Submission for Open-ended intergovernmental working group on an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child
FOCUS ON QUALITY SECONDARY EDUCATION

MANY DEVELOPING (AND DEVELOPED) COUNTRIES HAVE POOR PARTICIPATION, RETENTION AND COMPLETION RATES AT SECONDARY SCHOOL DUE TO:

1. Traditional curriculum promoting teacher centric classrooms and rote learning.
2. Difficulty in training and retaining qualified teachers, filling rural and remote teaching positions, and providing quality multimodal professional learning (CPD).
3. Lack of technology and inability to leverage technology for distance learning and educational resource sharing to overcome geographic barriers.
4. Limited local institutions and insufficient scholarships for study abroad.
5. Insufficient post school pathways for further training and vocational education.
6. Financial constraints in low SES communities and family responsibilities in rural and working communities.
7. Extreme weather events linked to climate change threatening school infrastructure, student safety and continuity of teaching and learning in some coastal and island nation communities.

SOME STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN PUBLIC SECONDARY EDUCATION INCLUDE:

CURRICULUM

- Enhance the relevance and contemporary nature of the curriculum, with internationally comparable standards based on international benchmarking.
- Integrate both cross-curriculum skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and technological literacy, core academic subjects as well as local culture and knowledge, to strengthen students' identity and their skills to navigate a globalised society.
- Establish processes for engagement and consultation of stakeholders including educators, community leaders, and cultural experts to revise the curriculum, ensuring it is aligned with both global standards and local needs.
- Enable teachers to use a flexible, contemporary curriculum to develop their own lesson plans that blend local knowledge, traditional skills, and vocational training with modern subject knowledge making education more relevant and engaging to students and better preparing them for the modern workforce.
- Create an open-source, multilingual flexible digital curriculum with resources to ensure consistency in teaching standards and offer an affordable alternative to physical textbooks.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- Invest in building and expanding local universities and vocational institutions and foster partnerships with local industries for apprenticeship and training opportunities.
- Reduce financial barriers to education, the high costs of studying abroad, and the brain drain, by increasing the number of scholarships available for students to attend tertiary education institutions, both domestically and internationally, or through distance learning.
- Expand and improve vocational training opportunities to align education with local and global job markets, addressing gaps in skills needed by introducing more vocational programs that teach practical, hands-on skills to students.

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TEACHER TRAINING AND CPD

- Teacher training and CPD programs should be aligned to curriculum and policy expectations and include a contemporary focus on assessment and pedagogy, on subject area content and transversal skills.
- Develop specialised training tailored to local contexts, incorporating cultural relevance and local languages into the curriculum. For example, bilingual instruction requires skilled teachers, appropriate resources, and a curriculum that effectively balances both languages.
- Attract and retain qualified teachers, particularly in remote and underserved areas, with incentives such as scholarships, competitive salaries, housing benefits, and career development opportunities.
- Facilitate teacher exchange programs to allow educators to share best practices and improve teaching standards and share curriculum resources and teaching strategies.
- Standardise teacher training and certification; and offer accredited tertiary courses and qualifications, training and mentorship programs.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Upgrade school facilities, improve physical facilities and learning environments, and build new schools in places where there is overcrowding.
- Continue partnerships between governments, private companies, and international organisations to fund infrastructure projects, ensuring modern facilities and technology are accessible to all schools.

TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL RESOURCES

- Ensure internet and high-speed broadband access to all communities and schools.
- Expand access to online platforms and digital learning tools and platforms improving access to distance learning and quality instruction as part of a blended learning model to address geographic isolation especially in areas with limited access to physical school buildings.
- Create a centralised hub for educational resources, including digital platforms, textbooks, and teaching materials, to share, develop and curate resources efficiently.
- Train teachers in digital literacy and integrate technology into teaching practices via e-learning platforms or satellites, where teachers can deliver online lessons (both synchronous and asynchronous) to students as part of a blended approach.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE

- Develop climate-resilient education infrastructure e.g. climate-proofing strategies in school construction and renovation projects to withstand natural disasters, and ensure schools are better prepared for natural disasters like floods, cyclones, and rising sea levels.
- Develop contingency plans for continuing education during extreme weather events or crises, such as implementing flexible learning systems, temporary mobile classrooms, or satellite-based education programs to reach more remote and isolated communities.
- Incorporate climate change, renewable energy solutions and sustainability into the curriculum, teaching programs and teacher training.

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