

57th DIRECTING COUNCIL

71st SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE OF WHO FOR THE AMERICAS

Washington, D.C., USA, 30 September-4 October 2019

Provisional Agenda Item 4.12

CD57/14
9 July 2019
Original: Spanish

EXPANDED TEXTBOOK AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS PROGRAM (PALTEX)

Introduction

1. Since its creation in 1966, the Expanded Textbook and Instructional Materials Program (PALTEX), established by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), has represented a form of technical cooperation aimed at providing textbooks and medical instruments for students and health professionals in the countries of the Region of the Americas, especially in times when access to information was limited in Spanish and Portuguese.
2. PALTEX's achievements in the field of education in the countries of the Region in the past 53 years are widely recognized. However, current advances in educational processes—mainly related to the adoption of new educational trends and the incorporation of technologies that offer dynamic and interactive training—have led to challenges to the sustainability of PALTEX's operational model, so that it no longer serves the current needs of students and health professionals.
3. The purpose of this document is to report to the Member States on the current situation of PALTEX and provide information on the challenges facing the program, mainly related to changing trends in the education of students and health workers throughout the Region of the Americas. Finally, the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (PASB) proposes the termination of PALTEX's operations as part of a new strategy to strengthen technical cooperation by renewing the educational tools that the Organization makes available to students and health workers in the Region.

Background

4. In 1966, through Resolution CSP17.R15, the 17th Pan American Sanitary Conference established a program to supply medical textbooks as a PAHO technical cooperation strategy to support and improve the quality of medical education in Latin
-

America by facilitating access to textbooks that otherwise would not be available in the Region.

5. In 1971 and in 1979, PAHO obtained loans from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to promote the growth of the program.

6. In 1979, the Medical Textbook Program was expanded to other health disciplines and instructional materials were incorporated, creating what is known today as the Expanded Textbook and Instructional Materials Program (PALTEX).

7. From 1969 to 2012, PAHO and the Pan American Health and Education Foundation (PAHEF) administered PALTEX jointly. In 2012, the 28th Pan American Sanitary Conference, through Resolution CSP28.R3, approved the transfer of all PALTEX functions to PAHO.

8. In recent years, coherent with the commitments established in Resolution CSP28.R3, PASB sought innovative ways to strengthen, expand, and modernize PALTEX. These included offering educational materials to the Region's students and health professionals, such as e-books and anatomical models for clinical simulations. Digital versions of PALTEX books were also incorporated into PAHO's Institutional Repository for Information Sharing (IRIS).

9. Over half a century, PALTEX has provided nearly nine million books and other affordable, quality instructional materials through more than 500 institutions that train human resources for health, correcting some of the imbalances and gaps in the availability and distribution of materials, and advancing toward more informed, equitable, and competitive societies.

10. At present, however, changing trends in education and in the supply of learning resources have produced changes in the demand for textbooks for students. As a part of the managerial process, PASB has conducted a series of studies to analyze and evaluate PALTEX's operations: *a*) in 2013, an internal audit evaluated the efficiency and effectiveness of PALTEX procedures, as well as internal audits to guide its operations and inventory; *b*) in 2014, there was a review of the volume, condition, and value of PALTEX inventory in eight countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, the United States of America, and Venezuela); *c*) in 2016, a study analyzed trends in education and learning in five countries (Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, and Mexico) to refocus and modernize the PALTEX model; and *d*) in 2017, situation analyses and detailed sustainability plans were completed for each country in the Region and at the regional level. Based on the results obtained in these studies, PASB considers PALTEX to have fulfilled its mandate to provide textbooks and instructional materials for the training of health workers in the Region of the Americas, as initially proposed in 1966.

Situation Analysis

11. Among the results of the studies conducted by the Bureau between 2013 and 2016 on the sustainability and relevance of PALTEX as a program that provides technical cooperation to the countries of the Region, a number of issues were found to have a significant impact on the program.

12. The descriptive study conducted in 2016 to analyze educational trends in five countries of the Region described changes in the education and training of health workers, including the following:

- a) The proliferation of new educational strategies for problem-based learning and student-centered teaching processes, in which students progress in their training with guidance from teachers (self-training). This has a direct negative impact on the demand for entire books, since students tend to look for only certain specific chapters of books that provide the required information.
- b) Greater access and availability of information and communication technology (ICT) as a tool to search for information and learning programs using computers and digital communications.
- c) Changing dynamics in student training, the introduction of laboratory simulations for training prior to hospital rotations, and the expansion of digital education platforms in Spanish and Portuguese, as a part of the curriculum in some universities.
- d) Increased capacity of publishers to respond to market needs in the Region, offering textbooks and chapters of books in different languages (Spanish, French, English, and Portuguese), as well as interactive educational materials with virtual libraries adapted to the new forms of education that students need.

13. Among the administrative aspects evaluated in the internal audit (2013) and in the study of PALTEX inventory (2014), the main conclusion is that the Bureau is effective in its internal audits of PALTEX inventory, but that the model used—multiple distribution points at the national level and retail sales—has high operating costs. This makes the prices offered to students uncompetitive compared to other suppliers in the countries. Furthermore, although the warehouses in the countries have high levels of inventory, turnover is low and PALTEX coverage of medical and nursing schools in Latin America is 26% and 10%, respectively.¹

14. Based on the studies conducted by PALTEX at the regional level and the situation analysis in each country in 2017, national work plans were prepared with a view to improving the sustainability of PALTEX. These plans sought interventions to increase

¹ 2017 data obtained from the databases of the Pan American Federation of Medical Education (FEPAM) and the World Directory of Medical Schools.

sales, reduce incremental costs, change the operating system, promote materials, propose innovative models, align materials with educational trends, and offer new digital materials.

15. Despite the Bureau's efforts, the number of books and instructional materials supplied by PALTEX dropped significantly, from 134,465 to 80,271, between 2014 and 2018, with increasing financial losses calculated at approximately US\$ 2.2 million in the last two years. These costs will be absorbed by the Bureau.

Proposal

16. Recognizing that the needs identified by the Member States in 1966 differ from current needs, as well as the changes that have occurred in educational trends and in the training of health professionals in the Region, PALTEX is considered to have fulfilled its mandate. Accordingly, it is recommended that its operations be terminated by 31 December 2019.

17. In accordance with strategic line of action 3 of the Strategy on Human Resources for Universal Access to Health and Universal Health Coverage (Document CSP29/10), approved by the Member States in 2017, which proposes to partner with the education sector to respond to the needs of health systems in transformation toward universal access to health and universal health coverage, the Bureau proposes to strengthen technical cooperation in health education, including modern, up-to-date tools that are aligned with educational trends, such as those offered through the PAHO Virtual Campus for Public Health.

Action by the Directing Council

18. The Directing Council is requested to review the information presented in this document and to consider adopting the resolution found in Annex A.

Annexes

References

1. Pan American Health Organization. Expanded Textbook and Instructional Materials Program (PALTEX). 28th Pan American Sanitary Conference, 64th session of the Regional Committee of WHO for the Americas; 2012 Sep17-21; Washington, DC. Washington, DC: PAHO; 2012 (Resolution CSP28.R3) [cited 2019 Apr 20]. Available from: <https://www.paho.org/hq/dmdocuments/2012/CSP28.R3-e.pdf>.

2. Pan American Health Organization. Strategy on human resources for universal access to health and universal health coverage [Internet]. 29th Pan American Sanitary Conference, 69th Session of the Regional Committee of WHO for the Americas; 2017 Sep 25-29; Washington, DC. Washington, DC: PAHO; 2017 (Resolution CSP29.R15) [cited 2019 Apr 20]. Available from:
https://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=42333&Itemid=270&lang=en.

3. Pan American Health Organization. Plan of action on human resources for universal access to health and universal health coverage 2018-2023 [Internet]. 56th Directing Council, 70th Session of the Regional Committee of WHO for the Americas; 2018 Sep 23-27; Washington, DC. Washington, DC: PAHO; 2018 (Resolution CD56.R5) [cited 2019 Apr 20]. Available from:
https://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_docman&view=document&alias=46573-cd56-r5-e-poa-hr&category_slug=56-directing-council-english-9964&Itemid=270&lang=en.



Pan American
Health
Organization



World Health
Organization
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE
Americas

57th DIRECTING COUNCIL

71st SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE OF WHO FOR THE AMERICAS

Washington, D.C., USA, 30 September-4 October 2019

CD57/14
Annex A
Original: Spanish

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

EXPANDED TEXTBOOK AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS PROGRAM (PALTEX)

THE 57th DIRECTING COUNCIL,

(PP1) Having reviewed Document CD57/14, *Expanded Textbook and Instructional Materials Program (PALTEX)*, presented by the Director;

(PP2) Recognizing that health education has evolved in the Region of the Americas, both in terms of educational trends and the inclusion of new technologies in educational processes, and that the needs identified by the Member States of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) in 1966 differ from current needs;

(PP3) Aware that technical cooperation for the education of health professionals should strengthen, expand, and modernize educational processes to better meet the current needs of PAHO's Member States, in accordance with the Strategy on Human Resources for Universal Access to Health and Universal Health Coverage,

RESOLVES:

(OP)1. To adopt the proposal made in Document CD57/14, *Expanded Textbook and Instructional Materials Program (PALTEX)*.

(OP)2. To request the Director to:

- a) coordinate and implement the necessary actions for the definitive termination of PALTEX operations, including administrative, financial, and human resources matters, by 31 December 2019;
- b) support the countries and territories, within the framework of the Strategy on Human Resources for Universal Access to Health and Universal Health Coverage, in order to strengthen educational systems and strategies at the national level, with a view to developing and maintaining the competencies of health workers focused on universal health.

Report on the Financial and Administrative Implications of the Proposed Resolution for PASB

<p>1. Agenda item: 4.12 - Expanded Textbook and Instructional Materials Program (PALTEX)</p>
<p>2. Linkage to PAHO Program and Budget 2018-2019:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Category: 4 Health Systemsb) Program area: 4.5 Human resources for healthc) Outcome: OCM 4.5 Adequate availability of a competent, culturally appropriate, well regulated, well distributed, and fairly treated health workforce
<p>3. Financial implications:</p> <p>The total estimated cost of implementation of the resolution through its life cycle (including expenditures on personnel and activities), calculated to December 2019, is approximately US\$ 344,000.</p>
<p>4. Administrative implications: Indicate the levels of the Organization at which the work will be undertaken:</p> <p>Department of Health Systems and Services (HSS)</p> <p>Office of Legal Counsel (LEG)</p> <p>Department of Human Resources Management (HRM)</p>

Analytical Form to Link Agenda Item with Organizational Mandates

1. Agenda item: 4.12 - Expanded Textbook and Instructional Materials Program (PALTEX)
2. Responsible unit: HSS/HR
3. Preparing officer: Dr. James Fitzgerald, Director, Health Systems and Services and Dr. Silvia Cassiani, Advisor, Nursing and Allied Health Personnel Development (assigned to technical coordination of PALTEX)
4. Link between Agenda item and Sustainable Health Agenda for the Americas 2018-2030: Objective 3: Strengthen the management and development of human resources for health with skills that facilitate a comprehensive approach to health
5. Link between Agenda item and the Strategic Plan of the Pan American Health Organization 2014-2019 (Amended): <i>Strategic area 4.5:</i> Human resources for health <i>OCM 4.5:</i> Adequate availability of a competent, culturally appropriate, well regulated, well distributed, and fairly treated health workforce
6. List of collaborating centers and national institutions linked to this Agenda item: PALTEX has provided service to 22 PAHO Member States through a network of 419 distribution points in universities, health services, ministries of health, PAHO/WHO Representative Offices, and professional organizations, providing educational resources related to medicine, dentistry, nursing, veterinary medicine, primary health care, public health, and other disciplines.
7. Best practices in this area and examples from countries within the Region of the Americas: PALTEX has operated for 53 years in 19 countries of the Region as a technical cooperation strategy to provide textbooks and instructional materials for students and health professionals with a view to strengthening the quality of education in the health sciences in the countries and territories of the Region.
8. Financial implications of this Agenda item: PALTEX has been financed with its own resources during these years, through a revolving fund. All its operating costs, including salaries, have been covered by revenues from its sales. The expenditures associated with termination of PALTEX operations will be covered by the program's own funds, which will be detailed in the Financial Report of the Director for 2019.