

## **Eight clues on hybrid education**

A brief look at what is happening in education at both the national and international levels would indicate that countries are now beginning to transform their ways of educating, learning and evaluating in response to at least two different challenges. On the one hand, an increasing awareness that the future of new generations is largely linked to their training in concepts and tools that will allow them to build a better, sustainable and fairer future. On the other, recognizing the need to rethink levels, offers and learning environments between face-to-face and distance training – what is generically called hybrid modes of education. Here we propose eight key steps around its need and development.

First, hybrid modes combine and integrate both face-to-face and remote learning methods in order to broaden and democratize learning opportunities for all learners, in a way that is tailored to their personal needs and expectations. This requires finding the most effective ways of balancing face-to-face and remote learning so that students – whatever their circumstances, contexts, abilities and preferences – can develop their full learning potential.

This does not mean simply adding online educational platforms, resources and materials to face-to-face education, or replacing this with on-line classes. Instead, the main challenge is to apply face-to-face and online learning as a single continuum, which integrates different initiatives, platforms, resources, strategies and activities to enhance the learning experience of each student.

Second, hybrid modes are pluralistic. They do not imply a single model of organization, and do not function equally and in a prescriptive manner for all educational centers. Rather, hybrid modes are meant to guide, share and monitor from the central level of the educational system. They articulate and offer a robust set of competencies and knowledge that makes explicit the why and what to teach, which are common and binding for all educational centers. It establishes clarified ideas, purposes, routes and processes on the contents in which the new generations will be trained.

Third, hybrid modes are characterized by the detailed selection, prioritization and sequencing of key knowledge and competencies. They allow educators to focus on identifying the most essential elements in education from basic education onwards, ensuring continuity and fluidity in the approach to various subjects and prioritizing the learning progression of each student without cuts or breaks between educational levels. Indeed, hybrid modes cannot operate on the assumption that each subsystem or educational level, whatever it may be, defines the order of its contents by itself.

Likewise, teacher training, as well as professional development strategies, must serve the purpose of strengthening pedagogical competencies that will facilitate the design of courses, activities and resources that combine face-to-face and distance learning. This means developing versatile teachers with the ability to combine different learning environments according to the needs of each student.

Fourth, hybrid modes imply rethinking the organization and hierarchy of knowledge in the curriculum, as

well as group and personalized instruction times. This is based on an understanding that each learner may require different combinations of face-to-face and virtual training in order to engage with, develop and achieve the objectives and learning outcomes set. Instructional time can no longer be thought of as something that is fixed and secure for all learners. Instead, equity lies in being able to differentiate intervention strategies according to the unique needs of each student, in order to achieve equal results.

To this end, hybrid modes require the functioning of educational centers that are proactive in being able to determine, implement, and take responsibility for delivering what and how to teach, learn and evaluate. It is not a question of “delegating or attributing responsibility” without a frame of reference, but rather of sharing criteria and instruments so that teachers can effectively lead, manage and take responsibility for the education of new generations.

Fifth, hybrid modes redefine the relationships between educators and students. By expanding the spaces for interaction, educators and students get to know each other better, and in different situations and contexts - generating conditions for greater levels of rapprochement and empathy, and potentially reducing intergenerational gaps. At the same time, both have increased opportunities and resources to devise outputs on different types of knowledge, and to develop them through situations in which students, both in groups and individually, face different types of challenges. The production, dissemination and discussion of knowledge becomes a key element of an education proposal that is without limits in terms of enhancing learning.

Sixth, hybrid modes entail a renewed dialogue and collective construction between education and social policies as a whole. On the one hand, this would mean that the State, strengthened in its role as guarantor, ensures that all families and households have access in terms of physical infrastructure and connective equipment, platforms and devices that enable hybrid modes to effectively become a lever for social and educational equity.

At the same time, the State must also guarantee social protection networks. This includes, among other fundamental components, providing food, health and psycho-emotional support care services for students, within the framework of an intensive promotion of healthy and supportive lifestyles -which have a positive impact on the students’ overall wellbeing.

To this end, it also implies a closer relationship, based on trust and collaboration, between the State and civil society – to make use of different spaces and activities so that each student can find ways to fulfill their concerns. It is not only a matter of increasing these spaces and times of presence – which are key for the well-being and development of each student – but also opening up to other types of training and experiences. These, when coming from different institutions and actors, can contribute to the integral formation of the person.

Seventh, a proactive use of technologies as part of hybrid modes can strengthen each of these previous points, in terms of reinforcing spaces for the production, circulation and dissemination of knowledge without borders or obstacles. In this sense, the use of Artificial Intelligence, within the framework of a

solid humanistic and ethical vision, can be a fundamental driving force that helps teachers and learners find personalized answers to their needs. Likewise, AI can support the development of innovative projects that sit outside of the traditional “boxes”, and which allow teachers and learners to integrate different ideas, knowledge and resources to respond to challenges that motivate them to learn.

Eighth, hybrids modes present a unique opportunity to rethink the relationships between schools, teachers, students, families and communities. Trust between institutions and actors can be reinforced – not just in terms of collaborating with the school, but also with the aim of developing capacities and committing to actions that strengthen teaching and learning for each student equally.

For example, this would imply that families could be trained on how to best accompany their children in education, in order to fulfill the role of learning “coaches” that complements the work being carried out by the education center. Underlying this idea is the need to promote lifelong learning opportunities in dialogue and permanent coordination with both civil society and training centers.

In short and summary, hybrid modes are an initiative that can represent the education of today and tomorrow, and that can allow the new generations can be masters of their own destiny. We already know that in its main outlines, today’s education far from guarantees the fundamental bases that enable all people to have an exciting, fair and fortunate future. Such a challenge is awaiting us as a society.