EI Policy brief

Quality learning environment

- The learning environment is central to quality education.
- A quality learning environment is accessible and inclusive for all.
- A quality learning environment is safe and secure for all.
- A quality learning environment has adequate resources and infrastructure.
- Reasonable class sizes are essential to a quality learning environment.

1. The learning environment is central to quality education

A quality learning environment must be designed to support all students in their learning process, and teachers and education support personnel in their missions. It contributes to well-being and health, and forms the basis for a positive environment where everyone can reach their full potential. The quality of the learning environment is determined by a number of physical, psychological and social factors. Public authorities must provide the necessary and relevant infrastructure and resources. Education support personnel, including classroom assistants, care workers, nurses, psychologists, nutritionists, technicians, librarians, bursars, drivers and others play a pivotal role in ensuring a healthy, safe and supportive learning environment to children and students. The local community, including parents, also plays an important role in fostering and supporting a quality learning environment.

2. A quality learning environment is accessible to and inclusive

Exclusion exacerbates inequalities in education worldwide and these inequalities are replicated in other areas of society. Public authorities must ensure equal opportunity and access to all levels of education. Inclusive education means that all students should be educated together, to the same high standards, as far as possible in the same education institution, irrespective of their gender, faith, ethnic, cultural or economic background or physical or intellectual capacities. The educational experience of students must instil in them the concepts of equality and respect for diversity.

People with special needs must be assisted to achieve their maximum potential. Facilities must be provided or adapted to meet their needs and adequate numbers of qualified support staff are essential.
3. A quality learning environment is safe and secure for all

Quality education can only take place in safe and supportive environments. All education institutions must take concrete measures to address all forms of discrimination, including those based on gender, to prevent bullying, harassment and different forms of violence, and to ensure respect for diversity. All teachers and education employees should be trained in conflict resolution and schools should adopt violence prevention and anti-bullying strategies. This is particularly important in environments that are marked by conflict.

4. A quality learning environment has adequate resources and infrastructure

The physical conditions of a learning environment have a direct impact on the quality of education, and on the wellbeing and health of students and staff. The physical space and equipment must correspond to the requirements of educational policies and programs, including availability of textbooks, stationery and other teaching materials. All education institutions must have access to clean drinking water and proper sanitation facilities, including separate toilets for girls and boys, adequate lighting, ventilation, heating, as well as drainage and dampness equipment. The buildings and facilities must also provide a secure environment within which the students feel that they are protected and safe from physical harm.

5. Reasonable class sizes are a prerequisite for quality education

Reasonable class size allows a teacher to focus on teaching and learning, especially for providing individual support to students. Classrooms with a reasonable number of students provide the optimum conditions for learning.