

REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING INITIATIVES AIMED AT ORGANIZATIONS THAT RECEIVE FUNDING FROM EDUCATION OUT LOUD

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING INITIATIVES AIMED AT ORGANIZATIONS THAT RECEIVE FUNDING FROM EDUCATION OUT LOUD

EDUCATION OUT LOUD - STUDY PROGRAM ON CIVIL SOCIETY
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING INITIATIVES AIMED AT ORGANIZATIONS THAT RECEIVE FUNDING FROM EDUCATION OUT LOUD

The following document aims to present the results of the research “Review and assessment of learning initiatives aimed at organizations that receive funding from Education Out Loud - EOL” by the Study Program on Civil Society Organizations of FLACSO Argentina. **This study systematizes the learning efforts of the beneficiary civil society organizations (COS) during the years 2021 - 2023 that received EOL funds for the development of projects.** The analysis focuses on the learning efforts on adaptive management, gender equality, and social inclusion, and their impacts on the projects developed by the OEL beneficiary CSOs. To achieve the objectives of this work, we applied a **qualitative methodology** to analyze the impact that learning about these approaches had on the actions of the organizations financed by EOL. For this, we used the **triangulation of collection strategies and qualitative and quantitative data sources**. This design allowed us to base the qualitative analysis carried out with quantitative data on the impacts of the projects. The sample of analysis units were all the beneficiary organizations of the EOL Regional Unit for Latin America and the Caribbean between 2021 and 2023. We carried out the fieldwork between March and May 2023, and the data collection instruments used were:

1. Documentary and bibliographical analysis of the three approaches, the GPE 2025 Strategic Plan, the EOL Learning Framework, and the strategies and activities of the EOL Regional Unit for Latin America and the Caribbean.
2. Collection of learning experiences facilitated by the OEL Regional Unit in LAC and CLADE for grantees.
3. Identification and analysis of the projects implemented by the organizations

based on the three analysis approaches.

4. In-depth interviews with EOL Regional Unit references in LAC.
5. A workshop in Guatemala consisted of the co-creation and co-production of knowledge-action that allowed us the identification of indicators of achievements and challenges in the learning process and the application of these in the projects developed.
6. An online survey for organizations refers to quantitatively identify the learning carried out in the components of adaptive management, gender equality, and social inclusion, and their products and impacts on the projects financed by EOL.
7. Semi-structured interview questionnaire for key informants of each organization (who have participated in different moments of the implementation of the projects).

We analyze the results of the fieldwork based on two dimensions: the training and learning processes in adaptive management, gender equality, and social inclusion approaches, and the impact of these learnings on the projects financed by EOL.

From the systematization of the learning efforts implemented in the period analyzed and based on the main shared findings, we present a synthesis of the main findings and recommendations that allow us to identify challenges and limitations to strengthen the projects financed by EOL in LAC.

About learning efforts

- During the period 2020 - 2023, we identified a wide variety of learning efforts

promoted by the EOL Regional Unit in LAC, CLADE and the grantees, in terms of objectives, themes, and strategies used through specific accompaniment with learning partners and or collective spaces for peer learning.

- All EOL beneficiary organizations value positively and recognize the usefulness of strengthening capacities for action of the learning experiences facilitated by learning partners (at the request of the EOL Regional Unit in LAC), the experience of learning among peers carried out by the workgroups promoted by CLADE, and the learnings generated from the feedback and constant accompaniment of the EOL Regional Unit in LAC and CLADE towards the grantees.

- Grantees have built learning spaces and training for the member organizations of the coalitions and the communities with which they work, based on the knowledge acquired during the EOL learning processes.

- It is relevant to point out the concern of organizations financed by EOL regarding the overload of tasks and the lack of time to participate in the learning processes since the vast majority are the same people who must also manage and implement the funded project.

- Peer learning spaces such as work groups and regional meetings favor the systematization and exchange of experiences, which is also highly valued by organizations, especially due to the possibility of learning from the experience of other countries, cases from other regions and other advocacy agendas.

- The participation of the organizations financed by EOL in the different learning efforts varied according to each experience. In some cases, they were the same people who participated in most of the learnings, in other cases different people participated depending on the theme and their role in the projects. In some organizations, only people directly linked to the projects financed by EOL participated, in others, they extended the invitation to the entire membership of the coalitions and alliances. In this sense, it is important to accept that each organization

appropriates each learning process differently and translates it to its scenario, incorporating its nuances and significant elements.

- The situated look regarding the application of the adaptive management, gender, and social inclusion approaches is essential to carry out a critical analysis regarding the impacts on the projects financed by EVA.

- According to the learning agenda built by the organizations, the following topics can be recommended as future training processes: institutional and administrative management of organizations (procedures, mechanisms, transparency, etc.); quality of education from a human rights approach, education and digital rights, education and mother tongue, youth, sexual and reproductive health, people with disabilities, methodologies for social research and systematization of educational experiences, development of indicators. The experience gained in some of these topics by the beneficiary organizations of EOL funds would be key to promoting learning processes among peers.

On the adaptive management approach

- The adaptive approach and theory of change were “new” for these organizations. Its incorporation has been promoted and led by the EOL Regional Unit in LAC, and it is a process that is still ongoing, in which its accompaniment and training have been fundamental for the beneficiary organizations.

- Each recipient of EOL funds has incorporated this approach in a particular way and has advanced in the adaptive exercise depending on the context of application of the project. However, it is possible to identify some common points:

- The organizations receiving EOL funds mainly incorporate elements of adaptive management such as attention to the context for the production of changes in the project and the making of modifications during its implementation.

- However, these changes emerge mainly from the accompaniment of the EOL Regional

Unit in LAC and to a lesser extent from the reflection processes within the organizations that receive EVA funds or from learning activities. Indeed, reflection activities within organizations, when they exist, are not related in all cases to adaptive management and change production.

- In this sense, we can point out that the adoption of the adaptive approach has been formal since it is included in the design of the proposals, but it is not applied systematically in the project implementation processes, and that it is a reaction, especially, to context changes, rather than the result of a learning process based on critical reflection on the experience carried out. A phrase that appeared recurrently in the interviews and the Guatemala workshop was "We were already doing it without knowing that it was adaptive management", alluding to the constant instability of the region and, therefore, the ever-present need to make adjustments in the plans made. However, these adjustments are not necessarily the product of learning carried out by the organization but rather the external need of the context that is imposed as an obstacle. Although this would not be wrong and would be within the adaptive approach of projects, by not understanding these changes within a learning process, there is no strengthening of capacities or accumulation of new knowledge to improve practices or incorporate new ones in the future development of the project.

- All the recipients of EOL funds state that they need to strengthen their learning about the incorporation of the adaptive approach in the process of elaboration, management, and evaluation of the projects and have more instruments that facilitate its application.

- In any case, this learning process requires other skills that we believe should be developed and strengthened, such as establishing the necessary institutional conditions for dialogue, collective discussion, critical reflection, systematization of experiences, monitoring of relevant information, and informed decision-making based on agreements and consensus.

- It is also necessary to institutionalize the spaces for reflection and learning based

on the systematization of experiences and the monitoring of results in dialogue with the contextual analysis of socioeconomic and political scenarios of each national and regional reality. The understanding of development processes, power disputes, conflicts over the distribution of socially produced income, inequalities, and geopolitical relations in the region and the world are fundamental sociopolitical analysis tools to understand the context in which the projects financed by EOL are implemented and that need to be strengthened in the advocacy processes for the human right to education. The intersectional approach, both gender and social inclusion, are central tools for understanding the functioning of inequalities in our region and the world.

- It is necessary to strengthen this dynamic understanding of reality and the capacity of organizations to carry out prospective readings of their scenarios, which allow them to anticipate changes, identify key actors, possibilities for alliances, challenges, and difficulties in their national scenarios, as well as recognize windows of opportunities that can be open at a regional and global level.

- In this sense, it is essential to strengthen leadership with the ability to open and sustain spaces for critical reflection within the organizations financed by EOL, and that, in turn, can carry out advocacy processes at the national and regional levels.

About the gender approach

- The incorporation of the gender approach to the projects financed by EOL is a process that, with its nuances, has been developed by all the beneficiary organizations since this approach is part of the objectives and actions of their projects.

- The learning efforts on the gender approach have been fundamental, providing them with concepts and tools that have allowed them to broaden their knowledge and better understand this approach and to discuss, with arguments, the need to guarantee the human right to education from a gender perspective.

- It also highlights the capacity of organizations to influence the State and public policies on gender equality and education.
- This incorporation of the gender approach is focused, in almost all organizations, on the fight for equality and equity between men and women and the eradication of violence against women, leaving intersectionality, diversities and the LGBTIQ+ community, cares, and masculinities, in second place or even outside.
- Nevertheless, learning about the gender approach has been functional to the projects, replicating it within the coalitions through discussion, work, and training activities.
- Regarding the incorporation of the gender perspective into the internal structure of the organization, it is observed only in half of the cases analyzed. Within this, there are issues to be implemented by the organizations: support mechanisms for care tasks, specific guidelines on equal pay, and intervention protocols against sexual and workplace harassment.
- One of the main obstacles to the effective incorporation of gender perspective has been the resistance in the educational communities and the member organizations of the coalitions. The conservative and religious nature of the countries where the projects are developed and the prejudice of “gender ideology” constitute a challenge and slow down the expected impacts.
- Within this framework, the organizations consider it necessary to deepen the understanding of the gender perspective in the leadership of the coalitions, their technical teams, and the member organizations.

About the social inclusion approach

- Even though the training experiences in the area of social inclusion have been less than those of adaptive management and gender equality approach, all the beneficiary organizations of EOL funds, without exception, have incorporated into their foundation, vision, missions, and objectives a social inclusion approach based on the respect for and guarantee of human rights,

particularly the human right to education (equity, access, and quality), of particularly vulnerable groups (women, girls and adolescents, people living in poverty, native communities and people with disabilities).

- They have also incorporated into the projects and their implementation the gender perspective, the participation of citizens and the community in the development of the objectives of the projects, and strategies to constitute the coalitions and the CEMSE ACCLLO alliance as influential actors in the formulation of educational public policies.
- Working with EVA has allowed organizations to broaden their conception of social inclusion, incorporating vulnerable groups not initially included in their projects, such as people with disabilities, young people, and LGBTIQ+ people.
- A relevant and interesting inclusion process has been the incorporation, by almost all organizations, of youths and adolescents into training, discussion, and work activities, whose purpose has been to add their opinions and proposals to the construction of an educational agenda.
- Based on the results of this report, and as some organizations have also pointed out, it would be relevant to delve into learning strategies related to a better understanding of inclusion and educational quality, and how to measure and monitor them.
- On the other hand, it is necessary to strengthen the work of organizations with LGBTIQ+ communities and people with disabilities.

Recommendations:

- In a continuous learning process, it is significant to sustain strategies that allow synchronous work modalities to be combined (located accompaniment and workshop facilitation) with asynchronous modalities that allow organizations to make the most of the use of time.
- Learning from the experience of others requires abilities for critical, practical and theoretical reflection on the identified learning and its possible applications in specific

contexts. It would be advisable, therefore, to work on this with the organizations to effectively develop peer learning processes.

- To strengthen the capacities of interpretation and understanding of contexts and their dimensions, as well as those for active listening, public speaking, negotiation, and strategic communication, we consider it essential to provide projects with tools for political advocacy. Knowing how to listen and read the social, political, and economic contexts, as well as being able to express and communicate to different audiences (governments, the media, the educational community, families, students, and society as a whole) our projects are fundamental aspects of political action to promote, guarantee and defend the human right to education.

- It is important to strengthen organizations with tools to generate learning experiences for the management and technical teams of the coalitions and member organizations in addressing adaptive management, gender equality, and social inclusion approaches.

- Thus, it would also be essential to strengthen the capacities of organizations with tools and methodologies for social research and the construction of indicators and evidence for follow-up, monitoring and evaluation of the application of adaptive management approaches, gender equality, and social inclusion within the organizations, in their projects and educational policies.

- Lastly, taking the recommendations made by the organizations on future learning, it is important to reinforce and deepen the tools for the effective implementation of the gender approach through their projects and their mainstreaming within the organizations. For this, it would be opportune a territorial accompaniment that can follow up and make recommendations *in situ* to overcome the resistance of the educational community and the member organizations themselves. It may be interesting to have the support of feminist organizations that work on the subject, especially in highly intersectional contexts (such as native communities) and conservative cultures, and that can serve as a guide to resolve these difficulties.

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