

# 38

## Spain: #SeeYouInDigital (Ensuring the continuity of learning)

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Type of intervention: non-governmental (no public organisation in lead role)  
 Website: <https://profuturo.education/en> |  
<https://profuturo.education/en/resources> |  
<https://profuturo.education/en/recursos-estudiantes> |  
<https://profuturo.education/en/resources-institutions>

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### General description

To help mitigate the consequences of the closure of schools across the world triggered by the COVID-19 crisis, the digital education programme ProFuturo put in place a contingency plan ensuring the continuity of teacher training and student learning away from classrooms: #SeeYouInDigital. As part of this contingency plan, ProFuturo opened its training courses and educational resources to everybody, free of charge, regardless of whether they were enrolled in its programme or not. Additionally, methodologies and content have been adjusted to reach students without access to technology or the Internet, ensuring that no one is left behind.

ProFuturo is a digital education programme launched in 2016 by the Telefónica Foundation and “La Caixa” Foundation (based in Spain) to narrow the education gap in the world by providing quality digital education to children in vulnerable environments in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and Asia. To do so, ProFuturo relies on digital technology to reach more people in less time and provide more personalised

education and innovative teaching-learning experiences. The health crisis has made the value of these tools more obvious as ways to take education beyond classroom walls and ensure the continuity of learning. ProFuturo wants to put its resources and expertise to good use in a crisis that at its peak left over 1.5 billion children and youth out of school (UNESCO, 2020<sup>[11]</sup>).

ProFuturo's contingency plan comprises the following actions:

1. **Opening of ProFuturo's digital learning platform.** In mid-April, ProFuturo opened its digital learning platform to teachers and students across the world so they could continue learning from home. The platform offers:
  - More than 160 online training courses and digital resources for teachers, focused on the development of their pedagogical and digital skills.
  - More than 7 000 digital interactive resources for students, focused on strengthening specific skills in language, science and technology, maths, and skills for life, while developing competences that are needed to respond to 21st century challenges (digital and communication abilities, teamwork, creativity, problem solving and decision making).

This content is available in four languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese and French). ProFuturo also opened a collaborative network where educators can browse a catalogue of curated educational resources and online content. More than 1 600 educational resources can be filtered by subject, difficulty level and type of activity. Teachers can also curate and upload their own content to the network.

2. **Building strong public-private partnerships to reach more teachers and children.** Ministries of Education and institutions that wish to include the ProFuturo content in their school educational platforms or use them in radio or TV broadcasts can do it free of charge and with no difficult legal process. To date, ProFuturo has reached agreements with the governments of Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru. In addition, together with the African Union, it has offered technical assistance to Ministries of Education in several African countries to develop an offline learning management system or app to reach students without an Internet connection.
3. **Adjusting content and methodologies to reach people without access to the Internet.** During the pandemic, ProFuturo adapted its blended training methodology (usually a mix of online and face-to-face) to fully remote training. To reach teachers and students with no Internet connection or access to a technological device, the programme used alternative content and formats, including printed workbooks that were distributed door to door, interactive presentations, podcasts, audio and video lessons for radio and TV broadcasting, WhatsApp forums, and an offline app for teacher training.
4. **Strengthening training to local partners.** ProFuturo has reinforced training on innovation, information and communication technology (ICT), and digital competences to its local coaches to ensure they can become virtual tutors supporting teachers and students remotely.
5. **Equipment donation.** To mitigate the effects of the digital gap on education during the COVID-19 crisis, ProFuturo made a donation of technological equipment in Spain. Through regional governments and social organisations, 10 000 tablets were delivered to socially vulnerable children and teenagers so they could continue their education from home during school closures.

## Main problems addressed

- This public broadcasting service's initiative aims to support national and regional education authorities as most schools are not prepared to offer students distance education. The programme has opened its learning platform to all students and teachers for free, to ensure wide access and

support schools in organising distance learning and teaching. The platform can be accessed from anywhere and by all, regardless of whether they are part of the programme or not. Moreover, technological equipment (server, router, laptop, tablets, projector, etc.) was also provided where needed.

- Not all teachers are familiar with the use of online platforms nor have the skills to teach remotely. The programme addresses the need for continuity in teacher training through a number of actions to provide teachers with the pedagogical and digital skills they need to integrate technology into their lessons and teach remotely.
- Disparities in access to technology and connectivity of students from different socio-economic backgrounds exacerbate inequalities in education and disproportionately affect the most vulnerable. The programme contributes to ensuring students can count on quality educational resources and the technology required to continue learning from home.

## Mobilising and developing resources

ProFuturo was designed as a digital education programme. It relies on technology and innovative teaching-learning experiences to improve the quality of education of boys and girls living in vulnerable environments and aims to narrow the education gap across the globe. In this sense, the programme continued doing what it has been doing for the past four years. However, given that ProFuturo's natural operating environment has always been schools, the COVID-19 crisis has forced the programme to adapt to support teaching and learning outside classrooms. ProFuturo's digital learning platform was mostly used in schools, where the programme also provided technological equipment (server, router, laptop, tablets, projector, etc.) where needed. Changing this model required some new developments:

- Opening the educational resources required technological adjustments to the learning platform. ProFuturo had to triple the size of the platform's infrastructure, open additional service nodes to improve users' experience, and reinforce the technical support service to assist the growing number of teachers and coaches that accessed the platform and could experience technical difficulties.
- ProFuturo has widened its scope of intervention by including families (in their role as supporters of their children's education), governments and institutions as potential beneficiaries of the programme's educational resources. This required modifications to the platform to enable the sharing of ProFuturo's resources.
- Some resources that were only available locally have been adapted so that they can now be used at a global scale. This is, for example, the case of Oráculo Matemático, an app that gamifies maths that was created by Telefónica Foundation Peru and used by the programme in that country.<sup>1</sup> The app was launched globally in mid-April and adapted to all Spanish-speaking contexts. By the end of 2020, ProFuturo will complete the development of an app to provide free educational content that can be used offline.
- ProFuturo has invested significant time and resources to develop new content and formats to reach those with no or limited connectivity. These include printed workbooks that are being distributed door to door, interactive presentations, podcasts, audio and video lessons for radio and TV broadcasting, WhatsApp forums, and an offline app for teachers and students. These tools have successfully been used in English, for instance in Liberia, Nigeria and the United Republic of Tanzania, where ProFuturo is implementing a Teacher Development Project together with several members of the Teach For All network to train 15 000 teachers by the end of 2020.
- ProFuturo expanded the online use of its class management tool used by teachers of the programme to create and plan their lessons. Before the health crisis, most teachers could only use the tool offline, through the software installed on teachers' computers at school. An online version

for all of ProFuturo's teachers is now available so they can prepare their classes anytime, anywhere, as long as they have an Internet connection.

- In Peru, ProFuturo and the Peruvian Ministry of Education have developed an online platform, Aula Digital en Casa (Digital Classroom at Home), that not only offers educational resources, but also digital tools to facilitate communication between teachers, students and families, such as messaging systems or debate spaces. By mid-September, 113 000 children had already been impacted directly by this joint project.

## Fostering effective use and learning

ProFuturo's educational resources are designed to give students an active role in the learning process; in other words, to enable "learning by doing". They are interactive and recommend a number of practical activities to help them better assimilate certain concepts. Stimulating student involvement is meant to motivate them to learn and result in higher attainment of knowledge, values and skills. At the same time, non-linear teaching inspires the methodology, which seeks new ways for students to access knowledge. It aims to enhance critical thinking and active learning, as opposed to memory-based learning.

In terms of teacher resources, ProFuturo's training courses have an important practical component. They not only teach knowledge and skills, but they focus on how to incorporate them into the classroom dynamic. Teachers not only learn to use technology and digital tools, but how to teach differently, using innovative teaching methodologies.

## Implementation challenges

Implementing the contingency plan posed greater challenges in Africa and Asia than in Latin America. In Latin America, digital education is more developed and Internet connectivity more widespread, facilitating families' and students' access to the online resources. In addition, ProFuturo benefits from the legacy of Fundación Telefónica in the region, where it has worked for many years building strong relationships with institutional and governmental partners who have helped disseminate the contingency plan and reach more people. ProFuturo signed collaboration agreements for this purpose with the governments of Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru, as well as with the Organization of American States and the Organization of Ibero-American States.

In the case of Africa and Asia, the possibility for teachers and students to continue training and learning remotely through online content was limited, given that only 17.8% of households and 28.2% of the population in Africa have access to the Internet (ITU, 2019<sup>[2]</sup>). To solve this problem, ProFuturo decided to further develop its contingency plan, which initially only contemplated the opening of its learning platform, creating alternative formats to deliver its content to the unconnected. In addition, together with the African Union, it has offered Ministries of Education in several African countries ProFuturo's learning management system for free or collaboration to develop an app, for offline use, to reach those with little or no connection to the Internet.

Before the pandemic, teacher training, the core of the ProFuturo programme, was delivered by ProFuturo's team and local partners through a coach following a blended methodology (online and face-to-face). Given the sanitary restrictions put in place, the training had to become 100% on line. This posed a big challenge, as ProFuturo operates in remote areas where teachers do not always have access to the Internet and, in many cases, do not own a computer or even a smartphone. To bridge this gap and ensure the continuity of training, ProFuturo has invested much of its time and resources in developing new content and formats to reach teachers and students with no access to the Internet. To resolve this, as mentioned above, the resources were printed and distributed door to door, and complemented by interactive presentations,

podcasts, audio and video lessons for radio and TV broadcasting, WhatsApp forums (and soon an offline app for teachers and students).

## Monitoring success

ProFuturo seeks to learn from its own intervention. To this end, it implements a monitoring and evaluation system to measure and assess the progress, scope and performance of the programme, as well as of its intermediate outcomes.

Through different research tools, it collects information about the effects the programme has on the life of its beneficiaries and improving their skills. In addition, ProFuturo has developed learning analytics tools based on advanced statistical and mathematical methods. This monitoring and evaluation system allows them to take decisions about the future of the programme, predicting new scenarios and detecting opportunities for improvement.

To quantify the success of the opening of its learning platform, ProFuturo has monitored the access to the platform's educational resources and the registration in training courses. The data show an exponential increase in the use of the platform compared to the pre-COVID period.

After opening the learning platform, the number of users accessing the content for teachers reached a peak of 254 000, up from an average of 28 000 users in March. In terms of course registration, from an annual average of 50 000-100 000 teachers registering for courses, there was a jump to 492 120 teachers. Some have registered in more than one course, raising the number of current course registrations to 1 042 000.

Regarding students' and families' access to the educational resources, the platform has had 6 million visits from 170 000 users.

The Math app *Oráculo Matemático* has registered 41 700 downloads from 20 countries, a 225% increase compared to when it was only available in Peru.

## Adaptability to new contexts

The COVID-19 crisis has only accelerated a long due need to transform education. ProFuturo believes that the transformation underway is irreversible and that hybrid learning will become the new norm, meaning that the demand for quality online educational resources and for digital native teachers will only grow. ProFuturo has a lot to bring to the table and will therefore extend these actions beyond the health crisis.

ProFuturo's digital learning platform was opened at a global scale in April. In a matter of weeks following school closures, teachers and students from different parts of the world were already using the resources made available. However, the data on platform use collected by ProFuturo show that access to the resources is greater in those countries where ProFuturo operates as a programme. To expand the impact of this initiative in countries other than the 38 in which it currently operates, ProFuturo has deepened its partnerships with organisations such as UNESCO, the World Bank, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Organization of American States, the Organization of Ibero-American States, and the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies. They have helped to disseminate ProFuturo's resources and to reach more people. In the coming months, ProFuturo will continue to work with its allies and build new partnerships to expand to new contexts.

In terms of scalability, the solution has no real limits given that the educational resources are accessible for free on line. In addition to reinforcing the outreach and dissemination strategy, ProFuturo wants to continue working on the development of content for students and teachers without access to the Internet.

### Box 38.1. Key points to keep in mind for a successful adaptation

1. Organise educational resources by topic, language and level of difficulty to facilitate use by students and families.
2. Curate, filter and catalogue content to help teachers navigate through the immense number of resources available.
3. Share the resources with governments and institutions so they can be accessed from as many resource banks as possible and reach more people.
4. Build partnerships that complement your work to offer holistic proposals that guarantee the continuity of learning in various contexts.
5. Broaden your target group to include other possible beneficiaries (i.e. families).
6. Invest time and resources in strengthening your local partners. Continue to train teachers on the use of technology. Facilitate and moderate those trainings.
7. Develop alternative approaches to reach the unconnected (i.e. printed materials) and invest in technology needed for this purpose (apps, offline software).
8. Collect data to monitor the progress of the project.
9. Be flexible to make strategical changes to the project in a timely manner to ensure that established goals and results are reached.
10. Pay special attention to legal issues related to using and sharing content.

## Acknowledgements

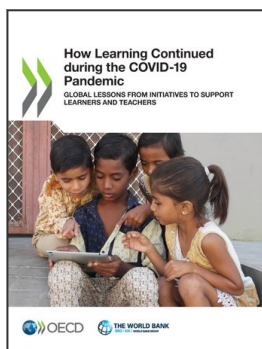
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## Notes

1 In Peru, ProFuturo is called Comprometidos con la Educación.



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