly 63 million. In contrast, those aged under 20 will number 26 million fewer in 2040 than in 2015".[17]

The average ageing of the population across the region will present economic challenges for today's children and adolescents when the time comes for them to seek entry to the labour market. One such challenge is that the "labour market will have to absorb a growing labour force, as well as an older population that will seek to continue working in paid employment for longer, since social security coverage and pension values are limited and household income is still low".[18] In addition, the economic dynamics around household consumption and savings, labour participation, and use of health and education services will change significantly. This is expected to have an impact on economic growth, sustainability of financial support systems for families, and inequality within and between generations.[19]

13 Novella et al., *Millennials in Latin America and the Caribbean*: to work or study?

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid, p. 28.

16 Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and International Labour Organization, *The Employment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean: Challenges and innovations in labour training,* ECLAC and ILO, Santiago, Chile, 2013, p. 6.

17 Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, *Social Panorama of Latin America 2017*, p. 21.

18 Bárcena, Alicia, 'Cambios demográficos en América Latina: Una ventana de oportunidad', *América Economía*, 1 July 2011.

19 Duda-Nyczak, Marta, 'Cambio demográfico en América Latina y el Caribe: Dinámica y desafíos para la región', PowerPoint presentation given at Seminario 70 años de la CEPAL: Planificación para el desarrollo con visión de futuro, Santiago, Chile, 22 October 2018.

Another important demographic factor is the high number of young people currently disengaged from both the education system and formal labour market, which stands at 20 million individuals in the LAC region.[20] There is a clear correlation between family income and years of schooling completed: these disengaged young people are typically young females belonging to low-income households.

© UNICEF/UN0278091/Párraga

20 Novella et al., *Millennials in Latin America and the Caribbean: to work or study?*

Transferable skills development in Latin America and the Caribbean region

Over the last 30 years, the LAC region has seen much progress and many reforms undertaken in education. Some of the most prominent reforms relate to improved access to formal education and increased completion rates among students at the different levels of education. Improvements include "widespread access to primary education and a significant expansion of secondary educational coverage; substantial growth in the proportion of young people who receive higher education; and even a significant expansion in preschool educational coverage."[21]

Despite this progress, about 12 million children and adolescents in the region remain out of school.[22] Furthermore, increased access to education has not translated into more relevant learning outcomes for the population, nor has it contributed to significantly reduce the major challenges faced by the region, such as economic and social inequality.[23]

Information about the development of foundational skills comes from the Third Regional Comparative and ExplanatoryStudy (TERCE), applied by the Latin American Laboratory for the Evaluation of the Quality of Education (LLECE) to Grade 3 and 6 students in 2015. The results reveal that the majority of students in the region attain low learning achievement in both reading (61 per cent among Grade 3 students and 70 per cent among those in Grade 6) and mathematics (71 per cent and 83 per cent respectively).

Test results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Programme for International Student Assessment for Development (PISA-D) present a similar picture. [iv] Indeed, in all the tests implemented, the performance of adolescents from LAC is much lower than that of their peers in the OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development] countries.[24] For example, among the 15-year-old adolescents assessed by PISA in 10 LAC countries in 2015, almost 50 per cent had not reached the minimum level in reading compared with less than 20 per cent of their peers in OECD countries.[v] Additionally, more than 60 per cent of the 15-year-olds in the LAC countries had not reached the minimum level in mathematics – three times the OECD average for students at the same grade level.

The PISA-D 2018 results are consistent with those of PISA 2015. The average proportion of 15-year-old students in LAC countries (in this case, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras and Paraguay) who have reached the minimum level of proficiency in reading is 35.3 per cent, compared with 79.9 per cent of their peers in OECD countries. On average, the proportion of 15-year-old students reaching the minimum level of proficiency in mathematics is 15.9 per cent in the LAC countries compared with 76.6 per cent in OECD countries.[25]

---

21 Bassi, Marina, et al., *Disconnected: Skills, education, and employment in Latin America*, 2011, p. xiii.

22 UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 'Data: Poverty headcount ratio at $1.90 a day', <**http://data.uis.unesco.org**>, accessed 23 December 2019.

23 United Nations Children's Fund, *Every Child Learns: UNICEF Education Strategy 2019–2030.*

24 Bos, María Soledad, et al., *Latin America and the Caribbean in PISA 2015: How did the region perform?*, Inter-American Development Bank, n.p., 2016.

25 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 'PISA for Development: Results in focus', *PISA in Focus*, No. 91, OECD, Paris, 2018.

It is common to find a mismatch between the skills demanded by the labour market and the skills acquired in school. Lack of educational relevance is one of the reasons for the relatively high dropout rates in secondary education across the region.

To overcome these challenges, as well as the social and economic inequality in the LAC region, national education systems must place greater emphasis on transferable skills development and strengthen its measurement. This will involve curricular reforms, innovative teaching methodologies, teacher training and sufficient human and financial resources. Moreover, education systems need to promote equity and ensure universal quality education – prioritizing rural areas and the most vulnerable populations – from pre-primary to secondary and post-secondary education.

Similarly, for education to be more effective and inclusive, it must provide individuals with the necessary skills to successfully transition from childhood to adulthood and from education to employment. It also requires a transformative vision of education in the twenty-first century that aims to strengthen human dignity and promote human rights.

A persistent challenge for education systems in the region is contributing to reduce inequity in the labour market. In this sense, it is necessary for education systems to be integrated with labour policies, and for effective programmes to be designed and implemented for the insertion into the labour market of groups that are currently excluded.[26]

Investing in transferable skills development can bring great benefits to individuals, their families and the countries of the region. It can help to increase social cohesion and achieve greater economic development at the national and regional level; build more egalitarian societies; promote sustainable economic growth and job placement for adolescents; achieve better academic outcomes; and reduce social risks. For these reasons, the current public policy priority in all countries of the region should be to focus on the design and implementation of investment strategies to boost human capital through the development of foundational, transferable, job-specific and digital skills, as well as strengthening the measurement of skills development.[27]

26 Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and International Labour Organization, *The Employment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean: Challenges and innovations in labour training*.

27 Berniell, Lucila, et al., *More Skills for Work and Life: The contributions of families, schools, jobs, and the social environment,* Corporación Andina de Fomento, Bogota, 2017.

Transferable skills in Latin American and the Caribbean education systems

The UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean recently conducted a study on the inclusion of concepts related to education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship education (GCED) – corresponding to Sustainable Development Goal Target 4.7 – in the national curriculum of 19 LAC countries.[vi] The findings show that transferable skills such as participation, collaboration and critical thinking are included in the curricula of at least 16 countries. Other transferable skills commonly named in curricula of the region include respect, democracy, dialogue, diversity, citizenship, identity, human rights, solidarity, responsibility and values. This is evidence of a certain level of agreement in the region on how to contribute to transferable skills development.

Conversely, the study also reveals that other transferable skills related to ESD and GCED in the areas of language and mathematics are mentioned in the declarative documents but not in the programme documents for these specific curricular areas. This is a challenge for the region since the mention of these skills in programme documents, which are used by teachers to design their classes, would make it more feasible to implement and foster transferable skills development within the classroom. Additionally, "educational agents [could] develop more specific work in these areas, and thus contribute to position them as elements susceptible to follow-up and monitor, in order to evidence the level of convergence of Latin American curricula with the 2030 Education Goals that have been proposed by UNESCO".[28]

There is, however, a greater presence of transferable skills related to ESD and GCED in the content programming of the natural sciences and social sciences curricula. This implies more direct links between transferable skills development within these areas of knowledge and the content delivered in the classroom.

Furthermore, many governments in the region do have plans and public policies that respond to the need to develop transferable skills. The difficulty lies mostly in the effective implementation of such policies, which is constrained in part by the lack of resources and efforts to align teaching practices with transferable skills development.

28 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *¿Qué se espera que aprendan los estudiantes de América Latina y el Caribe?*, UNESCO OREALC, Santiago, Chile, p. 83.

© UNICEF Panamá/2019-L1100204/Sokol

Programmatic framework

Multiple learning pathways

Transferable skills development could and should occur throughout life, through different modalities and in a large variety of contexts, including formal education (pre-primary, primary, secondary, tertiary and TVET); non-formal education (including accelerated education programmes); and informal education at home, at work and in the community (for example, through volunteering, civic participation and sports).

Transferable skills interact and enhance each other. Thus, people incorporate all kinds of knowledge that have been learned at different stages of life and through different mechanisms. Recognizing that transferable skills are developed through multiple learning pathways facilitates their transferability from one educational level to another – for example, from vocational to academic education and vice versa – and between education, training and employment.[29]

This is particularly important for the LAC region, where secondary education completion rates remain low, making the transition to the labour market complex for those adolescents with a low level of education. Therefore, the possibility of developing transferable skills through multiple learning pathways promotes equity and inclusion, as it means that people can catch up on skills they were unable to develop during earlier stages of life.

Alternative learning pathways must respond to local needs, offer quality opportunities and be properly funded. Likewise, it is necessary for the multiple learning pathways to be linked and to allow various entry and re-entry points for moving between formal and non-formal education. It is important to emphasize that skills developed through different modalities and across diverse contexts should be recognized and accredited through a common assessment framework.

Areas of programmatic intervention

To strengthen and integrate transferable skills development within the education system, as well as scale it up in a sustainable manner, programmatic intervention in the following three areas is proposed to enable a focus on a wide range of transferable skills.

1. Teaching and learning process: For effective transferable skills development programmes, curricula, pedagogical practices and assessments must be aligned to the context and relevant to the needs of all students. When such programmes are adapted from other contexts, it is important to pilot test and refine them to ensure their relevance to the new context.

2. Enabling environments: To ensure effective programmes, and for children and adolescents to develop transferable skills while feeling physically, socially and emotionally secure, it is necessary to promote good management practices and accountability

29 Raffe, David, 'Cross-national Differences in Education–work Transitions', ch. 22 in *The Oxford Handbook of Lifelong Learning,* edited by Manuel London, Oxford University Press, New York, 2011, pp. 312–328.

mechanisms in schools. Indeed, the entire school community should be encouraged to participate in the school's management (under the guidance of the school leadership team). Likewise, constructive, inclusive and non-violent environments should be fostered, with positive discipline and access to mental health programmes.

3. Strengthening education systems: All components of the education system must be included, especially strategies, plans and policies at the national level, as well as budgets, human resources and coordination with other organizations.

Based on the above, this discussion paper includes specific programmatic recommendations for UNICEF country offices to use as a platform of ideas (*see the chapter on Recommendations for implementing the Global Framework on Transferable Skills*).

© UNICEF/UNI264592/Meddeb

The role of UNICEF in transferable skills development

Many of the UNICEF country offices in the LAC region are currently supporting the implementation of initiatives (public policies, programmes and research) to foster the development of transferable skills in their respective countries. These initiatives respond to the four outcomes mentioned in the theory of change of the *Global Framework on Transferable Skills*, which are as follows:

1. Outcome 1: Improved education and lifelong learning towards a knowledge society.

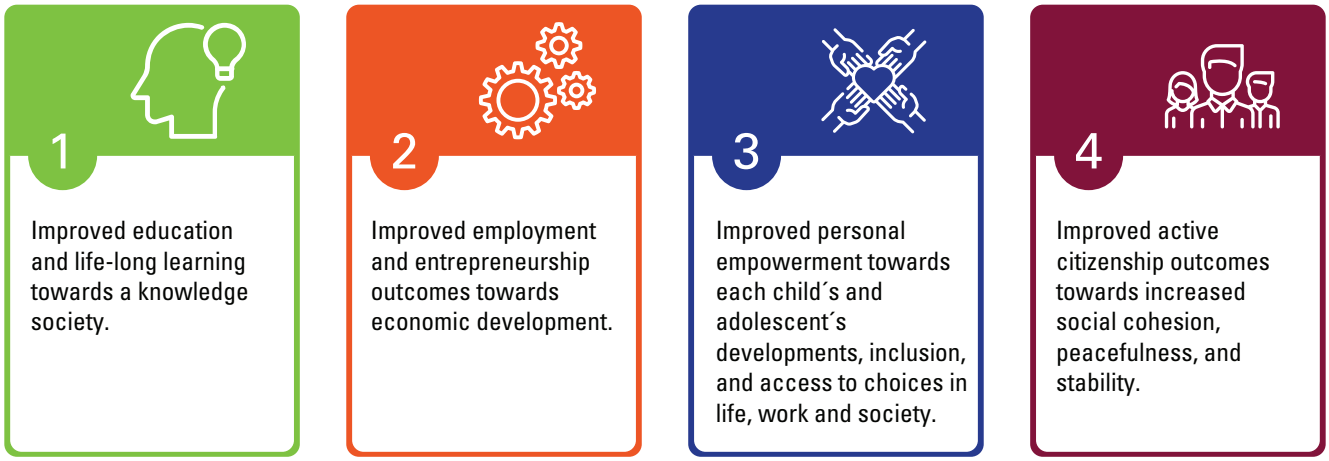
2. Outcome 2: Improved employment and entrepreneurship outcomes towards economic development.

3. Outcome 3: Improved personal empowerment towards each child's and adolescent's development, inclusion, and access to choices in life, work and society.

4. Outcome 4: Improved active citizenship outcomes towards increased social cohesion, peacefulness and stability.

The following subsections briefly describe some of the transferable skills development programmes that respond to these four outcomes, which are supported by the region's country offices. It is important to note that this overview of programmes is not exhaustive. Also, while many of the programmes respond to more than one outcome, each programme is included under the most relevant outcome only in this paper. Figure 4 shows how interventions can be more far-reaching in terms of their impact on the four outcomes.

Figure 4: Four outcomes of skills development



Outcome 1: Improved education and lifelong learning towards a knowledge society

Outcome 1 includes initiatives that integrate transferable skills development through curricula and teacher trainings, as well as through the development and implementation of assessment frameworks. UNICEF is currently supporting the governments of Argentina, Brazil and El Salvador in integrating transferable skills development through such activities.

ARGENTINA

Argentina is supporting the implementation of New School for Adolescents (Nueva Escuela para Adolescentes; PLaNEA), a programme created in response to a 2009 federal regulation and a 2017 resolution known as Secondary Education 2030. Through PLaNEA, UNICEF Argentina supports provincial governments by providing technical assistance to accelerate the process of transforming secondary education. The goal is to develop an inclusive and quality secondary education that equips adolescents with critical knowledge and skills for life in the twenty-first century, and ensures educational opportunities through innovation and teaching and learning.

PLaNEA works in several areas to promote change at the education management, school and classroom level, always using a student-centred approach. The programme promotes transformation in the teaching, learning and assessment styles to enable the transversal development of transferable skills through a project-based model. To achieve this, PLaNEA promotes changes in the ways in which the education system accompanies and organizes the work of the teachers and teams within the 24 schools that participate in this initiative.

BRAZIL

UNICEF Brazil, together with several NGOs and the national government, identified the 20 life skills that are most relevant for Brazilian adolescents to be successful in different areas of their lives.[30] Based on these 20 life skills, Brazil has developed the following three parallel initiatives.

- **UNICEF Municipal Seal of Approval (Selo UNICEF)**: This award is given to municipalities in the Amazon and Northeast regions – which have the lowest social indicators in the country – that make progress on issues related to children's and adolescents' rights, and/or work on the development of policies and programmes that directly benefit children and adolescents. Municipalities must achieve 17 systemic results and overcome 8 challenges put forward by UNICEF, including civil registration and participation; immunization; school enrolment; child protection; reduction of child labour; and adolescent participation.

- To meet the expected result in each of the areas of adolescent participation and life skills, the municipality must work with a group of at least 16 adolescents (8 female and 8 male) to create a permanent participatory space for continuous participation. UNICEF support to municipalities includes guidance, materials and examples of good practice on issues related to adolescents. In addition, UNICEF can provide training to the strategic actors of a municipality, on issues related to adolescence, social protection, and the health of children and adolescent mothers.

30 Fundo das Nações Unidas para a Infância, *Compêtencias para a vida: Trilhando Caminhos de cidadania*, UNICEF, Brasilia, 2018.

- **Curriculum study on skills development**: Brazil has new national curricula for primary and secondary education, which focus on trajectories of school success. Both place an emphasis on the most vulnerable children and adolescents, and those who are lagging behind and/or at risk of dropping out of school. UNICEF Brazil conducted a study to assess whether the foundations of the new national secondary education curriculum reflect 10 of the 20 life skills identified by UNICEF and its partners. The study, which includes a contextualization of the skills present in the national curriculum, concludes that the new curriculum does indeed encompass the competencies identified in the four fields of knowledge.

- **Empowerment of girls in Recife, Belém and Salvador**: In partnership with the Secretariats for Women's Rights (Secretaria dos Direitos das Mulheres) of the Recife, Belém and Salvador municipalities, this initiative addresses the 20 life skills from a gender perspective. The goal is for girls to develop skills that empower them to know their rights and learn how to demand that others respect these rights. UNICEF offers technical assistance to the municipalities through materials and other content, training and a small amount of financial support.

  As part of this initiative, 150 municipal employees were trained on gender issues related to the implementation of municipal policies in their areas of work. The purpose was to develop a municipal gender equality policy that constitutes a transversal pillar for education, health and social protection policies. The initiative also seeks to involve adolescent girls in job opportunities, advocacy and innovation so that they can exercise their leadership skills, become empowered and claim their rights. There are plans to expand the initiative to São Paulo and Manaus.

EL SALVADOR

UNICEF El Salvador – in collaboration with the Advisory Council for Children and Adolescents (Consejo Consultivo de la Niñez y la Adolescencia), comprising private sector, academic and civil society actors, and New York University's Global TIES for Children centre – has developed a work plan to improve its political positioning to advocate for greater investment in supporting children at the national level. As a result of this work plan, UNICEF El Salvador directly supports the national government in strengthening transferable skills development through the following initiatives, among others.

- **Comprehensive sexuality education curriculum**: UNICEF, in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Pestalozzi Foundation, Collective Association of Women for Local Development (Colectiva Asociación de Mujeres para el Desarrollo Local) and Plan International, is supporting the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in developing and implementing this curriculum. Aimed at young children and students in Grades 7 to 9, it provides them access to knowledge about sex education.

- **Accelerated basic education for children**: This curriculum, delivered through a flexible modality, has been implemented at the national level since 2004 and reviewed and improved with the support of UNICEF. It targets children who are out of school, or in school but overage or experiencing other at-risk situations. This education offer enables students to access education, catch up and reintegrate into formal education. Its technical and pedagogical basis is the project-based learning methodology, which derives from a constructivist vision of education. The curriculum is applied as a response to the needs, interests and resources of the education centres, with a special focus on strengthening students' self-esteem.

  Within the framework of curriculum review, update and improvement, it seeks to ensure that the curriculum adheres to a holistic and comprehensive vision of education that transcends the basic subjects, employs a rights-based and gender-inclusive approach, and accommodates the knowledge and use of a wide range of skills, taking advantage of the project-based learning methodology.

  These skills include personal empowerment (communication and self-management), citizenship (participation), employability (cooperation, negotiation and decision-making) and learning skills (creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving).

Outcome 2: Improved employment and entrepreneurship outcomes towards economic development

Programmes that respond to this outcome include those focused on providing training in various trades with the aim of improving employment opportunities for adolescents and young people in vulnerable situations. Currently, UNICEF is supporting the governments of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Argentina, El Salvador, Cuba and Jamaica in the development of such programmes.

BOLIVIA

To improve employability opportunities for young people and encourage the involvement of the private sector, UNICEF Bolivia supports the Bolivian Government's Employment Generation Plan (Plan Generación de Empleo del Gobierno Nacional Boliviano) in two areas of work: labour and vocational orientation, and job placement.

In relation to the first area, UNICEF Bolivia supports the Ministry of Planning to improve labour and vocational content, adapt training materials for adolescents in vulnerable situations, and develop a webpage with materials and tools to support young people during this process. This programme includes three modules: self-knowledge sessions; practical information on the current job market situation in the country; and practical information on how to get a job (for example, how to present oneself in interviews or write a résumé).

The area of work focused on job placement seeks to help adolescents and young people to engage with businesses. The programme has two components: a network of contacts to link young people who are looking for a job with offers from businesses that are recruiting, with the Government initially paying half of the new recruit's salary; and a network of advisers who provide direct and practical guidance to young people to enable them to find a job more easily.

BRAZIL

UNICEF Brazil is implementing, in 10 of the country's largest cities, an initiative similar to the Bolivian Government's Employment Generation Plan, which addresses the 20 life skills developed within the framework of the Apprentice Law (Ley de Aprendiz). It's objective is to promote integrated policies for adolescents to improve their competencies and life skills, while helping them prepare to access employment opportunities. This law establishes that apprentices must comprise 5 to 15 per cent of the workforce in all medium and large enterprises that have functions requiring vocational training.

The programme includes corporate learning workshops and programmes that enable young people to work and train at the same time. Apprentices can study in school (if they have not graduated from secondary school) or attend TVET classes on subjects related to the enterprise's specialization. The programme has four phases, involving: (1) community activities on child and adolescent rights, and on the transferable skills and life planning of the participants; (2) the design, innnovation and development of skills for the labour market (this phase is implemented by universities, NGOs and professional institutions); (3) workshops on innovation, project management and career prospects; and (4) the participation of young people in activities that result from the entire process. Activities under this final phase could include joining an innovation team, working as an apprentice (under the Apprentice Law), working in regular employment, or embarking on a professional education.

ARGENTINA

Within the framework of an agreement between UNICEF Argentina and Fundación SES, a project is being developed entitled Vocational Training for Adolescents in Conflict with the Law in a Situation of Deprivation of Liberty (Capacitación en Oficios a Adolescentes en Conflicto con la Ley en Situación de Privación de Libertad). Through the implementation of vocational workshops, the programme aims to provide young people deprived of their liberty with the necessary tools for their individual and social development. In turn, the young people are better equipped to access formal jobs or embark on small business opportunities – individually or with family members, friends or acquaintances – once they leave the system.

EL SALVADOR

UNICEF El Salvador supports the Labour Initiation (Iniciación Laboral) project, which promotes the acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills by children and young adolescents in Grades 7 to 9 to prepare them for work and life. The project includes 11 training modules in trades such as (basic) automotive maintenance and embroidery, as well as in minor home furniture repairs, how to establish a household budget and other life skills. This initiative aims to provide students with a comprehensive education that overcomes the traditional gender division in occupations; every student must take each module for at least three months, irrespective of their gender.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has also developed a curriculum that responds to Outcome 1, which is gradually being implemented in schools nationwide. The mechanism seeks to be sustainable using a multiplier effect: from teacher to teacher and from student to student.

CUBA

UNICEF Cuba supports children and adolescents with disabilities in 52 existing trade schools (*escuelas de oficios*) across the country. These schools provide a combination of theoretical and practical training in trades, which has been part of the formal education system since 1989 and is implemented through an agreement between the Ministry of Education and various businesses. The objective of the tradehools is to integrate adolescents aged 13–17 years from vulnerable populations into the labour market. UNICEF Cuba provides technical training to teachers at the national level; supports the updating of tools for trades learning, and the use of new technologies to make schools more attractive to adolescents; and promotes gender equality in the programme.

JAMAICA

UNICEF Jamaica supports the Career Advancement Programme, which provides two additional years in the secondary education system for students who have not enrolled in tertiary education. The programme provides the opportunity to develop necessary job-specific skills, with adolescents able to study vocational subjects ranging from cosmetology to electrical and mechanical engineering. English and mathematics courses are also available, while a course on transferable and job-specific skills includes elements of financial literacy, self-esteem building, and health and well-being.

Outcome 3: Improved personal empowerment towards each child's and adolescent's development, inclusion, and access to choices in life, work and society

Outcome 3 encompasses programmes aimed at helping children and adolescents learn how to demand that others respect their rights. Currently, some such programmes – including examples in Costa Rica, Argentina and Jamaica – focus on helping adolescents and young people to overcome their vulnerable situation with socio-emotional support and guidance, so that they may become empowered through the creation of life plans. Other programmes – for example, in Chile, Nicaragua, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Costa Rica – seek to provide tools for adolescents and young people to become agents of change in their communities, supporting their development as leaders.

COSTA RICA

UNICEF Costa Rica is partnering with the National Child Welfare Agency (Patronato Nacional de la Infancia) and the Cantonal Union of Associations for the Comprehensive and Specific Development of Desamparados (Unión Cantonal de Asociaciones de Desarrollo Integral y Específico de Desamparados) to implement the pilot programme Making Community Alliances (Haciendo Alianzas Comunitarias). The programme supports adolescents who have been separated from their families of origin (i.e., those placed in foster care or in residential alternative care) and who are interested in undertaking a comprehensive development process to broaden their opportunities to belong to a community and cultivate roots, develop a sense of belonging and, above all, acquire transferable skills. Through the programme, young people create their own life plans and projects focused on empowerment and autonomy within a supportive and safe family and community environment.

ARGENTINA

Similarly, UNICEF Argentina together with the Doncel Civil Association (Asociación Civil Doncel) implements the project, Keys for Autonomy (Llaves para la Autonomía). This project trains and supports the technical teams of the residential homes to enable children and adolescents to progressively acquire autonomy to carry out daily tasks and activities. Keys for Autonomy is implemented in five provinces and reaches adolescents and young people aged 16–21 years who are transitioning from the care system to adult life. Adolescents and young people prepare life projects, develop their résumés and participate in training workshops to prepare for job interviews. (The Keys for Autonomy project also responds to Outcome 1.)

JAMAICA

UNICEF Jamaica supports the implementation of the Fight for Peace Bounce Back programme, which is managed by Fight for Peace and the Ministry of Health and Welfare through its Child Guidance Clinics (which deliver mental health support). The Bounce Back programme provides psychosocial support to children and adolescents who have suffered trauma. This takes the form of individual counselling sessions, psychotherapy sessions and other psychosocial interventions, which are delivered by clinical social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists. In addition, UNICEF Jamaica supports the Eve For Life Mentor Moms programme. This programme supports peer counselling and mentoring for survivors of child sexual abuse and empowers adolescents and young women to advocate against the sexual abuse of girls.

CHILE

UNICEF Chile supports the Revolutionize Concausa (Revoluciona Concausa) programme co-led by América Solidaria with the support of Caserta Foundation (Fundación Caserta) and the National Youth Institute (Instituto Nacional de la Juventud del Estado). The programme provides empowerment and leadership workshops to adolescents and young people living in the country's 16 regional capitals. This initiative seeks to generate partnerships that promote participation and formative citizenship (which responds to Outcome 4), while recognizing the capacity of adolescents and young people to develop, innovate and lead solutions to the specific challenges within their communities.

NICARAGUA

UNICEF Nicaragua is supporting a range of projects focused on innovation issues and aimed at young people from the Caribbean coast regions. For example, in collaboration with Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University, UNICEF Nicaragua has launched the Innovation Labs project to mobilize the university community in formulating, and then pilot testing, ideas to promote children's rights in line with new policies of the Caribbean coast regions. Using a methodology known as Innovation Camps, students identify a problem that affects children and adolescents and then collectively design a solution to address it.

As part of the Innovation Labs project in 2018, UNICEF Nicaragua supported the implementation of the national Generation Unlimited Youth Challenge. Ten teams from across the country were selected through this process to design innovative ideas, with five of them going on to receive seed funding to test their ideas. Of these five Nicaraguan teams, two were ultimately chosen to participate in the global competition.

BOLIVIA

Similarly, UNICEF Bolivia supports the enhancement in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), in particular to reduce the gender gap in these subjects. This programme works to eliminate existing gender stereotypes in STEM, by giving visibility to girls and women in the country who are successful in the areas of science and technology. In partnership with Technovation Bolivia, the programme implements a curriculum to enable small groups of two to four girls, mentored by women or men, to develop their computer programming skills. In 2019, the programme benefited 530 girls across four of the country's largest cities. The state has expressed its interest in institutionalizing the programme.

COSTA RICA

UNICEF Costa Rica is working in partnership with the Ministry of Culture and Youth, the Youth Council (Consejo de la Persona Joven) and the Council of Persons with Disabilities (Consejo de las Personas con Discapacidad) to establish the Network of Youth Communicators (Red de Comunicadores Juveniles). This initiative provides empowerment workshops for 60 young communicators and, through the use of participatory methodologies, seeks to engage adolescents in thinking about how they can personally generate substantive changes.

Outcome 4: Improved active citizenship outcomes towards increased social cohesion, peacefulness and stability

Programmes responding to this final outcome include those that support children and adolescents to learn transferable skills that enable them to develop peace strategies, manage conflicts with their peers and negotiate for the benefit of all. UNICEF currently supports programmes that offer psychosocial support and promote integration through cultural and sports activities in countries such as Ecuador, Jamaica, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Chile and Brazil. The goal is for children and adolescents to develop transferable skills to enable their participation in peaceful environments while receiving care and protection whether in school or out of school.

ECUADOR

UNICEF Ecuador supported the design and implementation of Pazita's Treasure (El Tesoro de Pazita), a programme that seeks to develop skills for peacebuilding and peaceful coexistence. The methodology was created by Nation of Peace (Nación de Paz) and is implemented in coordination with the Ministry of Education. The curriculum includes five types of workshops, which cover themes related to leadership; cooperation; play as an activity for the protection of rights; positive conflict resolution; and teamwork. Workshops are selected according to the needs of the schools or regions involved. They can be implemented within the formal system through cascade training, or in an informal education setting, in emergency and disaster contexts.

JAMAICA

UNICEF Jamaica supports the following three programmes to improve active citizenship outcomes and increase social cohesion, peace and stability.

» **Peace Management Initiative:** This non-profit organization works to maintain peace in the most violent communities of Jamaica. The Peace Management Initiative implements a violence interruption programme for at-risk children and adolescents, which supports those who have committed crimes and intervenes when others feel at risk of falling into the wrong path. The programme recruits young people who are involved in gangs to join theatre groups or sports programmes, and provides self-development opportunities to facilitate alternative responses to violence. In addition to providing individual and group counselling, the Peace Management Initiative makes referrals for psychotherapy; dismantles gangs; en courages discussions; and develops activities on conflict resolution and evasion, anger management, self-control, respect for others' opinions, self-respect, overcoming trauma, preparation for adulthood, and career planning. The programme also provides remedial education as well as parental support groups and workshops.

» **School-wide Positive Behaviour intervention and Support programme:** is a framework for primary and secondary schools to promote positive behaviour. Schools create teams of teachers and students, with each team choosing three or four values to implement in the school (for example, responsibility, kindness, honesty and politeness). Team members work together to decide how to promote the values in daily school life. Students who model these values are followed up in different ways (for example, school-wide recognition panels) to encourage and recognize them in front of their peers.

» **Fight for Peace International:** is a UNICEF-supported extra-curricular programme for urban youth who have been exposed to trauma. Through sports activities, the programme offers children and adolescents leadership training as well as individual and group counselling. The programme combines martial arts with foundational skills (literacy and numeracy) and transferable skills such as conflict resolution, anger management, self-management, empathy and resilience. In addition, the programme offers parenting workshops for the development of positive parenting skills. These activities are offered in places designated as safe spaces by children, adolescents and their communities.

COSTA RICA

Similarly, the Classrooms for Listening (Aulas de Escucha) programme, supported by UNICEF Costa Rica, aims to promote spaces that encourage the creation of life projects free of violence. It works with at-risk adolescents in Grade 7, providing extra-curricular lessons in daytime public schools. This model has a comprehensive approach since it provides emotional support; creates spaces for students to acquire tools associated with creativity, sports, and emotional containment; and encourages school permanence through the acquisition of skills related to learning.

UNICEF Costa Rica also supports the Civic Centre without Walls Model (Modelo Centro Cívico sin Paredes). This model complements the proposal of the Civic Centres for Peace (Centros Cívicos por la Paz), promoted by the Costa Rican Government since 2015 to offer children and adolescents a permanent programme of cultural, sporting, pedagogical and psychosocial support activities, among others, to strengthen active citizenship and the fulfilment of child and adolescent rights. The Civic Centre without Walls Model focuses on those areas of the country that are most isolated and in need. The training topics offered relate to parental responsibility between genders, concepts of masculinity, and sexual and reproductive health education. There is a manual for dealing with situations of violence in civic centres, and pedagogical guidance to teach content on anti-bullying protocol, both in schools and in civic centres.

NICARAGUA

UNICEF Nicaragua supports the Council of Educational Communities (Consejería de las Comunidades Educativas), which is not only a council but also a movement led by the Ministry of Education and implemented in schools to develop spaces free of violence. For example, volunteer counsellors – whether students, teachers or parents – are trained to respond to emergency situations or circumstances that alter the school environment. The Council of Educational Communities movement is active from pre-primary to secondary education.

EL SALVADOR

UNICEF El Salvador supports I Am Music (Soy Música), a Ministry of Education and Technology project that seeks to promote peaceful coexistence in schools. It is based on a methodology developed by the international organization Musicians Without Borders, which uses music to promote civic coexistence, conciliation, leadership, creativity, collaboration, resilience and communication. I Am Music aims to increase the musical leadership capacities of teachers and community facilitators linked to schools and cultural centres, enabling them to offer workshops and community music activities for children and adolescents to promote inclusion and social harmony. (This project also responds to Outcome 1.)

CHILE

UNICEF Chile supports knowledge and evidence generation through the development of studies on collaborative conflict management within schools. It also provides training in this area for both teachers and school administrators.

BRAZIL

During election time in 2018, UNICEF Brazil promoted participation in the voting process among the youngest voters – adolescents aged 16–17 years – through the #PartiuMudar and #GoOutAndChange campaigns. Likewise, it boosted their contribution to debates around lack of political participation, the importance of decision-making, and the various political parties and their manifestos, and promoted adolescent participation in the democratic process. The campaigns included educational activities on democracy and citizenship, supported by social media posts on these topics. The messages were based on content developed by the adolescents who participated in Adolescent Citizenship Centres (Núcleos de Ciudadanía de Adolescentes) and in the group United Youth for Life in Amazonia (Juventud Unida por la Vida en Amazonia).

Measuring transferable skills

The importance of measuring transferable skills

Transferable skills development in children and adolescents contributes to their holistic development. Such skills are decisive for school life and adulthood, as they contribute to the construction of peaceful and more egalitarian societies.

To improve the impact and efficiency of transferable skills development– as well as design better programmes and initiatives – it is necessary to examine the results, effects and impacts that they achieve in similar contexts but among different groups of beneficiaries. As such, it is important to measure transferable skills through assessment or the monitoring of indicators. Similarly, measuring how transferable skills affect educational, work and social outcomes could contribute significantly to greater investment in transferable skills development in the LAC region.[31]

Along the same lines, it is helpful to understand the level at which children, adolescents and young people in the region and its countries are regarding transferable skills development. This can facilitate an overview of the performance of these skills in the different contexts, as well as help to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Such an understanding would also enable investment in policies and programmes aimed at ensuring balanced and contextualized skills development processes.

Incorporating the measurement of transferable skills in standardized assessments, such as those conducted by the Latin American Laboratory for the Evaluation of the Quality of Education (LLECE), could play a key role in enhancing the development of transferable skills. In turn, this improves the quality of education, the transition between education and the labour market, and the level of success in academic, work and social contexts. To achieve coherent learning experiences throughout the different pathways by which skills are developed, common measurement tools, standards and certificates are needed to measure and recognize the knowledge and transferable skills acquired by students. This calls for coordination among the various stakeholders involved.

31 Heckman, James J., Jora Stixrud and Sergio Urzua, 'The Effects of Cognitive and Noncognitive Abilities on Labor Market Outcomes and Social Behavior', *Journal of Labor Economics*, vol. 24, no. 3, July 2006, pp. 411–482; Berniell, Lucila, et al., *More Skills for Work and Life: The contributions of families, schools, jobs, and the social environment*, Corporación Andina de Fomento, Bogota, 2017; Busso, Matias, et al., 'The Effects of Financial Aid and Returns Information in Selective and Less Selective Schools: Experimental evidence from Chile', *Labour Economics*, vol. 45, April 2017, pp. 79–91; Novella et al., *Millennials in Latin America and the Caribbean: to work or study?*

How to measure transferable skills?

Measurement of transferable skills must be supported by a clear conceptual framework based on a consensus on the definition and description of each dimension (cognitive, instrumental, individual and social) and skill. Once the 'what' has been defined, the next question is 'how' measurement should be carried out.

As yet, there are no established mechanisms for measuring transferable skills. Self-reporting is the most commonly used technique, but this brings certain challenges.

Despite these challenges, some national, regional and global initiatives have begun to use transferable skills indicators to contribute to the ongoing debate and decision-making process regarding skills development at the different levels of the formal education system.

There are at least three examples of transferable skills measurement at the global level: the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS);[vii] PISA; and an OECD skills study that assesses five skills (task performance, emotional regulation, collaboration, open-mindedness, and relationships with others) both individually and in combination.[32] Analysis of the results of these assessments is useful in understanding the development of some transferable skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking. Such analysis has not yet proven very effective, however, in understanding those transferable skills that are associated with emotional or social dimensions. To this end, PISA has begun to measure collaboration for problem-solving, underscoring the importance of measuring and assessing transferable skills at both the regional and global level.

More recently, the UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office and the World Bank have undertaken the development of a tool to measure creativity, problem-solving, negotiation, decision-making, communication, self-management, empathy, respect for diversity, and participation. This tool, which seeks to assess these transferable skills among Grade 7 students, is appropriate for use in the context of the LAC region.

Despite the lack of a substantial number of studies measuring transferable skills, some of the available results are promising. For example, a 2018 study points out that the performance of young people in the region is quite positive when analysing their transferable and digital skills, reporting: "young people show high levels of self-esteem, self-efficacy, passion and perseverance".[33] Study findings such as these raise the hope of creating a future in which transferable skills become the key to enhancing economic development in LAC countries.

Regionally, LLECE measures student learning achievements within the education systems of LAC countries. The fourth Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo; ERCE), applied for the first time in 18 countries, contemplated piloting a test module to measure two transferable skills – empathy and self-management – among Grade 6 students.[viii]

Furthermore, in 2009 and 2016, the ICCS (module for Latin America), implemented in Chile, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Mexico and Paraguay, measured empathy and aggression using indicators such as self-reported aggression, victimization, bullying and antisocial behaviour. Based on this work, various LAC countries such as Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru have been developing similar instruments to measure transferable skills.[ix]

Currently in the LAC region, there are some country-level tools that assess several transferable skills. In some cases, instruments designed in other countries have been adapted to the national context; in others, the

32 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *OECD Work on Education and Skills,* OECD, Paris, 2019.

33 Novella et al., *Millennials in Latin America and the Caribbean: to work or study?*

instruments were developed by researchers and experts for the specific context.

Argentina has several tools for measuring transferable skills, including the Scale of Personality Resources Associated with Child Resilience (Escala de Recursos de Personalidad Asociados a la Resiliencia Infantil), which has been applied to children aged 9–12 years and includes three dimensions: empathy and prosocial behaviours; self-control and self-efficacy; and creativity. Other tools include the Creative Personality Scale (Escala de Personalidad Creadora), which has a version for implementation by teachers, parents and guardians as well as a self-assessment version. Moreover, the Scale of Compassion towards Others (Escala de Compasión hacia Otros) measures compassion, empathy and relief of suffering. The latter has been used with adolescents and young people aged 13–23 years.

In Chile, the Ministry of Education has established a public policy that contains personal and social development indicators (indicadores de desarrollo personal y social), which has been approved by the National Council of Education (Consejo Nacional de Educación) and evaluated by the Education Quality Agency (Agencia de Calidad de la Educación).[x] These indicators include self-management, self-awareness, emotional stability, extroversion, kindness and responsibility. Information is provided on the personal and social development of the students in relation to the achievement of the general objectives of school education; this information complements the assessment of learning achievements using the national standardized tests.

In Colombia, in 2003, 2005, 2012 and 2015, the national Prueba Saber 11 test – obligatory for all Grade 11 students – assessed citizenship skills such as empathy, emotional management, attitudes, aggression, multi-perspectivism and systemic thinking.

In Mexico, transferable skills have been measured annually since 2015 among students in the last year of higher education, through the National Plan for Learning Assessment (Plan Nacional para la Evaluación de los Aprendizajes; PLANEA). A questionnaire is applied to assess skills such as solidarity with and respect towards peers, conflict management, well-being and collaboration. It is intended that, in future, PLANEA will also assess empathy, collaboration, autonomy, self-efficacy, self-management and perseverance.

Also in Mexico, in 2017, through an instrument Contruye-T, designed jointly by the Secretariat of Public Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), some transferable skills such as persistence, stress management, empathy and decision-making were measured.

In 2013 and 2018, Grade 6 students in Peru were assessed on their citizenship skills as well as their understanding of democratic principles, civic systems, democratic coexistence, and citizen participation.

So far, an insufficiently large number of assessments have been conducted to allow us to understand the impact of regional or global policies, programmes or initiatives that seek to foster transferable skills in students. For the results of transferable skills measurement to be useful for informed decision-making and for others to use these results, it is important that results are communicated in a clear manner. Results reports should incorporate qualitative and quantitative data, describe the context in which the results occurred, and share good practices at different education levels.

Recommendations for implementing the Global Framework on Transferable Skills

The *Global Framework on Transferable Skills* provides tools to support national governments, UNICEF country offices and other interested organizations identify and analyse a range of context-relevant transferable skills that can enable children and adolescents to be successful in education, work and life. The UNICEF framework is not prescriptive neither in terms of the transferable skills to be identified, nor in its definition.

The following four steps should be considered when identifying which transferable skills are to be developed in a given context:

» Understand and resolve the challenges linked to the conceptualization of transferable skills: concepts must be clearly defined and relevant to the context.

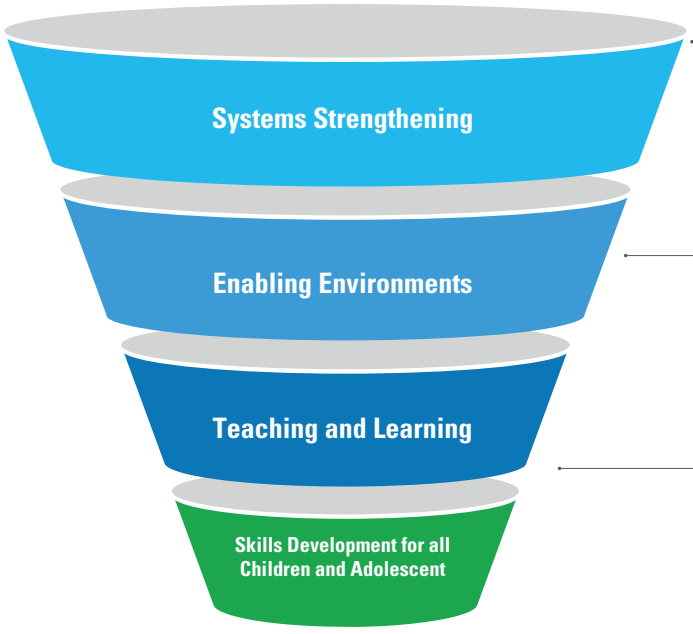
» Identify a set of transferable skills, relevant to the context, that together contribute to all four dimensions of learning (cognitive, instrumental, individual and social).

» Within this set of transferable skills, identify a smaller set of core transferable skills that include a balance of cognitive, social and emotional skills.

» Identify other skills related to the core transferable skills. This step should allow for a more profound analysis of each core skill.

From a programmatic point of view, it is necessary to work across multiple learning pathways, and throughout all education levels and learning systems.

Figure 5. Programmatic intervention areas through multiple pathways



Systems Strengthening

Systems Strenghthening: Achieving scale and sustainability requires skills development to be addressed within all components of education systems and throughout multiple pathways, especially upstream components (national policies and plans, curricula frameworks, coordination and partnership frameworks, qualification frameworks, budgeting and financing, human resources and capacity development, and monitoring and evaluation.

Enabling Environments

Enabling Environments: Effective skills development requires learning environments in shich all learners can participate and feel physically, socially and emotionally safe. This is fostered by good school governance and accountability mechanisms, parent and children participation in school-based management, and the larger community engagement.

Teaching and Learning

Teaching and Learning: Effective skills development programming requires aligning curriculum, appropriate pedagogical and assessment practices to adress the needs of all learners.

Education systems must be strengthened to promote the comprehensive development of transferable skills in an equitable, holistic and inclusive manner, especially among the most marginalized. To achieve this, it is necessary to align teaching and learning practices (curriculum, pedagogy and assessment approaches) as well as promote enabling environments that support transferable skills development.

To enable UNICEF country offices in the LAC region to contribute in the conceptualization and development of transferable skills, a series of programmatic entry points is proposed, based on three areas of intervention: teaching and learning process; enabling environments; and strengthening education systems (*see Figure 5*).

Regarding the **teaching and learning process**, the proposed programmatic entry points are:

- inclusion of transferable skills in the curriculum and content at all levels of education, including early childhood education, TVET, non-formal education and other programmes described in the multiple learning pathways approach
- support for the design and implementation of pre-service and in-service professional development programmes, for teachers, facilitators and trainers, on transferable skills and active pedagogical practices
- support to define formative and summative assessment tools and approaches for the measurement of transferable skills.

Some examples of UNICEF country offices that have supported initiatives in the area of teaching and learning process are those in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Cuba, Jamaica and Ecuador. UNICEF has supported both in defining the curriculum and in relation to the professional development of teachers and facilitators regarding transferable skills.

In terms of creating **enabling environments** to support the work of ministries of education, the proposed programmatic entry points include:

- support for the creation and strengthening of good school governance mechanisms and accountability processes, including students, families and communities participation in school management
- contribute to school environments free of violence that foster positive relationships among the members of the school community, through good communication and encouragement for peaceful conflict resolution and self-protection
- support for the design, reform and implementation of public policies, strategies and programmes on positive discipline, to discourage public punishment and other forms of violence
- support for psychosocial support mechanisms for children and adolescents in school settings, including in humanitarian situations.

Examples of UNICEF country offices that have supported initiatives to create enabling environments include those in Argentina, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Jamaica and Nicaragua. Many of these country offices contribute to programmes that provide psychosocial support. For example, UNICEF Jamaica supports School-wide Positive Behaviour Intervention and Support, a positive discipline programme, while UNICEF Nicaragua supports a programme to create governance and accountability mechanisms in schools known as the Council of Educational Communities (Consejería de Comunidades Educativas), which works with the entire education community to develop safe and violence-free spaces.

Finally, the proposed programmatic entry points for **strengthening education systems** are support for the:

- integration of transferable skills components in education sector analyses and planning as well as in the development of public policies and strategies
- integration of transferable skills components into human resource strategies, frameworks and standards
- use of national consultation processes and mapping exercises to better identify the main actors working in transferable skills development; determine the geographical areas where the programmes are being implemented; and identify the objectives and areas of work involved as well as the budgets and target populations
- introduction of national, municipal, district and school budgets for transferable skills development activities
- development and implementation of processes of coordination among government, donors, civil society and the private sector
- integration of transferable skills components within Communication for Development (C4D) strategies and frameworks
- development and strengthening of frameworks for transferable skills implementation systems as well as for transferable skills development outcomes, outputs and impacts.

To strengthen education systems, it is suggested that implementation of existing national public policies is promoted, by providing technical assistance to develop the necessary frameworks, curriculum, assessments, and financial, budgetary and human resource management. In addition, support for the development of technical, monitoring and result assessment capacities is encouraged. Examples of UNICEF country offices that have supported such work include those in Argentina, Brazil and El Salvador.

Where national public policies do not prioritize transferable skills development, the use of evidence-based advocacy strategies is crucial to highlight the importance of transferable skills and encourage a focus on their development within the education system.

© UNICEF/UN0278092/Párraga

Conclusion

Children and adolescents in the Latin America and Caribbean region currently lack sufficient quality opportunities within the education system to develop the necessary skills for learning, work, life and active citizenship.

This discussion paper has identified four types of skills – foundational, transferable, job-specific and digital – which are interrelated and should be developed throughout life. Skills development assumes a systemic and coordinated approach that considers multiple learning pathways, including formal, non-formal and informal education.

In particular, transferable skills play a central role in enabling children, adolescents and young people to take full advantage of their learning experience throughout life. Transferable skills also enable these individuals to become agile learners and active citizens, equipped to face personal, social, academic, economic and environmental challenges.

To provide governments and UNICEF country offices in the LAC region with a conceptual framework that can be adapted to the national and local context, UNICEF has identified a set of 12 key transferable skills across the cognitive, instrumental, individual and social dimensions:

1. Creativity
2. Critical thinking
3. Problem-solving
4. Cooperation
5. Negotiation
6. Decision-making
7. Self-management
8. Resilience
9. Communication
10. Respect for diversity
11. Empathy
12. Participation

Programmatic interventions to support the teaching and learning process, creation of enabling environments and strengthening of education systems will allow to put into practice the conceptual framework at the national and local level. This, in turn, will contribute to the effective development of transferable skills among children and adolescents in the region – improving their chances of success in school, work and life.

© UNICEF/UNI166619/Fabres

Appendix: Summary of transferable skills

Cognitive Dimension Skills

1. Creativity

Creativity, one of three core transferable skills situated in the cognitive dimension, can be defined as the **ability, either individually or through collaboration, to generate, articulate or apply inventive ideas, techniques and perspectives**.

As a cognitive skill, creativity is surprisingly closely related to critical thinking and problem-solving and is firmly rooted in the processes of analysis and evaluation. Because creativity is so fundamental to all innovation and adaptation, it is a key skill in education, workplace and everyday life settings.

Creativity is a natural element of any learning process, irrespective of the learner's age or the setting. In education settings, creativity has been shown to improve academic achievement and is best purposefully and deliberately emphasized from an early age. Creativity can be actively developed through appropriate teaching methodologies and educational activities that encourage imaginative play.

Along with appropriate teaching methodologies that foster creativity, a safe educational environment must be provided to allow creativity to flourish, as stipulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (article 29).

Beyond education settings, creativity contributes to valuable characteristics of the workplace and life, such as collaboration, innovation, problem-solving and tolerance. Fostering creativity thus prepares individuals to face the future.

Creativity and the four dimensions of learning

Cognitive dimension: Learning to know

Contrary to popular belief, creativity is characterized by orderly and organized thinking rather than undisciplined or chaotic thinking. It can be taught across the educational curriculum to all ages, using teaching approaches that emphasize thinking skills over the acquisition of objective information.

Creativity encourages divergent thinking, which leads to the possibility of more than one correct answer and is therefore closely tied to critical thinking.

Instrumental dimension: Learning to do

In terms of life skills in general, creativity is a highly prized skill. It leads to societal improvements through innovative solutions to social problems and is especially applicable at all levels in the workforce.

Creativity is key to entrepreneurship because it fosters innovation and problem-solving and it can contribute to individuals having a competitive edge in a technology-oriented society.

Unfortunately, creativity is often lacking in the workforce and must be actively encouraged.

Individual dimension: Learning to be

Creativity is considered a basic human attribute that contributes to both persistence and resilience through the development of individual talent, motivation and determination. Creativity is closely tied to self-esteem; it enables adaptive and flexible responses to life problems, increasing coping capacities and leading to empowerment.

Because creative thinkers are more open to the risk of mistakes, they tend to be more willing to break paradigms and find innovative solutions that challenge the status quo. This can lead to positive and constructive solutions to everyday problems.

Social dimension: Learning to live together

Creativity is today considered a skill that is best fostered in a collaborative and social setting, rather than an individual attribute. Social creativity stimulates personal and social ethical connections across different cultures and values. It can be encouraged by educators with an awareness of diversity and a willingness to explore topics from an ethical perspective.

Because creativity is relevant to how complex community challenges are addressed, creative citizenship programmes and research on social creativity are leading the way towards positive social transformation.

2. Critical Thinking

Critical thinking, another core life skill situated in the cognitive dimension, can be defined as the **permanent ability to 'read between the lines', ask questions, identify assumptions and assess facts**.

Critical thinking is one of the skills most frequently identified in international frameworks and national documents, not least because of its applicability across education, work and life.

Critical thinking has long been considered key to academic success. As a 'meta-skill,' critical thinking allows learners to engage in a complex mental process that involves separating fact from opinion, recognizing assumptions, questioning the validity of evidence by asking questions, verifying information, listening and observing, and understanding multiple perspectives.

Critical thinking is best taught early in life, through varied practice, as it seems to be a difficult skill to acquire as an adult. If critical thinking is absent from the education system, children are less likely to grow into individuals equipped with the necessary skills to face life challenges and participate fully in society.

In today's world, critical thinking particularly helps children to judge factors that influence their attitudes and behaviour and to protect themselves from negative influences such as violence and radicalization.

Besides contributing to academic achievement, the skill of critical thinking prepares individuals to face complex issues and changes in both the world of work and life in general.

Critical thinkers become key individuals not only in making better workplaces and growing economies but also in helping to build stronger communities. This is because critical thinking is closely associated with self-efficacy and resilience, and critical thinkers have the ability to analyse ways to reduce negative societal trends. This makes critical thinking key to citizenship education.

Critical Thinking and the four dimensions of learning

Cognitive dimension: Learning to know

Critical thinking is recognized as key to academic outcomes and requires specific and concrete teaching as a core emphasis of all school subjects. Students who are explicitly taught the skill of critical thinking outperform those who are not.

While research shows that many people struggle with critical thinking, learners of all abilities can gain critical thinking skills through practice. Critical thinking practice must span all academic disciplines and use teaching methods that, among other things, provide adequate background knowledge and guidance in the face of dissent.

Besides explicit instruction, teaching methods that encourage critical thinking include collaborative and cooperative learning, modelling, and constructivist techniques. Simply providing students with the space to evaluate, question and synthesize new information can lead them to become genuine critical thinkers who go far beyond simple agreement or disagreement.

Instrumental dimension: Learning to do

Critical thinking has long been recognized as a crucial skill in the world of work. As employment demands increase in their complexity, critical thinking allows for effective analysis, problem-solving and decision-making on the job, along with improvements in team building and performance.

The skill of critical thinking directly addresses youth unemployment by increasing the likelihood of members of this population securing employability and entrepreneurship opportunities.

In the workplace, critical thinking contributes to healthy and safe environments characterized by less mismanagement and fewer accidents and conflicts.

Individual dimension: Learning to be

By raising decision-making processes to a conscious level, critical thinking becomes an important characteristic, which successful individuals conserve throughout life. It contributes to increasing the quality of life as well as to happiness and personal fulfilment.

Critical thinking encompasses various attitudes, including open-mindedness, curiosity, the desire to be well-informed, flexibility, and respect for others' points of view.

Because critical thinking allows individuals to recognize and assess factors that influence them, including values, peer pressure and media, it can aid their protection from threats such as violence and radicalization. It also allows for balanced decisions that consider environmental health along with human health and well-being.

Social dimension: Learning to live together

The skill of critical thinking, practised through self-determination and ethical civic engagement, is one of the main objectives of citizenship education.

From a social dimension perspective, critical thinking is about making and understanding a conscious choice of one's own while respecting the choices of others. If the skill of critical thinking is lacking, serious repercussions can occur at the national and community level, including decisions leading to conflict, inappropriate policies or misuse of funds.

In the digital age, critical thinking is an essential skill for separating fact from opinion, honesty from deception, and sense from nonsense. Active citizens who apply the skill of critical thinking can instigate sustainable and equitable changes that promote social justice.

3. Problem-Solving

Problem-solving, an individually or collaboratively practised high-level cognitive skill, can be defined as the **ability to identify a problem, take logical steps to devise a desired solution, and monitor and evaluate the implementation of such a solution**.

Accordingly, the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) identifies four cognitive processes in problem-solving:

1. exploring and understanding the problem
2. representing the problem (through images and words) and formulating hypotheses for its resolution
3. planning and executing a strategy to solve the problem
4. monitoring and reflecting on the solution strategy.
5. An increased awareness of collaborative problem-solving reflects the reality of education and workplace settings where teamwork is highly valued.

Problem-solving is related to other cognitive skills such as critical thinking and creativity. Valued across education, workplace and everyday life settings, problem-solving is a transferable skill frequently included in international skills frameworks.

Problem-Solving and the four dimensions of learning

Cognitive dimension: Learning to know

Problem-solving is well recognized as an essential academic skill, especially in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects. Like any skill, problem-solving can be acquired through practice and is best taught through a problem-based or enquiry-based learning approach.

A *problem-based approach*, as originally developed in medical education, rests on the following principles:

- students are responsible for their own learning
- problem scenarios should be 'vaguely defined' to promote free enquiry
- collaboration is essential
- activities have real-world value
- problem-based learning is an intrinsic and central aspect of the education curriculum.

Vaguely defined problem scenarios require learners to use different cognitive skills and more creativity than the 'well-defined' scenarios often favoured in education settings.

In an *enquiry-based approach*, most often used in science education, the teacher provides information and facilitates a process that starts with question and proceeds through critical thinking, questioning and investigating to arrive at possible solutions.

Both methodologies are important in effectively teaching the skill of problem-solving.

Instrumental dimension: Learning to do

Problem-solving is important in the world of work, especially in entrepreneurship. In 2015, the World Economic Forum ranked problem-solving as the most important skill.

In the workplace, problem-solving is valued by employers who desire independent workers who assume personal responsibility and take the initiative to identify and resolve problems and improve processes through constructive teamwork.

Individual dimension: Learning to be

In life, problem-solving is a 'meta-cognitive', flexible and adaptive skill that signals openness, curiosity, and divergent thinking based on acute observation and recognition of the surrounding environment.

These attitudes lead to self-efficacy and empowerment, enabling individuals to solve problems through critical thinking and decision-making. Moreover, this autonomy and capacity to act leads to lower stress levels, thus the skill of problem-solving actually results in better overall individual health and well-being.

Social dimension: Learning to live together

At the community level, problem-solving directly contributes to active citizenship by helping to resolve community problems. The skill is particularly relevant to human rights issues and the fields of conflict management and conflict resolution.

Problem-solving is identified as a key area of emphasis in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future initiative. In this initiative, students are guided through problem-solving processes to sustainably address local community concerns.

Collaborative community problem-solving is more likely to result in sustainable solutions to challenging environmental issues. At the same time, it creates a stronger sense of common identity, leading to improved social cohesion.

Instrumental Dimension Skills

4. Cooperation

Cooperation, a core life skill in the instrumental dimension, can be defined as the **act or process of working together to get something done for a common purpose or to achieve mutual benefit**. Cooperation skills valued across varied life stages, dimensions and settings include, but are not limited to, teamwork, leadership, consensus building, partnership, respect for others, accepting feedback, and conflict resolution.

Cooperative relationships are socially motivated, shaped by a 'socially oriented' or 'common good' approach rather than a transactional approach focused on personal benefit or material gain. The social motivations underpinning cooperation include shared values and identities, emotional connection, trust and a shared commitment to use fair procedures, all of which are essential for operating groups, organizations, institutions and even society itself.

Cooperation also has deep roots in both the cognitive and individual dimensions, making it an essential life skill in terms of supporting academic achievement and psychological well-being.

In the critical area of social and political conflict management and resolution, cooperation is an essential component of healthy and productive workplaces and societies.

Cooperation and the four dimensions of learning

Cognitive dimension: Learning to know

Cooperation taught early in life has clear academic advantages; the evidence in favour of truly collaborative classrooms is striking. Not only is collaborative work of a better quality than individually produced work, but collaborative learning is also better retained than individual learning.

Classrooms specifically geared towards cooperative learning are made up of small groups of learners and are distinguished by positive interdependence and non-competitive behaviours designed to ensure the success of all group members.

Besides bringing academic benefits, encouraging learners to work *as* groups and not merely *in* groups helps individuals to develop important social skills and learn how to resolve conflicts and work as a team for their mutual benefit. Taught early in life, cooperation increases the pleasure of learning and raises academic performance, and, perhaps more importantly, increases self-efficacy and self-esteem through collaboration.

Instrumental dimension: Learning to do

Although cooperation and communication are critical transferable skills for employment, these skills are rarely practised or reinforced. And yet cooperation is often included as a foundational skill in work, employability and entrepreneurship frameworks.

Cooperation demonstrates the ability to work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams, to make compromises, to assume shared responsibility for collaborative work, and to value the contributions of individual team members.

Teamwork, a hallmark of cooperation, is highly prized by employers. Because cooperation encompasses so many desirable traits across all varieties and job levels, it remains a highly desirable employee characteristic. Workers who can cooperate show that they can partner well with others, respect others' opinions, accept feedback, resolve conflict, build consensus in decision-making, and take on leadership responsibilities.

Individual dimension: Learning to be

Cooperation is closely linked to self-identity and depends on self-management skills such as self-control and self-awareness. Individuals in possession of a strong self-identity are more able to engage in collaborative work with others.

Cooperation is positively correlated with psychological health because it promotes better self-esteem than competitive or individualistic pursuits, resulting in better overall social skills. For this reason, this skill is best encouraged at an early age.

Research shows that promoting cooperation helps learners to develop a stronger sense of their academic identity, enabling them to set goals, deal with uncertainty and build relationships, all of which leads to personal empowerment.

Social dimension: Learning to live together

In the social dimension, the skill of cooperation is closely linked to problem-solving, respect for diversity, and empathy. By motivating individuals to act in ways that transcend self-interest and instead serve the interests of the group, cooperation is key to solving many of the problems faced by organizations and society.

Cooperation is critical for active citizenship and social cohesion, both of which are based on common values, attitudes and identities, and an emotional connection that involves trust.

In the realm of conflict management, a cooperative orientation leads to positive outcomes and is defined by positive behaviours even amid disagreement. Such behaviours include refraining from personal attacks, understanding and valuing the legitimate views of others, emphasizing the positive, taking responsibility for harmful consequences, seeking reconciliation, and being honest.

In conflict resolution, a cooperative 'win-win' orientation, as opposed to a competitive orientation, can result in more productivity, better relationships, higher self-esteem and better overall psychological health, all the while facilitating – rather than hindering constructive resolution.

5. Negotiation

Negotiation, an instrumental dimension skill, can be defined as a **process of communication, between at least two parties, aimed at reaching agreement on perceived divergent interests**. The process rests on an individual's ability to cooperatively participate with the other party (or parties) using respectful yet assertive communication skills.

Various styles of negotiation, with different definitions of success, are common across a wide range of disciplines and contexts.

An 'integrative' approach to negotiation is emphasized in this discussion paper, with cooperation rather than competition used to arrive at mutually beneficial and acceptable agreements for all parties. This type of negotiation is closely tied to communication skills, particularly the skill of listening. In a multicultural context, integrative negotiation can overcome misunderstandings and improve relationships.

Negotiation is a skill that is learned naturally in early childhood as part of play, and it can be encouraged in and integrated into education settings.

Negotiation and the four dimensions of learning

Cognitive dimension: Learning to know

In the learning context, the skill of negotiation supports healthy peer-to-peer and teacher–learner interactions and contributes to a positive learning environment.

Negotiation training is a regular part of higher education fields such as law, economics and business. As a key life skill, it should also be incorporated into both early childhood development programmes and school curricula to teach children and adolescents to resolve disputes by reading emotions and using language rather than force.

Negotiation can be taught and learned through observation and practice using interactive techniques. These include role play of real-life scenarios and peer negotiation, allowing learners to question, listen, debate and arrive at resolutions acceptable to all parties.

Activities designed to practise negotiation build agency and an increased sense of responsibility in learning, reaping many positive outcomes. Among these are increased self-esteem, empathy, assertiveness (as opposed to aggression), active listening, concise questioning, and reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the process.

The benefits of teaching negotiation go far beyond the education environment, equipping children and adolescents to handle – respectfully and assertively, without the use of violence – home, work and life situations that may threaten their own or others' health and well-being.

Instrumental dimension: Learning to do

Valued by employers and often associated with leadership, the skill of negotiation is included in the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies and plays a positive role in employability, work, entrepreneurship and career development. In business and other economic interactions, negotiation approaches range from competitive to cooperative depending on the context and purpose.

Besides laying the foundation for positive interactions with co-workers and managers, the skill of negotiation contributes to safer workplaces by equipping individuals with communication skills to protect themselves against occupational health and safety concerns and exploitation or abuse.

Individual dimension: Learning to be

Negotiation skills are considered essential to personal empowerment, particularly the 'refusal skills' to enhance child and adolescent protection.

Negotiation skills help children and youth to be assertive and resist peers and adults who may pressure them to engage in risky sexual behaviour or the use of drugs, alcohol or tobacco. In this way, children and youth may be better equipped to maintain their overall health and well-being, including their sexual and reproductive health.

Within a patriarchal or conservative family or social context, however, negotiation can be complicated or thwarted, making it more difficult to arrive at mutually beneficial agreements.

Social dimension: Learning to live together

An integrative approach to negotiation is preferred in the humanitarian context and is key to fostering a culture of democracy. Integrative negotiation seeks win-win solutions through partnership, brainstorming, and cooperative rather than competitive relationships.

6. Decision-Making

Decision-making, a transferable skill in the instrumental dimension, can be defined as the **ability to choose a preferred option or course of action from among a set of alternatives based on a certain criterion**. Like many core skills, it is used by all of us on a daily basis, and our well-being is directly affected by decision-making, through the consequences of our choices.

Decision-making is often conceptualized as a linear process: (1) define objectives; (2) collect information; (3) develop options; (4) evaluate and decide; and (5) implement the decision. The process of making decisions, however, can be informal or formal and based on intuition, reasoning or a combination of the two.

Decision-making is considered a transferable skill closely related to critical thinking, cooperation and negotiation skills, with cross-disciplinary elements spanning fields such as cognitive science, psychology, management, economics and sociology.

Many factors influence decision-making, including concrete aspects such as information, time constraints and clarity of objectives. Individual differences, like past experiences, cognitive biases, age and beliefs, also play a part.

One challenge in effective decision-making is overcoming individual biases of motivation or cognition. These can be addressed through exercises and techniques that consider alternatives and invite dissenting viewpoints. Another challenge is to encourage decision-making based on ethical principles and rules of civility, considering respect for others, especially the vulnerable and marginalized.

Decision-Making and the four dimensions of learning

Cognitive dimension: Learning to know

As a life skill, decision-making can be taught and learned as a component of basic education. Because it makes for more responsible learners and improves study habits and academic achievement, the earlier that decision-making is introduced, the greater the gains.

A teaching methodology for decision-making should employ collaborative, real-world tasks to encourage learners to identify pros and cons and make balanced, informed choices. Cooperative learning methods, based on communication, creativity and critical thinking, are an obvious choice for developing this skill.

Explicit teaching of decision-making in the early years, outside of education settings, can allow for more informed risk-taking as adults.

Instrumental dimension: Learning to do

Decision-making is a foundational skill in the world of work and is important for strong business performance in a competitive and changing economy. It involves analysing information and competing opinions, delegating, leading teams by motivating and empowering people, and resolving problems, all with an understanding of both the customer and the market.

A complex skill, far beyond the simple following of instructions, decision-making can also contribute to improved workplace health and safety.

Decision-making is best seen as a systematic process with a clearly defined set of elements and steps. This can help to avoid errors due to biases in judgement, leading to poor decisions. Such errors in decision-making are both common and costly for individuals, businesses and even the economy.

Individual dimension: Learning to be

Decision-making is at the root of all human actions and is critical to feelings of success. It includes the important concept of 'risk literacy', which enables the risks of daily life to be understood and managed through a process of balancing risk, rather than simply selecting one risk over another.

Associated with self-determination, effective decision-making can protect individual well-being in the context of negative power dynamics, by helping to overcome setbacks and shocks and achieve goals. In this sense, decision-making is a core skill in empowerment, especially for children and adolescents with disabilities.

Social dimension: Learning to live together

Developing and establishing new relationships based on ethical decision-making – and given the various complexities involved, adopting a sequential model – can help in making both every day and life-changing decisions.

Decision-making, by definition, involves power. In a political context, ethical decision-making is characterized by transparency and an awareness that, because of reduced access to education and resources, socio-economically disadvantaged groups may be more susceptible to poor decision-making.

An ethical decision-making process rests upon the social justice and human rights values of trust, respect, fairness and care for others. The process considers safety, social norms, realistic consequences and the well-being of others.

Individual Dimension Skills

7. Self-Management

Self-management, a core life skill in the individual dimension, can be defined as the **ability to regulate and monitor emotions, feelings and impulses**.

Self-management includes a broad category of related skills and has wide applicability in all domains of life, from the family to school to the world of work. In school, in particular, self-management leads to self-realization, which supports the "development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential", which, according to Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, is the goal of education. Self-management enables the self-efficacy and self-awareness that can improve relationships and the overall quality of life.

Self-management rests upon the brain's mechanism to self-regulate or resist inappropriate behaviours or responses. An executive function, self-control is a cognitive process that regulates intense emotions and behaviours that can lead to negative outcomes and health impacts. Impulsivity and the inability to delay gratification; risk-taking; undervaluing intellectual ability; self-centredness; and volatile temper are all behaviours that can be addressed through effective self-management.

The capacity to exert self-control varies widely among individuals, and while it is present in early childhood, it improves and is more malleable in adolescence and early adulthood.

Because self-management covers myriad related skills, there is a great deal of variation in how self-management is conceptualized across skills frameworks. This calls for a more comprehensive approach to the development of self-management and its related skill areas.

Self-Management and the four dimensions of learning

Cognitive dimension: Learning to know

Self-management is an important skill in education settings, where children can experience stress, anxiety and anxiety-related disorders, depression and violence. Self-management can help children to cope better with difficult situations.

Research shows correlations between self-control and self-efficacy and adult achievement outcomes, in terms of both academic success and the attainment of higher education.

Of particular interest to psychologists and educators are persistence and perseverance, components of self-management that enable an individual to intentionally adapt and continue to master a skill in spite of challenges, obstacles and distractions.

While PISA 2012 results for perseverance vary across countries, less socio-economically advantaged children and adolescents typically report lower levels of perseverance.

Instrumental dimension: Learning to do

Self-management and its related skills are key life skills commonly included in employability frameworks. It can be difficult, however, to find evidence of these skills – for example, ability to work under pressure, adaptability and organizational skills – in actual job applicants.

Unmanaged job stress can lead to a number of well-documented negative impacts on health and motivation, including tension, irritability and an increased risk of poor judgement or errors. Skills related to self-management contribute to concentration, regulation of emotions, and stress mitigation. They can thus lead to increased employability and, once in the workplace, to good co-worker relationships.

Individual dimension: Learning to be

Self-management is a core skill for self-realization and empowerment. Because it enhances autonomy, agency and a sense of self-help, it may also reduce risks of exploitation and abuse for children and adolescents, contributing to child protection.

Active participation in the self-management skills of goal setting and life planning can help individuals to manage their emotions and to function well in society.

Another self-management skill, self-awareness, allows individuals to recognize their strengths, weaknesses and preferences as well as to identify when they are overly stressed. In the social dimension, self-awareness is a prerequisite for developing good communication skills and empathy.

Social dimension: Learning to live together

Self-management helps us to live well alongside one another by practising and building ethical behaviours and attitudes.

Individuals with strong self-management are more autonomous, self-confident and comfortable with themselves, and can therefore relate to others with respect, tolerance and empathy. These attitudes open up the possibility of collaborative and even peacebuilding community group processes, which can work to advance citizens' rights and social justice.

The related skill of self-awareness is central to the concept of 'critical consciousness', an integrated and deep understanding, achieved through critical and socially responsible thinking, of our multidimensional world.

8. Resilience

Resilience, an instrumental dimension skill, can be defined in general terms as the **ability to successfully navigate changing circumstances**. As a concept, resilience is both highly context-dependent and used broadly across contexts, from stressful work environment to violent conflict. This perhaps explains the lack of consensus on the exact meaning of resilience. In this paper, however, **resilience** is understood to be a constructive skill that **goes beyond simply surviving, accepting, or resigning oneself to what may be an unacceptable situation**.

The most prominent approach to resilience comes from the ecological sciences, but important insights have been contributed by many other disciplines, including psychology, medicine, hazard and disaster management, and the social sciences.

Resilience, although expressed differently depending on gender, culture, age and environment, is a behavioural process that can be taught and acquired by anyone.

Resilience is perhaps best conceived of as an umbrella term for addressing difficult issues in an active, conscious and constructive way. It encompasses coping skills, tenacity, perseverance and determination to bounce back from disruption, stress or change. Rooted in the capacity for self-development in trying times, resilience draws on well-being and reinforces good health.

Being resilient does not mean being protected from difficulty or distress; being resilient means both struggling and coping with adversity constructively, with awareness and attention to mental health.

Development of resilience in highly radicalized or conflict situations can take a rights-based approach to resist the legitimization of hatred and the use of violence. A rights-based approach to resilience encompasses rights, power and agency, enabling individuals to build and defend healthy, happy and meaningful lives and livelihoods.

Resilience and the four dimensions of learning

Cognitive dimension: Learning to know

Resilience is the result of a developmental process that takes place in childhood and adolescence and can be enhanced in education settings. Resilience helps learners to maintain a positive outlook on their education in situations of adversity.

While resilience alone may not directly lead to academic achievement, applying determination or perseverance to long-term goals undoubtedly helps learners to cope with and overcome difficulties in their education. Explicitly teaching coping strategies can help learners to develop resilience to deal with everyday stresses both in school and outside of school.

Surprisingly, simply engaging in learning (knowledge acquisition and generation) in any context – whether formal, informal, extension, apprenticeship or intergenerational learning – can help to build resilience through the prediction of and preparation for challenges.

Instrumental dimension: Learning to do

Resilience is a necessary skill in the world of work, particularly when facing rejection or difficulty finding a job. It is also an important skill for coping with a stressful or abusive work environment or a difficult or disappointing job.

Resilience can equip individuals coping with long-term unemployment with the strength to keep searching for jobs or exploring alternatives to employment. For entrepreneurs facing difficulties beyond their control, resilience is a critical skill in creating ways to maintain or rebuild livelihoods.

Individual dimension: Learning to be

Resilience in the individual dimension draws on self-efficacy and empowerment to ensure persistence in self-development even in difficult and stressful times.

In contexts of violence or conflict, resilience helps the individual to resist falling prey to the negative discourse of conflict. It can aid self-protection and help in finding a way to move forward.

Because an individual's capacity for resilience continually changes according to the context and environment, it is misguided to focus on personal characteristics of resilience in isolation, without also considering the individual's environment.

Individual coping skills are nevertheless a core component of resilience. Coping with stress involves recognizing the source of the stress and how it affects one and acting to control the stress through lifestyle changes or stress reduction strategies. Coping skills include the ability to positively reappraise a situation, regulate emotions, make plans, and use social supports and resources.

Another key factor in resilience is psychological flexibility, which encompasses problem-solving, the formation and maintenance of good relationships, emotional and behavioural self-regulation, a positive self-concept and view of life, and even humour and attractiveness to others.

Social dimension: Learning to live together

In the social dimension, resilience frameworks focus on a constructive approach, to promote a community's capacity to respond to, negotiate and transform shocks to avoid a downward spiral and to uncover opportunities for improvement. A disaster resilience approach connects short-term disaster response and humanitarian interventions with long-term development programming.

Disaster risk is the potential for severe changes in a community's normal functioning due to physical

hazards in combination with vulnerabilities caused by underlying social conditions. Hazard mitigation is the process of understanding, managing and reducing disaster risk – in other words, building resilience.

A central element of any rights-based approach is equity, entering into relations of power and acknowledging historical legacy to get at the root causes of vulnerability and poverty. A rights-based approach to resilience will therefore carefully consider the possibility of reproducing the same institutional structures and conditions that gave rise to an existing problem, recognizing that humans adapt only as far as necessary to fairly access resources. Inequality is thus recognized as the key factor in diminishing resilience-building possibilities, rather than as an outcome of failed resilience.

9. Communication

The individual dimension skill of **communication** can be defined at the most basic level as the **ability to share meaning through the exchange of information and common understanding**.

As a two-way verbal, non-verbal or written exchange between two or more individuals, communication is an interpersonal skill firmly grounded in social relationships. This basic human desire to communicate is clearly demonstrated by the obsequious use of communication technologies and social media.

Communication plays a central role in all other life skills, especially cooperation, negotiation, participation and empathy.

Though a process honed over a lifetime, the ability to communicate relies upon the mastery of language at an early age, when the brain more easily acquires language skills. Evidence shows that a conducive social context and early social interaction are essential for language development.

Communication is an essential skill in a knowledge society and can be taught through interactive learning methodologies.

Communication and the four dimensions of learning

Cognitive dimension: Learning to know

In the cognitive dimension, communication is clearly central to learning. Strongly linked to literacy, numeracy and technological literacy, communication is essential for academic, personal and professional success as well as for individual well-being in general.

The best methodologies for developing a wide range of communication skills involve interactive and participatory learning, where learners can actively listen and question, rather than lecture-based instruction.

In a school setting, children and adolescents are expected to listen, understand and respond in clear and appropriate ways. Spoken language – talking – is the first critical step in early learning for the transition to reading and writing and to handling increasingly complex academic expectations and tasks.

Instrumental dimension: Learning to do

In the world of work, communication is key for finding and keeping a job as well as for teamwork and interactions with co-workers and clients. Communication is often the most sought-after skill among employers across world regions and different job levels. Even so, communication skills are frequently identified as in need of improvement or altogether lacking in job applicants.

Communication – the ability to use language efficiently – draws on critical thinking and the high-order thinking skills of reasoning and inference. It also draws on the interpersonal skill of self-management to lead to more successful groups and teamwork.

The components of communication – effective speaking, active listening and active questioning – can be practised in education settings. Strong communication skills involve the use of various modalities and selection of the best medium for the message, whether that is a text message, telephone call, email, writing or the spoken word.

Individual dimension: Learning to be

In the individual dimension, the skill of communication is connected to self-worth and self-efficacy and is fundamental to building relationships and social cohesion. Rapidly changing communication technologies have created the need for coping skills specific to these new modalities.

The ability to express opinions and desires and to ask for help and advice is important for both self-realization and interpersonal relationships. The use of appropriate communication skills in various contexts is critically important for lifelong development, helping individuals to reach their full potential and gain a sense of empowerment and personal effectiveness in their lives.

Social dimension: Learning to live together

As a skill that is key to both practising interpersonal skills and to active citizenship, communication contributes to a functioning society through various levels of interaction (individual, family, community and social). Communication for social purposes includes debating opinions, making choices, and clearly explaining one's point of view while considering the viewpoints of others.

In line with the ethical foundation of the renewed vision for education, ethical communication – avoiding discriminatory and inflammatory language though self-management – is a powerful tool for combating discrimination and minimizing conflict. Communication skills rest upon civility, respect for diversity, and empathy. In one sense, communication can be understood as the actual exercise of the human right of freedom of opinion and expression.

Social Dimension Skills

10. Respect for diversity

A deeply interpersonal skill, **respect for diversity** can be defined as the **understanding that human beings are equal participants in a common ethical world by virtue of their human status, all the while recognizing each individual's uniqueness and differences**. This social dimension skill allows for the possibility that legitimacy lies beyond one's own perspective.

Most closely associated with respect for diversity is the skill of active listening – that is, being open to other perspectives and willing to see other viewpoints as worthy of respect.

Individual differences can be defined by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical ability, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other characteristics. Respect for diversity goes beyond tolerance and understanding to actively acknowledge and promote the "equal worth of peoples without condescension" (UNICEF, 2017: p.175).

Closely related to the principle of equality, respect for diversity entails the use of critical thinking skills to identify the underlying causes of social injustice and ways to constructively address these.

In conflict or post-conflict settings, it may be easier to encourage respect for diversity, since it is not based on agreement but on listening to others and acknowledging their right to shape outcomes. In non-conflict settings, respect for diversity can manifest as cultural pluralism, which acknowledges the differences in status, privilege and power within and between groups and across society.

Respect for diversity is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (article 29), which calls for the education of children and adolescents to be respectful of the child's unique family situation, culture, language, values and country and to also respect different civilizations. The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) clarifies that children's education should "be directed to a wide range of values […] and the recognition of the need for a balanced approach which aims to reconcile diverse values through dialogue and respect for difference" (CRC, 2001: p.2-3). Further, the Committee recognizes the unique role that children can play in "bridging differences that have historically separated groups of people" (CRC, 2001: p.3).

Respect for diversity and the four dimensions of learning

Cognitive dimension: Learning to know

Respect for diversity is essential for equitable and inclusive education, helping to prevent discrimination and violence and to promote a positive environment that leads to better learning processes and outcomes.

In education settings, respect for diversity can be developed by building life skills to deconstruct stereotypes and listen respectfully to others. Because it leads to the testing of assumptions, respect for diversity enhances meta-cognitive skills.

Key characteristics of teachers willing to adopt a methodology that enhances respect for diversity include training in rights and responsibilities; an interdisciplinary awareness of historical and

contemporary affairs; a commitment to and skills in enquiry-based and experiential learning; and confidence in addressing controversial issues.

Respect for diversity is a topic in global citizenship education (GCED), which includes age-appropriate values and skills that enable individuals to: (1) live together peacefully; (2) recognize diverse identities; and (3) actively engage in promoting values of peaceful coexistence.

Instrumental dimension: Learning to do

Respect for diversity is an essential skill for cooperation and teamwork in the world of work. Diverse teams in the workplace tend to be both more creative and more innovative – important assets in the knowledge economy.

In the workplace, respect for diversity includes accepting various levels of competency as well as differences in gender, ethnicity or religion. Respect for diversity can prevent discriminatory practices, encourage respect among employees, reduce conflict in the workplace and increase productivity.

Individual dimension: Learning to be

Central to the individual dimension, respect for diversity is a fundamental part of human development, allowing people to test assumptions and to function in complex societies. Respect for diversity is based on healthy self-esteem, which is developed first; self-esteem and self-management skills create the foundation for respecting others in cases of disagreement.

Respect for others explains many interpersonal behaviours. Trusting that others are acting on goodwill, helping people, and avoiding confrontation are all behaviours that may actually be in conflict with an individual's underlying preferences. Respect for diversity is thus a regulating behaviour; it is often based on a moral sense of what we think we should do, rather than on what we want to do.

Social dimension: Learning to live together

A thriving society is based on a behavioural code that "tempers self-interest, and promotes instead coordinated, cooperative, and self-sacrificing action among its members" (Dunning, Fetchenhauer and Schlösseret, 2016). Respect for diversity achieves this, by setting the stage for pluralism and democratic practices. It leads to social cohesion through respectful interaction, communication and ethical social behaviours.

Because respect for diversity inhibits aggression, this skill plays a key role in conflict management by promoting reconciliation as well as consideration of others with opposing views as equal participants. Long-term reconciliation processes therefore include specific strategies to recognize diversity.

In some contexts, respect for diversity remains elusive, and various groups – for example, socio-economically marginalized populations – are excluded. In these cases, the education system should consider a new (or renewed) emphasis on teaching, at an early age, the values that underpin this important social dimension skill.

11. Empathy

Empathy is a skill central to emotionally intelligent behaviour, playing a positive role in relationships, conflict management and conflict resolution across settings. It can be defined as the **ability to comprehend another's feelings and to re-experience them oneself without judgement**.

A key concept in developmental psychology and cognitive and social neuroscience, empathy involves the internalization of rules that protect others and motivates altruistic behaviour, paving the way for moral reasoning.

The development of empathy is explained through various factors, including genetics, brain development, temperament and socialization.

Empathy develops in humans early and rapidly; it is possibly a prosocial personality trait in children and adolescents, and it can develop further throughout adulthood. Because this skill is developed at an early age, parenting skills, empathy training, and classroom strategies all play an important role in its development. Social competence, meaningful relationships and successful learning are all related to empathy.

By encouraging collaboration, solidarity, and safe behaviours towards the environment, empathy can be an important aspect in promoting sustainable development.

Empathy and the four dimensions of learning

Scholars identify four outcomes associated with empathy that are key to the four dimensions of learning:

1. internalization of rules: learning right from wrong through the ability to empathize with others
2. prosocial and altruistic behaviour: with empathy as a precursor
3. social competence: shown in children and adolescents with higher levels of empathy
4. relationship quality: based on the ability to empathize and higher levels of conflict resolution skills.

Cognitive dimension: Learning to know

Empathy development is a blend of emotion, cognition and memory, and is a fundamental skill in academic success. Empathy leads to social and emotional learning, which promotes emotional perception skills, a stronger sense of self, and the ability to connect with others.

Emotional regulation is considered a 'macro-component' of empathy, and along with motivation, it is a core factor in academic achievement. Research shows that emotional regulation is truly relevant to cognition. In education programmes designed to foster empathy in young children, cognitive benefits include better collaborative critical thinking and the ability to make independent decisions.

Instrumental dimension: Learning to do

Students with good job skills and poor social-emotional skills may manage to get a job, but they may have difficulty keeping it or being promoted. Empathy plays out in attitudes that are valuable for businesses, for example, in nurturing a culture of service and in prioritizing the customer's needs. Empathy also plays an important role in building solid and authentic professional relationships.

Empathic leaders have more business success because they are better able to adapt and to capitalize on the strengths of their workforce. By showing a deep respect for co-workers, rather than simply enforcing rules and regulations, empathic leaders create loyal teams with high morale, resulting in increased productivity.

Individual dimension: Learning to be

Central to emotional literacy, empathy is at the root of social perception and smooth social interactions. Because humans are social by nature, a good part of the brain is devoted to understanding one's own emotions and the emotions of others.

Managing the so-called 'moral' emotions, for example, shame or guilt, requires internalization of the norms and moral principles shared by the community. These emotions come from social interactions that have, whether explicitly or implicitly, established ideal behaviours.

Social development – that is, learning how to form relationships – also depends to a great extent on the ability to perceive and understand others' emotions.

Social dimension: Learning to live together

An essential transferable skill, empathy plays a profound role in functioning human relationships and in citizen education.

Because empathy motivates altruism, it leads to better social cohesion through collaboration and solidarity. Related to respect for diversity, empathy enables recognition of people's common humanity and promotes active tolerance.

Empathy is also important in conflict management and resolution and in conflict situations, enhancing the realization of rights. For example, adults with empathy skills can provide a safe emotional space for children to exercise their right to be heard and understood.

Research on bullying shows a marked lack of empathy in bullies. An education that fosters empathy is essential to nurture mutual respect and encourage co-responsibility.

Empathy skills in the social dimension can also result in care for future generations, leading to safe behaviours and actions towards the environment.

12. Participation

In its most basic sense, **participation** can be defined as **partaking in and influencing processes, decisions and activities**. It is an act of empowerment in relation to both an individual and a community because individuals who participate often exercise human rights by contributing to democratic society.

Participation is widely recognized in human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which includes the right to participate in government and free elections, in the cultural life of the community, in peaceful assembly and association, and in trade unions.

Participation signals that opinions and ideas are valued, giving children and adolescents a sense of control and involvement in their school life, both to exercise their rights and achieve more. More importantly, children and adolescents who participate show higher self-esteem, better social relationships, and contribute more to a healthy school environment where learning is a shared responsibility.

Participation is enshrined as a guiding principle in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children and adolescents have the right to be heard in decisions that affect them, to express themselves freely, to share and receive information, and to participate as citizens and agents of change.

Participation and the four dimensions of learning

Cognitive dimension: Learning to know

Participation is an essential skill acquired early in life, often in school. Effective participation is important for learning outcomes and for quality teaching and learning. Active and experiential learning are based on participation; both styles of learning promote equity and employ social skills such as cooperation, sharing, helping, communication, empathy, friendliness and kindness.

The skill of participation equips learners with the ability to launch and engage in actions, encouraging student leadership. Participation also improves student–teacher relationships and improves the classroom environment by raising awareness of various learning styles and alternative ways of learning.

Instrumental dimension: Learning to do

Worker participation, a component of healthy workplaces, is recognized in various declarations and frameworks. Worker participation leads to improved worker health through active involvement in the control of work, input into decisions, and empowerment. It can be encouraged by employers and can lead to greater job satisfaction and productivity.

In the workplace, participation in decision-making is particularly important, as evidence shows that a lack of such opportunities represents one of the greatest risks to workers' health.

A rights-based approach to worker participation is founded on a fair and just relationship between worker and employer, which includes freedom from coercion; job security and safety; a fair income and benefits; and dignity and respect. This complements the International Labour Organization concept of 'decent work' based on ethics, human rights, labour standards and environmental protection.

Individual dimension: Learning to be

Effective participation is important in the individual dimension for empowerment and self-efficacy. Because participation is about social connection, it contributes to individual general well-being.

All people, including children and youth, can participate in various capacities; participation is learned through practice, not endowed at a certain age. Participation can support maturity and growth by way of a virtuous circle: meaningful participation leads to more experience and confidence, in turn leading to more effective participation.

Social dimension: Learning to live together

Paulo Freire's vision of praxis urges people to act or participate in building democratic citizenship by questioning the status quo in the hope of change. This place the skill of participation at the core of citizenship education.

In the social dimension, participation is about taking an active role in improving society in the political context, in the community, and in other aspects of civic life, including sustainable development. Communication skills, along with critical thinking skills, are key to the ability to fully participate in civic and political life. When voices are heard, decision makers are influenced and changes take place, allowing individuals to take charge of their lives.

Bibliography

Bárcena, Alicia, 'Cambios demográficos en América Latina: Una ventana de oportunidad', *América Economía*, 1 July 2011.

Bassi, Marina, et al., *Disconnected: Skills, education, and employment in Latin America*, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, D. C., 2011.

Berniell, Lucila, et al., *More Skills for Work and Life: The contributions of families, schools, jobs, and the social environment*, Corporación Andina de Fomento, Bogota, 2017.

Bos, María Soledad, et al., *Latin America and the Caribbean in PISA 2015: How did the region perform?*, Inter-American Development Bank, n.p., 2016.

Busso, Matias, et al., 'The Effects of Financial Aid and Returns Information in Selective and Less Selective Schools: Experimental evidence from Chile', *Labour Economics*, vol. 45, April 2017, pp. 79–91.

Cavallo, Eduardo A., and Andrew Powell, *2018 Latin American and Caribbean Macroeconomic Report: A mandate to grow*, Inter-American Development Bank, n.p., 2018.

Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 1, Article 29 (1): The Aims of Education, CRC/GC/2001/1, n.p, 17 April 2001.

Delors, Jacques, et al., *Learning: The treasure within – Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century*, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris, 1996.

Duda-Nyczak, Marta, 'Cambio demográfico en América Latina y el Caribe: Dinámica y desafíos para la región', PowerPoint presentation given at Seminario 70 años de la CEPAL: Planificación para el desarrollo con visión de futuro, Santiago, Chile, 22 October 2018.

Dunning, David, Detlef Fetchenhauer and Thomas Schlösseret, 'The Psychology of Respect: A Case Study of How Behavioral Norms Regulate Human Action', Advances in Motivation Science, vol. 3, 2016, pp. 1-34.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, *Social Panorama of Latin America 2017*, United Nations, Santiago, Chile, 2018.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and International Labour Organization, *The Employment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean: Challenges and innovations in labour training*, United Nations and ILO, Santiago, Chile, 2013.

Fundo das Nações Unidas para a Infância, *Compêtencias para a vida: Trilhando Caminhos de cidadania*, UNICEF, Brasilia, 2018.

Heckman, James J., Jora Stixrud and Sergio Urzua, 'The Effects of Cognitive and Noncognitive Abilities on Labor Market Outcomes and Social Behavior', *Journal of Labor Economics*, vol. 24, no. 3, July 2006, pp. 411–482.

Jones, Stephanie, et al., 'What Is the Same and What Is Different? Making sense of the "non-cognitive" domain: Helping educators translate research into practice', Ecological Approaches to Social Emotional Learning (EASEL) Laboratory at Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA, 10 May 2016.

Kautz, Tim, et al., 'Fostering and Measuring Skills: Improving cognitive and non-cognitive skills to promote lifetime success', NBER Working Paper No. 20749, National Bureau of Economic Research, December 2014.

Maxwell, Nan L., 'Smoothing the Transition from School to Work: Building job skills for a local labor market', ch. 8 in *Improving School-to-work Transitions*, edited by David Neumark, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 2007, pp. 247–282.

Novella, Rafael, et al., eds., *Millennials in Latin America and the Caribbean: To work or study?*, Inter-American Development Bank, n.p., 2018.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, n.p., 2013.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *OECD Work on Education and Skills*, OECD, Paris, 2019.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 'PISA for Development: Results in focus', PISA in Focus, No. 91, OECD, Paris, 2018.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and Corporación Andina de Fomento, *Latin American Economic Outlook 2017: Youth, skills and entrepreneurship*, OECD, ECLAC and CAF, Paris, 2016.

Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura, *¿Qué se espera que aprendan los estudiantes de América Latina y el Caribe? Análisis curricular del Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo (ERCE 2019)*, OREALC/UNESCO Santiago, Santiago, Chile, 2020.

Raffe, David, 'Cross-national Differences in Education–work Transitions', ch. 22 in *The Oxford Handbook of Lifelong Learning*, edited by Manuel London, Oxford University Press, New York, 2011, pp. 312–328.

UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 'Data: Poverty headcount ratio at $1.90 a day', **<http://data.uis.unesco.org>**, accessed 23 December 2019.

United Nations Children's Fund, *Every Child Learns: UNICEF Education Strategy 2019–2030*, UNICEF, New York, 2019.

United Nations Children's Fund, *Global Framework on Transferable Skills*, UNICEF, New York, 2019.

United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, E/ICEF/2017/17/Rev.1, New York, 16 August 2017.

United Nations Children's Fund, *Reimagining Life Skills and Citizenship Education in the Middle East and North Africa: A four-dimensional and systems approach to 21st century skills – Conceptual and Programmatic Framework*, UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office, Amman, 2017.

Endnotes

i. The 18 countries were: Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, *Social Panorama of Latin America 2017*, ECLAC, Santiago, Chile, 2018, p. 83.

ii. Approximately 20 per cent of girls and young women aged 15–19 years are pregnant or have been a mother, and in the case of low-income youth, this figure rises to almost 35 per cent. A study conducted in 12 LAC countries revealed that 15 per cent of respondents had had children during adolescence and that "those who were parents early show a greater probability of being outside the educational system, work or not."

iii. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) defines the 'demographic dividend' as a shift in the age structure of a population, specifically such that there are more working age people (aged 15–64 years) and fewer non-working age people (under 15 years of age and aged 65 years and above). More workers than dependants create an economic boost.

iv. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a test led by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for member and non-member countries, which evaluates education systems by measuring the abilities of 15-year-old students in the areas of mathematics, science and reading. This discussion paper refers to the results of PISA 2015. The Programme for International Student Assessment for Development seeks to encourage and facilitate participation in PISA among low- and middle-income countries. Seven such countries participated in PISA-D 2018: Cambodia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay, Senegal and Zambia.

v. The 10 participating LAC countries were the OECD countries Chile and Mexico, along with partner countries Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay.

vi. The study is the fourth Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo; ERCE) developed by the Latin American Laboratory for the Evaluation of the Quality of Education, UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean. The 19 LAC countries participating in ERCE 2019 were Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. While the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was part of the curriculum analysis study, it did not participate in the ERCE assessment itself. Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura and Oficina Regional de Educación para América Latina y el Caribe, *¿Qué se espera que aprendan los estudiantes de América Latina y el Caribe? Análisis curricular del Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo* (ERCE 2019), OREALC/UNESCO Santiago, Santiago, Chile, 2020.

vii. The International Civic and Citizenship Education Study is the only international study dedicated to civic and citizenship education. It investigates the ways in which Grade 8 students prepare to assume their roles as citizens in a world of changing contexts in terms of democracy and civic participation, by examining their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. In addition, the study collects data on civic and citizenship education in the curriculum, teacher qualifications and experiences, teaching practices, the school environment and climate, and support at home and in the community. The study was first implemented in 2009 with a follow-up in 2016 and another set to be in progress by 2022.

viii. The ERCE 2019 assessment was applied in Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

ix. The examples of transferable skills measurement in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru were obtained from presentations made at the International Seminar on Measurement and Development of Socio-Emotional Skills, Peru, 26 September 2018.

x. The policy was previously known as Personal and Social Development: Other indicators of educational quality (Desarrollo Personal y Social: Otros indicadores de calidad educativa).

Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office
Building 102, Alberto Tejada Ave
City of Knowledge
Panama, Republic of Panama
P.O. Box: 0843-03045
Telephone: +507 301-7400
www.unicef.org
Twitter: @uniceflac
Facebook: /UnicefLac

unicef
for every child
75