

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WEBINAR

HOW SHOULD WE ASSESS CHILDREN'S LEARNING
IN THE COVID ERA?

Washington, D.C.

Wednesday, October 20, 2021

PARTICIPANTS:

Moderator:

REBECCA WINTHROP
Senior Fellow and Co-Director, Center for Universal Education
The Brookings Institution

Panelists:

ESTHER CARE
Professional Fellow
University of Melbourne

JAVIER GONZÁLEZ
Director, SUMMA
Affiliated Lecturer, University of Cambridge

HORACIO ALVAREZ MARINELLI
Senior Education Specialist
Inter-American Development Bank

URVASHI SAHNI
Nonresident Fellow, Center for Universal Education
The Brookings Institution

* * * * *

P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. WINTHROP: Good morning, good afternoon, good evening. Thanks for everybody who has joined us today for this assessment -- for this event on assessment in the COVID era. There is a lot to talk about. Obviously, with education disruption all over the world, over the last year and a half, coming upon two years, not only are there questions about what should education systems do to support students learning in this time, but how should they assess learning?

There were hot debates before COVID hit on how to assess learning, debates around academic versus 21st century skills, debates around large scale summative assessments to assess system level diagnoses versus formative assessment, to really help improve teaching practices, getting the balance right between those. We have been doing work over the last several years, led by my colleague, Esther Care, on -- with many partners, including the Global Partnership for Education and others, around the world, from our Optimizing Assessment Above All work, and this is the first in a series just to build on the reflections we've had from that work, over the years, for this unique moment in time.

I am going to be taking audience questions. I'm Rebecca Winthrop, from the Center for Universal Education. I'll be your moderator today. You can tweet them at #21CSAssessment, and thanks to all of you, who have already sent in questions. We've got lots and lots of questions coming in, beforehand. And I am really pleased to be joined by a wonderful panel. I'm very grateful for their time.

As I already said, my colleague, Esther Care, who is a nonresident senior fellow with us, at the Center for Universal Education at Brookings. She's also a professional fellow at the University of Melbourne. I'm also very pleased to have Horacio Alvarez Marinelli join us, who is a senior education specialist at the Inter-American Development Bank, really, based in Panama at the moment, and leading work there, in that country, and Javier Gonzalez, who is director of SUMMA and also a lecturer at the University of Cambridge, will be joining us, and, last, by no means least, Urvashi Sahni, my other CUE at Brookings colleague, who is a nonresident fellow with us, and also the CEO and founder of the Study Health Foundation in India. So, all of you please come to the screen, welcome, thank you so much for joining us. Thank you. Horacio, Urvashi, Javier, please put your videos on Esther too. Let's see.

So, the first question that I wanted to pose to all of you was really to help lay the -- set the scene for the audience. And it's really around, you know, what -- how are countries thinking about

assessments right now, countries or jurisdictions that you work with, and what are some of the debates and trends that you are finding? Esther let's start with you.

MS. CARE: Fine, thank you, and hello. Hello to everybody. Good evening, good afternoon, good morning. I think the thing for me, about assessment in this particular climate, is that we can't talk about assessment as though there is just one solution, though we can talk about all the different functions of assessment. As Rebecca just mentioned, we can talk about summative and formative, but we really need to focus on what is needed right now. What do we need to assess under the pandemic conditions, and where do the data fall? You know, in principle, of course, assessment targets should always reflect what is being taught. So, what is being taught now, that might be different from pre-pandemic? Is it different? And in some cases, yes, it is different. What we're seeing is, we're seeing streamlining of curricula to focus on essential learning competencies.

In the Philippines, for example, I know, that something like 60 percent of the learning competencies identified throughout the curriculum have been put aside, so that the country can focus on what is most essential. And the intended focus of those sort of competencies are what's required for the students to be able to continue on, to next grades and ultimately a successful life. So, at least aspirationally, it's about research skills, it's about reading comprehension, it's writing, it's map reading, it's hypothesizing. And they're presumed to be the competencies, that we can't always learn outside of the school.

Whether that intention is actually reflected in the modified materials that are being provided to students is another question, and whether the assessment is aligned with those new approaches to learning is another question. And in my experience, assessment approaches seem to be remaining, in the main, precisely as they were. They're focusing on rote learning and the minutiae eye of sort metalinguistics, and equations, and so on. And so, we need to be thinking about what is that capacity to align assessments with what is being taught.

And we got three things that impact on that. We've got the infrastructure resources. So, what is the availability of useful assessments, and what are the delivery modes that are possible? We've issues of teacher expertise. Do they know how to develop assessments that link with the way we're being -- we're teaching now, and the materials that we're teaching. And in terms of student and parent

engagement, what's happening there? Because they've been used to a very different medium. How do they suddenly shift and start thinking about learning in a different way, particularly because they don't have the guidance of teachers face-to-face.

So, before we move on, I actually just wanted to make one more thing clear. I think we're sort of talking broadly about four different teaching and learning conditions. We're talking about face-to-face. Some countries are still doing that, have done that, on and off. We're talking about distance learning, that might be enabled by really lovely technologies and infrastructures, so that there can be online synchronous learning.

There can be distance learning, that is enabled by tv, radio, chat, and SMS, and there can be distance learning that is enabled by hardcopy materials. And if you think about each of those four, what we're talking about is we're moving further and further away from teacher interaction and teacher supported learning. So, what do each of those four conditions mean for assessment? And so, that's something that I very much like to explore and understand more about. Thank you, Rebecca.

MS. WINTHROP: Thank you, Esther. That was a great sort of meta-global picture of sort key themes and context, which you do always so beautifully, that we need to think about, and also really bringing up, which I know you always do in our conversations, the need for nuance and diversity, when we think about our approaches.

Javier, can I turn to you now? I'd love to hear your take, from sort of a Latin America perspective. Where is Latin America in all of this? What are you seeing? And are you seeing what Esther is talking about? Do you see different things?

MR. GONZALEZ: Definitely. Thank you so much for the invitation, first of all, and this is a very important topic for the region and for the world, indeed. And we're seeing, from SUMMA and working with governments, a lot of movement, in terms of assessment and different trends. And I think, for maybe the non-specialists, maybe to build on what Esther was saying. We have definitely distinguished between the summative, at least summative and the formative assessments.

The summative is to verify, basically, what students are learning. The formative is somehow to provide feedback for teachers and, of course, for students. So, one, I would say, is assessing of learning, and the other one, I would say, it's assessing for learning. In that sense, let me

maybe distinguish between these two trends.

In regard to summative assessment, what we see, basically, three trends, that I would like to point out. One is that we see a consolidation of national institutions of educational evaluation in the region. We have (inaudible) in Colombia, we have an eval in Ecuador, we have in it in Uruguay, et cetera. So, in the last 15 years, at least, or even 20 in some countries, we have seen a progressive and quite strong move towards summative assessment. And, of course, we think this is important because, of course, it allows, as governments especially, to better channel support and better channel to know their weaknesses.

Now, the interesting thing is, in the second trend, is that we see, throughout the region, a more profound understanding of summative assessment. And many of them allow to go into one of the main challenges of Latin America, which is inclusion and inequality. So, assessments, today, allow to distinguish what are the outcomes and the results for different types of students, for example, to the -- gender differences, to the ethnic backgrounds, such as, for example, Colombia, Ecuador, and Mexico. They include these kind of gaps, socioeconomic backgrounds in most of the countries, but especially Colombia, Brazil, and Mexico.

So, first is the consolidation, then the deepening of these kind of instruments that I think is -- that are very important. And, thirdly, the use of these instruments for accountability, something that has been suspended, in many cases, which I think it's -- and, again, it's something different that's happening now because of the pandemic. Many of these have been suspended. And, again, in this case, in the region, I think, and I would like to point out, at least from my opinion, this is a more kind of a negative trend, is that until now, assessment -- some of the other assessment has been used for accountability to pressure, really, schools to perform, regardless, sometimes, of their context and the poverty, the material poverty, of the context. So, in that sense, we have to grow much more and balance this summative assessment with more support for schools. So, that's on the summative part.

And let me be very quick on the formative assessment. I think, during the pandemic, we have seen a very virtuous and positive trend towards formative assessment, which, of course, is very important because, well, actually, as evidence shows, one of the most important practices actually stop this feedback and formative assessment.

It can provide up to five months, equivalent of five months, improvement in a location. And so, we see this, and, I mean, I want to put out the example of Colombia in the case of (inaudible). In the case of Chile, we have, as well in this country, two tools of more kind of formative assessment. One is called the progressive assessment, which is two times in a year. So, it allows -- but it's more of a centralized system. And then there's also a decentralized system for formative assessment.

Now, just to finish with the Latin American context, I would just like to point out that although we're moving in a correct direction, in the proper direction of moving towards more formative assessment, there are, of course, certain barriers of the region, that make it, maybe, more unique then, that we have to be very -- I mean, we have to be very cautious. One barrier has to do with material conditions. And I want to point out, for an example, for example, in the case of Argentina, 45 percent of teachers, teaching three or more schools. And that is definitely a barrier for providing good feedback to students, if you're, of course, working with many students, in three or more schools.

The second condition is the non-lecturing time. We see, in many countries, teachers just don't have enough non-lecturing time. That means very little time to really prepare classes, and, of course, to assess and provide feedback. In the case -- for example, in the case of Chile, the last reforms have moved from 25 percent of the non-lecturing -- of the whole contract for non-lecturing time to 35 or even 40 percent, in the case of the poorest. And then, finally, just to mention, and as I was saying, the importance of teacher training. Teachers have not been really trained to provide really fine formative assessment, and that's something that we have to really look in detail. Thank you.

MS. WINTHROP: Great. Thank you, Javier. Horacio, I want to come to you because you are based in Panama. You know Latin America very well. What do you -- what would you want to add to what Javier said? What are you seeing in Panama and/or if you're, you know, also thinking about other countries you specifically worked in? And I also wanted to ask you about this summative versus formative assessment. I know you have strong opinions. Where are you coming out on it?

MR. ALVAREZ AMRINELLI: Okay, so, yeah, we've seen it like, Javier said, a trend all over Latin America, in the last few years, to have a summative assessment and institutions that are dedicated to evaluating education quality. However, I think Esther pointed it out, that, at some point, these institutions were made -- attempting to assess the quality of the system, but the feedback for the

providers, feedback for teachers, for schools has been lagging behind. So, as I mentioned in a previous conversation with you, for example, we did national testing here in third grade in Panama, and it has taken us four years to get back the results to teachers.

Same case in Colombia, where the results of the assessments take between one to two years to return back to the schools, even though, at some point, they were made -- they were individualized tests. So, that type of logistics, the logistical part, like Javier mentioned, we have so many challenges in the region to do this in a way that impacts, directly, the children that we are serving, at that point, when we do those national assessments and such exercises.

I would say that in this point and time, where we are right now, and Javier mentioned it, and I think Esther also did, is we need to strength teachers' abilities to do formative assessments, to know where their students are, when they come back to face-to-face learning. Here in Panama, for example, kids have been almost out of school for two years. They left in March 2020, and this -- today, I would say more than 50 percent of the students are not yet in school or are not receiving regular in-class schooling.

So, we need to give the teachers the instruments to assess. Now, I would go further and say we need to give them the instruments to teach because, as you know, prior to the pandemic, we had half of children in Latin America didn't understand the simple paragraph in third grade. So, this is half of the children, and when you look at it from -- in terms of the quintiles, the differences between the lowest 20 percent and the highest 20 percent is really, really high.

You have some countries where 90 percent of poor children do not know how to read in third grade. That means we have a problem of instruction, of schooling, of how the teacher, you know, does what they do. So, they will have a problem with assessment. So, at the same time, when we do, you know, formative assessment and we develop these tools for teachers to learn to assess better, we also need to give them structured materials, which has been proven, all over the world, to work, structured materials for teachers that probably have not been trained very well, in their initial training process. So, I would add that, we don't only have a problem with assessment, we have a problem with instruction. And we've had it for a long time, and the pandemic caught on to us, and now we are in a probably much worse situation than we were before.

MS. WINTHROP: Okay, great. I wanted to push you -- could I just come back to you in a minute here, on this structured assessment, structured instruction -- scaffolding teachers, structure lessons planned, et cetera. There is a lot of debate about that, an argument, particularly from teachers, who say, look, you know, this is very stifling. It's stifling my creativity. You're supposed to be able to be responsive to teacher -- to your students' needs, and, you know, I wanted to see what you -- what your reaction is. What's your reaction to that, Horacio?

MR. ALVAREZ AMRINELLI: Well, it is true, in some cases. But not all teachers are expert teachers. And as in Latin America, and I think we've talked about this before, as you have, also, very heterogeneous situations in the classroom, with different types of students in the classroom. You also have a very heterogeneous assignment of teachers because of how our systems work and how we deploy teachers around countries.

For example, a teacher in Bogota, Colombia, you know, where 25 or 30 percent of the teachers that are in school have doctorates or master's degrees. It is very different from a teacher in Kakitangan (phonetic), Naraoka (phonetic), and what -- it's called the (inaudible) that's in Colombia or in Cartagena, who sometimes just went to a normal school, or who went to normal schools on the weekend plan, you know, they studied Saturday and Sunday, on Saturday, and Sunday's, and Friday's, and that's how they got their teaching degree.

So, it a very -- we have to think that teachers are not the same all over the place, that we -- if we prepared these materials, some might not want to use them, but, to many, it is a really good resource for improving their performance with students, which is what, in the end, we want, and, you know, what we did with Let's All Learn to Read, (inaudible), which is this program that we did in Colombia, is we took like a, I would say, quote, unquote -- I'm sorry, my dog -- a balanced approach for instruction, where we gave structured materials to teachers, with some leeway. But they had the resources, to be -- to teach, for example, in this case, early literacy. So, some might not use them, but many, many will, and will find it useful for this.

And another point I wanted to make but has more related to assessment. We cannot develop all these, and I understand, we need national assessments to see how the systems are performing. But I would say -- mention the case of Colombia. You have a National Assessment Policy, but you don't have a textbook distribution policy. So, how do teachers do this? They

don't have textbooks. You go into a classroom, and depending on the classroom, even in the same school, you might find an early reading instruction, a teacher with three different textbooks, trying to teach children to read, from three different guidebooks. How do they do this? We think they're super teachers, you know, they're heroes for doing this. But, you know, we can't have a National Assessment Policy, when we don't have a National Textbook Policy, to support teachers.

MS. WINTHROP: Point well taken, and I think you, too, are also really pulling out what Esther laid out, around the need to have a really nuanced view of this. So, you know, scaffolding might be exactly what's needed in structured guidance for new and inexperienced teachers, as long as those who are much more high skilled, don't -- aren't forced to use it, I think, is what you're saying.

Urvashi, let's come to you. Tell us about India. What is happening in India, and also, you know, on the ground. You are very much on the ground, with your organization, Study Hall Foundation. So, yeah, tell us what's going on and what your thoughts are of what's -- what are the strengths and weaknesses of the approach?

MS. SAHNI: Okay. So, first of all, thank you for inviting me. Yes, I'm glad you asked about what -- about the country level and what's happening on the ground because I'll echo what Esther said, that there are policies and then there's what's happening on the ground.

So, in terms of policy, but, first of all, India, you know, is very diverse, very complex. We have the government school system, where 55 percent of our students go and the private school system, 25 percent of them go there, but, in terms of schools, 72 percent of the schools are government schools, and the rest are private schools.

So, and then we have states, and then we have center. So, we have state boards, and we assessment boards, and curriculum boards, and then we have central boards. The central boards, so, let me talk about the central board, which is the central board of secondary education, and it's considered a very progressive board, and, well, it actually is, in terms of the policy.

So, what we have done, during COVID, of course, everything went berserk. We have some summative assessments and formative assessments, according to CVSA, though summative assessments have a higher point, and formative assessments have a lower point. And those are meant just to track children, the internal exams, and a lot of schools just fudge them, the mark, so that the

summative becomes bigger, and it's only 20 percent of the weightage put into that.

So, what happened these last two years, in '21, is that there were no assessments. They took, in fact, class 10, class 11, and the pre-board marks, and I'm just talking about secondary because those were considered. As for the others, there were no assessments at all, and they were just promoted, two grades, by the way, with no assessment at all, and in many cases, no teaching at all because the internet penetrated only 24 percent, in the country, or there was tv broadcasting, et cetera, but no assessment, and I'm talking about the broader system, yeah.

Of course, schools like ours and foundations, we did do that, but I'll come to that a little later. So, there were no assessments that for these, they gave 50 percent weightage to class 10 because that's a summative board exam again. Class 11 was 40 percent, and class 12 was the pre-board exam, which is 10 percent. And they took a cumulative of that, they moderated them, and then they came out with a list which were used for college entrances, which is why those are really so important.

Let me tell you the policy, though. What CSBE did was, that even, you know, we had the National Education Policy come up just very recently, in 2020. That has a huge focus on higher order thinking skills. They're even dialing back the curriculum, and CBSE sent out this notice to all our schools, saying that we must emphasize higher order thinking skills and not rote memorization. Assessments must look at, and I'm going to read verbatim, by the way, that there will be a greater number of competency-based questions, the questions that assess the application of concepts in real life, unfamiliar situations in the question paper, and there will be art integrated projects, and that we will be looking at higher order select analysis (inaudible) and assessments will be targeted towards that.

Of course, to echo what Horatio and Javier said, that, and Esther, that there's very little teacher preparation for that, for teaching of these skills, right, even though there might be papers. There's very little, and I'm talking, again, about the larger country level policy. So, what has happened with schools? So, that is all up in the air, right? Now, what has happened there's huge learning gaps, huge learning gaps because, as I told you, in much of the country there was no teaching.

So, people are just struggling with how to bridge those gaps, and like you said, Horatio, they haven't come up with any tests, and they've left it to teachers' creativity that, okay, test them, and then bridge the gaps. Okay, right, and so, we are of schools like ours that have been used to doing

formative assessments, that have been used to working with higher order (inaudible) and working with our students continuously. We find it easier to make that transition, and plus we're testing it, we are just putting the curriculum away, for the time being, and saying, no, we'll just focus on taking the kids from where they are and moving them along.

In terms of what we have been doing as an organization, during this time, we, of course, have been working with online teaching and connecting students wherever they could. What the teachers have done on their own is that they've been using formative assessments, and they've all been calling them practice tests. To your point, Horacio, some creative teachers, look how good they are, and then they said, and then we have unit tests, which is our short-term summative, and, of course, they've done no annual summation. They said, no, we can't do that, we just haven't taught them enough to do that, and they have so many things going on that they can't do that. What they've also been doing, and we did that even before this, you know, we had gender education as part of our curriculum. So, with every test, they have included a question about gender to test what they learned during our critical dialogues, and they marked that, and they included it as part of their summative assessment, as well.

Now, of course, parents in this -- during this time, like you mentioned Rebecca, once, that even though when you ask them, they want all these wonderful things for their kids. But when they test them, all they're looking at is do they know how to read, write, and do they know how to do that test, right? And you can't blame them because the whole system is geared towards those tests. College entry is not looking at higher order thinking skills. There are no tests for that, and yet they're looking at what did you get? Can you read and write? Any job is looking at can you read or write?

So, until the whole system changes, I don't see how parents are going to change. So, if you ask me, there needs to be a huge mindset change, everywhere. We have the new education policy, and the government is working very hard. By the way, the Central Board of Education, the CBSE, they're trying very hard to train teachers online, to start thinking along this side, right? At the same time, right now is not the time for them to put all higher order thinking skills, either the instruction or the assessment, in place because things are so -- schools have opened, and they're going -- everything is crazy right now. Everyone is just struggling to just catch up, just catch up. There was an assessment, that said that 92 percent of student population has lost at least one math skill, and 88 percent at least two language skills,

in this (inaudible) foundation. So, see even the assessment is just what have they lost in this?

Nobody's really looking at what did you gain because what has happened during this time is that there's been a lot of peer learning, there's been a lot self-learning, there's been a lot of research working, and there has been a lot of resilience that students have shown during this time. So, people have been recognizing that, and of course, mental health problems, but --

MS. WINTHROP: Okay.

MS. SAHNI: -- there's no way of assessing that, is there?

MS. WINTHROP: I want to pick up on this, Urvashi. It's very interesting what you say because you basically have said, look, students have gained a whole -- people are struggling all over the place, but there is also a number of competencies and skills that students have developed and teachers. The way you're talking about teachers coming up with new ways and creative ways of trying to reach out to families, and make connections, and their students. And how do we cap -- you know, is there an opportunity to capture that moving forward, if we can sort of pivot and orient towards a new way of assessing. But I also hear you saying, we need to be very careful how we sequence that because the system is so overburdened and adding a whole new thing might sort of break the camel's back. I don't know if people use that term.

So, I want to come to that because, for all the panelists, I want to pick up on what you're saying, Urvashi, because we have a number of questions that are around that theme, and they're around sort of opportunity for shifting assessment systems in the crisis, and they're around asking about the balance of sort of focusing. Esther, you talked about the teaching and educational experience has changed under COVID, but the assessments are the same. It's very much, you know, math formulas, sort of very narrow academic, sort of knowledge-based tests.

And there's a whole set of questions, saying, can we also shift to look at the -- you know, what kids have learned and look at a mix of academic competency plus 21st century skills? So, I'm just going to throw these questions out here, as a cluster, and then I'm going to come to you, probably Esther, starting with you first, again. So, we have Charlotte, from NCEE, here in the U.S., and she is really asking, can we use COVID as an opportunity to rethink assessment? I'm really worried about -- now, in the U.S., of course, there's lots of assessment. So, this might be very, again, differentiated, based on the

country context. But she's also quite worried about anxiety, stress, and anxiety of these assessments, as they are -- if they're plowing forward and students really aren't prepared. So, that's one question.

We have Yasmine from LeapEd in Malaysia, who is asking about basic literacy and numeracy skills versus 21st century skills, and are literacy and numeracy skills part of 21st century skills, and how do we assess that suite? We often call that, in Brookings, the breadth of -- we talk about breadth of skills, which is not the same as saying what your curriculum is. When we say breadth of skills, we're looking at competencies, and you can certainly get critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving, et cetera, through a science class, or a math class, or a literature class. So, when we talk about breadth of skills, that's what we're talking about, and I think she's asking about the balance.

And we also have Denise from AcademyHealth, who's asking about the same thing, but with a mental health lens, and thinking about socioemotional learning as a piece of what we might want to track over time. So, that's a bundle of topics, but they all kind of relate to each other. Esther, what are your thoughts there?

MS. CARE: Yeah, thanks, Rebecca. I mean, I think that each of those questions we could desegregate them and talk for the 24 hours. The article says part of the problem, that there's so much talking and so much aspirational activity, and the problem is that we have to think about what is happening on the ground. And I don't think that this is a matter of an either or. So, for many years and still under the pandemic conditions, I cannot see that we need to be making a choice between foundational literacies, such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, and what we call 21st century skills, talking about problem solving, and critical thinking, and metacognition, and collaboration. I don't see any reason why we need to have a dichotomy here.

My view is that the skills need to be integrated throughout subject studies, such that the students are encouraged to learn more deeply in all of their subject areas because they're applying the skills, they're questioning, they're hypothesizing, they're exploring, they're building knowledge. And I know that there is a perspective, among some, in those cognitive skills, in particular, are just only relevant to the more senior students, or they're only more relevant to the students who are higher achieving, and that's a nonsense, from my perspective.

We can teach anyone how to think about learning, how to approach learning, how to

solve problems. And if we can encourage reflection or metacognition, that empowers the learners to engage in independent learning. And what we're hearing from country national systems, world over, is saying that their learners must now engage in independent learning because many of them are not in a classroom. So, they are put back on their own resources. And because they're having to rely on their own resources, we need to further develop these skills where they can actually -- can take control of their learning.

You know, we could say it's too late. We could say they should have been taught in this way for many years. That hasn't happened. And it makes it even more difficult now, where you're presented with a different mode of learning. You're presented with an environment where you don't have the support of your teachers, and you don't know where to move first. So, if we think about the fact that teachers need to be able to focus on application of learning, that would be a main focus.

If they only rely on traditional, as Rebecca was saying, rote memory learning and assessment, then under pandemic conditions, in particular, the assessments are not going to contain valid data. Right, we can't pick up summative data, we can't pick up routine-type assessment results in a valid way, at the moment, because you do not have control over the child in the classroom under standardized conditions. And so, from that perspective, personally, I don't see a great deal of sense, right now, in summative assessment, apart from the fact that at different times, and in different countries, and in different regions, we're going to have to help students and teachers make decisions about where they slot back into classroom learning, what year level do they go into? And so, there, we're moving to another topic altogether, which is around readiness testing. So, I'll back off that, for now, and just stay with this application of learning.

And as Rebecca mentioned, we did quite a lot of work in thinking about how can we help teachers, as well as assessment groups, think about assessment of these learning to learn skills, critical thinking, and problem solving in our project, optimizing assessment for all, which was both in Asia and in Africa. And what we started there was the process of developing assessments that targeted application of learning. And that was through, at that time, an explicit focus on the skills as a strategy to help assessment developers and teachers start thinking about how, then, do you teach, and what do you want to see coming out of the students.

And one of the things I've been fascinated by in our discussion, as well as I think we're finding more generally, is, you know, in the past, when you had a webinar, or a seminar, or a conference on assessment, it was all about assessment, in terms of development of items and tests. Now, when we have discussions about assessment, it's about how do we need to vary the curriculum, how do we need to use different pedagogical approaches, how do we make sure that the textbooks actually support and are aligned with the assessments. So, I think we've come a long way, but the problem for us, and, again, Horacio, and Javier, and Urvashi talked about this, is that it's one thing to talk about you need to go there and do it. It's another thing to equip the teachers to do that.

MS. WINTHROP: Yep. Right. Okay.

MS. CARE: So, I'll pass back to you now for -- yeah.

MS. WINTHROP: Thank you. Thank you. I think I'll go to Horacio. Horacio, what are your reactions to that? How does it play out in Panama or across other countries in Latin America?

MR. ALVAREZ MARINELLI: I fully agree, and -- but I would say that the main skill that you need to learn all other skills is reading, reading comprehension. This is very, very hard for me to think about you develop critical thinking when you don't have children who know how to read, and I, you know, I fully agree that we need to do, and it's not an if and one for another that we need to test 21st century skills or fundamental skills. But it's really hard when we have countries for such a -- like the Dominican Republic, where I worked for a while, where you have 81 percent of students not being able to understand the text at their grade. How do you teach critical thinking? How can you think critically when you cannot get information from text? You know, it is extremely hard. Of course, you can do a lot of exercises. Of course, there's many things that you can do.

But the challenges we faced in the region, before the pandemic started, are so huge we let our systems, in general, I would say, you know, with a few exceptions, fail our children because what we also do, and at least in Latin America, is the child doesn't know how to read, he doesn't learn, he doesn't acquire the skills, and then we fail them. In countries like my own, in Guatemala, it's almost 30 percent of first graders have to repeat the grade, and many don't come back.

So, we have to build upon these systems that have already these challenges before we got into the pandemic. And we've had, so far, I would argue, a waiting to fail model. We wait for them to

fail, whether it's in first grade or third grade. At the end of the year, say, well, you know, you didn't acquire all the skills that you needed. You're going to have to repeat the grade, whether you come back or not. We're not that, you know, sure if you will. And that's -- this is why we also have in Latin America about 50 percent of kids don't finish high school because the system expels them. So, we have to think of whatever changes we do and whatever interventions and policies we do, regarding assessment, regarding 21st century skills, that this the -- this is where we're coming from. It's not all of a sudden. And I've heard this a lot, you know, the systems are going to perform better. What makes us think that a system that was underperforming, that teachers who didn't know how to teach before the pandemic are all of a sudden going to be -- come up to speed to do it in a different way and to rethink our education systems.

So, I fully agree that we need to focus, and I would argue even more on socioemotional wellbeing for when these children come back to school because of all the challenges they faced during the pandemic. You know, in the case of Panama, we were practically -- for four or five months, the children couldn't go out of their houses. They are going to face, you know, socialization challenges, how to communicate with other kids, how to resolve, you know, problems because they have not been socialized for such a long time. We have to take care of that. A lot of them have lost family members or have -- their parents have lost resources and income, and they're facing total insecurity.

So, we need to think of all these issues before we think, okay, we need to do a national assessment. Maybe, maybe we need to do a national assessment for some grades, you know, to gauge where we are. But I would think the focus needs to be on socioemotional wellbeing and evaluating that, and giving teachers tools to do that, and on the fundamental skills, that didn't allow them, before, to learn independently, and that didn't allow them to learn independently during the pandemic, and that won't allow them, if they don't have them, to learn independently, after the pandemic.

MS. WINTHROP: Okay, great. Thanks, Horacio. Urvashi, I see you want to come in here.

MS. SAHNI: Yeah. You know, in terms of -- Horacio, I just wanted to respond to a couple of things that you said, that, you know, that, really, yes, very, very important, of course. And by the way, in terms of the State Board, also, they have made a special mention and they want special focus

on reading, and they understand that's really important. In terms of can you have critical thinking without reading, I think you can. And this comes from your own (inaudible). How can we forget him? At idea of critical dialogues, having them regularly, in the classroom, to enable critical thinking and oversee enough for that. So, it really -- and it can happen in every subject area that you teach, provided the pedagogy is tweaked for that and the instruction.

And the other thing I wanted to respond to, that have teachers changed? I think they have, by the way. What happened was everything changed. They had no choice but to change. Many of them went along kicking and screaming, and some of them just rose to the occasion. And what they did - I know in our own foundation that the impact had an instruction, but they did it. I think the creative portion spiked, along with the COVID, and so did the caring portion spike. You were talking about social and emotional learning.

In fact, many teachers spent a lot of time in just grief counseling because people had lost, and they had lost loved ones, too, and then asking, all the time, how are you, and reaching out, and helping because they understood that people were in distress, and that's the first thing they did. They started their lesson with how are you, we hope you're well, and what's going on at home. When they spoke to parents, that was the first question they asked, and that's how they built the bond.

Secondly, there was a huge amount of self-learning that happened. They had to just measure up. They did a lot of research, enormous amounts. They weren't just waiting for someone to tell them what to do because there wasn't anyone to tell them what to do. And, in fact, even the government, by the way, this time, reached out, far and wide, that we need materials, we need help. And even now, they reached out to organizations, like mine, what are the tests that you're using for kids who are coming back? How are you bridging the gaps? And we are helping. I'm on the Steering Committee of the National Education Policy and on another committee nationally led. And that's what we are trying to lend them.

On the materials that people have done, there was a national teacher platform, the different kind of pedagogy that is being spread all over. I agree with the point that when things are so much up in the air, then there's so much catch up to do. Of course, you have to focus on foundation, and you are just worried about how to catch up. I think it will be such a good idea if people were to try and

assess all of the good things that have happened, how children have measured up, because it'll do two things, even for poor children, who, by the way, are more resourceful. They've had so little resources that they had to count on their own. They're very resilient. They have a lot more world knowledge. If, somehow, that could be, that learning, could be considered valuable enough to legitimize and make official, can you imagine how that would soar, that they would suddenly be, you know, that we learned.

Just because we can't read and write doesn't mean we don't learn. We do learn. And, yes, they will be more eager to learn to read and write because we have validated the knowledge that they've made. And I wish there was a way for us to also validate everything that teachers have learned. And organizations like ours are continuously asking teachers to document their learnings.

MS. WINTHROP: Right.

MS. SAHNI: What is it they want to teach from the COVID experience, how they do that?

MS. WINTHROP: Thank you, Urvashi. You -- Horacio, can you respond very briefly, in a minute, and then we're going to --

MR. ALVAREZ MARINELLI: Yeah. Yeah. And so, I was thinking -- I was thinking about what Urvashi was saying, and, yes, I do agree that you can do critical thinking, like exercises, without reading, but in order to get to deep learning, you need to go out, then, and survey, and have the knowledge and the background knowledge, and that comes through reading. And I was on a panel yesterday with Javier, and critical thinking skills have been going on in, you know, elite schools, in Latin America, for a long time. And I remember I was in third or fourth grade, the teacher is like, well, you're going to debate a subject. You need to be informed. Go to the library and research it. You need to have the skill to read in order for it to be deep. Otherwise, you know, we can carry on dialogues and, based on our opinions, have a conversation of, you know, second grade, whether you like strawberry, or what, or chocolate ice cream. But in order to go deep, you need to comprehend and go out to get knowledge because the basis of critical thinking, I would argue, is to have enough knowledge so that you can come to those (inaudible) different approaches or experiences.

MS. WINTHROP: All right. I'm going to intervene because Urvashi is posting in our little panel chat, but, yes, even illiterate -- but you don't have to be literate to be a wise and profound and deep thinker. There are other ways to get knowledge. So, we could have this debate for a long time, I can

see. But I want to switch, and I want to come to Javier, to a different topic, which actually, Urvashi, you put on the agenda, which is practical, interesting, new, creative approaches that are sort of opened up at this moment, around assessing learning, and could we look at different ways of doing -- of carrying it out and different types of knowledge and competencies to assess.

And I want to come to you, Javier, because you lead SUMMA, and you look for all sorts of creative ideas that have -- could have practical traction for quite a -- in your day job. And I want to see what you think about that and note that we have several questions around that topic. We have one that asked that question, vis-à-vis the lens of ed tech, how, really, how helpful can technology be, in terms of innovative new approaches that we think we want to keep, that are useful, that have emerged. And we have a question around really practical ideas for engaging parents in thinking about assessments. So, Javier, over to you.

MR. GONZALEZ: Perfect. Thank you, Rebecca, and just to open, just a little bit, on the -
- to piggyback on the last discussion, basically --

MS. WINTHROP: Yes, please do.

MR. GONZALEZ: -- I know, very quickly, but because I think innovation is key, of course. But I think it also -- I don't think you have to choose, really, among both. I think it depends on the pedagogical strategies they use. For example, if you use a rope-based learning, in science, you can learn foundational mathematical skills and critical thinking and collaboration skills, for example, working in a project. So, I think that's -- it goes a lot back to the pedagogical skills that we use to learn each one of these.

Of course, from a constructivist perspective, foundational skills are definitely key, and I also am with Horacio, in the sense of this lack of foundational skills are a barrier for progressing along the school system. In Latin America, just to put some figures out there, 56 -- before the pandemic, 56 percent only of students finished -- completed secondary education. Now, it will go back to 42 percent. Only 42 percent of students in the region complete secondary education. And the percentage in the poorest quintile will drop by 20 percentage points, not 20 percent, 20 percentage points. So, foundational skills are key. And I just wanted to say that, of course, also, high order skills are key. And let me just point out that I think this whole debate, that it seems to be 21st century skills, I go back to Bowles and

Gintis here, with a hidden curriculum kind of discussion. These skills, really, are the elite skills. They have been -- and Horacio was just saying we were in a -- also in a panel yesterday, we were talking about this, the same topic from my curriculum perspective. These skills have been there and developed in the elite schools. And the difference with the 21st century skills is that we want to democratize these skills in all the education systems, so. So, they're not really new at all. The new thing is actually that we want to provide them along this system.

Now, going back to your question, very quickly, I'm sorry for that, for -- I didn't want to miss that point. There are, of course, a lot of innovation in the region, as you say, from SUMMA. We developed several issues, we synthesize evidence, we have a map of innovation. Now, we have a call open for educational justice, social justice, it's a call for innovations but in the assessment. I think, as I was saying, the trend is going from summative to formative, and we're very happy with that new trend.

And we see this -- and let me put, just because of time, maybe three examples. One is the case of Colombia with (inaudible), which delivers guidelines and a lot of training for teachers, and support, and monitoring to the -- to assess students' skills, on the ground, with different toolkits, et cetera. You have the case of Chile, La Hencia de Calidad, which has these two quite new instruments, the progressive one, which is a centralized and more standardized test, but it's given at the beginning, in the middle, and the end of the year. So, it's more than summative. It's kind of a formative assessment. Plus, now, a lot of, again, guidelines and items, et cetera, are available for teachers to do, also, a formative assessment.

And the last maybe, just because of time, let's say in Guatemala, and because Horacio's here, in Guatemala, they're doing -- quite interesting, they're opening what is called a prendocasa, and they will do a whole period, and just to say, also, in terms of innovation, of course, I'm going from the government perspective first, then I'll go to NGOs and all the countries, but it's interesting to see many countries that they are leaning, already, their planning for a five-week, six-week period in March, when the new year starts in many of these countries, to do formative assessment.

So, what they are asking students is, and they're preparing students, is to reach that phase of face-to-face schools with a portfolio of different, well, homework, et cetera, and projects that they have done through the year and through this time with the COVID, and they will be assessing that

during these five weeks and working with students to do some leveling up. So, that's -- I think it's quite interesting, again, how we're moving to formative assessment and also to kind of starting to plan leveling and takeback exercises for the year. That's from the government side.

Now, in terms of the private sector, NGO, local actors, there is a lot of -- and you were mentioning ICTs. I think there are two things to -- that I want to say. First of all, I think the COVID showed how weak we are, in the region, in terms of internet. The figures that we had, it was that there was a lot of penetration on cellphones, et cetera, et cetera. And even among the strongest countries, that really -- it was more of a myth of connectivity because one thing, of course, is to be connected to maybe - - just to Google or something like that, but another thing is to be able to really assist an online class, et cetera, so. And I don't have too much time to talk about this, but (overtalking).

MS. WINTHROP: Yeah, Javier, can you wrap up in 30 seconds?

MR. GONZALEZ: Yeah, in 30 seconds.

MS. WINTHROP: Keep going.

MR. GONZALEZ: So, there's a lot of a-synchronic and synchronic platforms. I just want to say I think -- so, one thing is that we are quite weak, but, on the other hand, there's a lot of development, in terms of different tools coming from WhatsApp, for example. WhatsApp has been quite a good tool. And there's a different RAC seesaw, different platforms, quizzes, et cetera, and others developed in Latin America, that are being used in Latin America, to basically provide items and ways of easily monitoring the learning, I mean, the learning process of students. So, there's a lot going on there. Of course, not too much time to talk about that, but, again, a lot of innovation happening.

MS. WINTHROP: Great. Great. Thank you, Javier. That was very comprehensive in this short period of time. We appreciate it. So, we have three minutes left. What I'd like to do is just give Urvashi and Horacio time, you know, 30 seconds, key takeaways for the audience and then I'll come to Esther, last, to maybe wrap up key themes you see across. Horacio?

MR. ALVAREZ MARINELLI: I'm finding my unmute button. So, I would argue that, again, to wrap it up, let's focus on kids' wellbeing, now that they go back to school, on their socioemotional wellbeing. They've been out of school for quite a bit, and they've gone through a lot. And let's give them the tools, the teachers the tools, to assess where they are, so that they can help to build

them up.

MS. WINTHROP: Right.

MR. ALVAREZ MARINELLI: I think that would be my main takeaway, never forgetting that, of course, there's more to reading and math, there's more in life than reading and math, but that they're the basis --

MS. WINTHROP: Okay.

MR. ALVAREZ MARINELLI: -- that they will carry in their future academics.

MS. WINTHROP: Okay. That was a great 30 seconds. One thing, Urvashi, one thing, and then Javier, and then Esther.

MS. SAHNI: So, the -- okay, so, the country and the world, actually, was held hostage by technology for these two years, and lots of creative, wonderful things happened because they want the people happy. I think we should hang onto that, hang onto all the lessons learned. And I know to use technology more creatively, we increase outreach, we increase learning, and to enable and support teachers. I think that's really important.

MS. WINTHROP: Great. That was a perfect 30 seconds. Javier, your 30 sort of one thing, one last (overtalking).

MR. GONZALEZ: Thirty seconds, one idea. I think the move towards formative assessment is the right move to total, I mean, in the region. The thing that I think we have to promote much more balance is that, so, until now, we had grown too much, in terms of summative assessment, in assessment, in general, but the -- what we do with that assessment is that I think we're lacking on that. And we have to balance with more support, so, state support for schools and teachers, it's quite needed. We cannot advance in more accountability measures, et cetera, if we don't advance in supporting them for change. Thank you.

MS. WINTHROP: Okay. Great. All right, Esther, over to you to wrap up. Two, two minutes of a rich conversation.

MS. CARE: Ah, lovely. Thank you. Absolutely. I mean, I think that there's a lot of areas that we somewhat disagree on, not greatly, but there's some there. The problem, I think, with the focus on formative assessment is that it assumes that a teacher is able to act on an information and to vary the

instruction. And if you think about the four learning conditions that I outlined earlier, the opportunities for teachers to vary their instruction on the basis of formative assessment data coming back is -- can be incredibly limited.

So, quite apart from adopting the different teaching approaches that we're seeing from streamlined curricula, another challenge is the appropriateness of the assessment tools, themselves, have the countries adjust to those assessment tools, in line with the streamlined curricula, and is there actually an opportunity for the teachers to differentiate their instruction. And by and large, quite honestly, the opportunities are incredibly limited, and so, we've got patterns of streamlining curriculum. We've got acknowledgement of the need for formative assessment because we understand that the different children have different needs.

We need to do readiness testing to ensure that we can slot the children back where they need to, when they get back to school. But in the meantime, teachers are just trying to stay alive and keeping up with delivery of learning. So, the trend has been to adapt what we've done pre-pandemic and in face-to-face, instead of us thinking differently. So, let's now put ourselves in the situation of a child, in a remote area, where they have some hardcopy materials, the parents are illiterate, the materials are not in mother tongue. How does a teacher possibly deliver learning under some of these conditions? And I understand we've got a huge diversity of conditions, worldwide. But they're the sort of ground scenarios that national systems and teachers and people like us need to start thinking about, not to be incredibly aspirational, but think what can be managed for that child, in that house, in a remote village somewhere. Thank you.

MS. WINTHROP: Wonderful. Well, that is perfectly timed. We are exactly at time. So, I want to give a huge thank you to you, Esther, and Urvashi, and Horacio, and Javier. Many thanks for joining us. We had a very lively dialogue and lots of other questions we couldn't get to. So, we will have a second installation of this discussion on assessment coming up in about a month. So, stay tuned. And thank you, everybody, and good morning, good afternoon, good evening. Have a good rest of your day or night.

* * * * *

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
1800 Diagonal Road, Suite 600
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2024