The COVID-19 Pandemic as an Opportunity to Improve Education Systems

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"Mitigating the Learning Losses Caused by the COVID 19 School Closures"
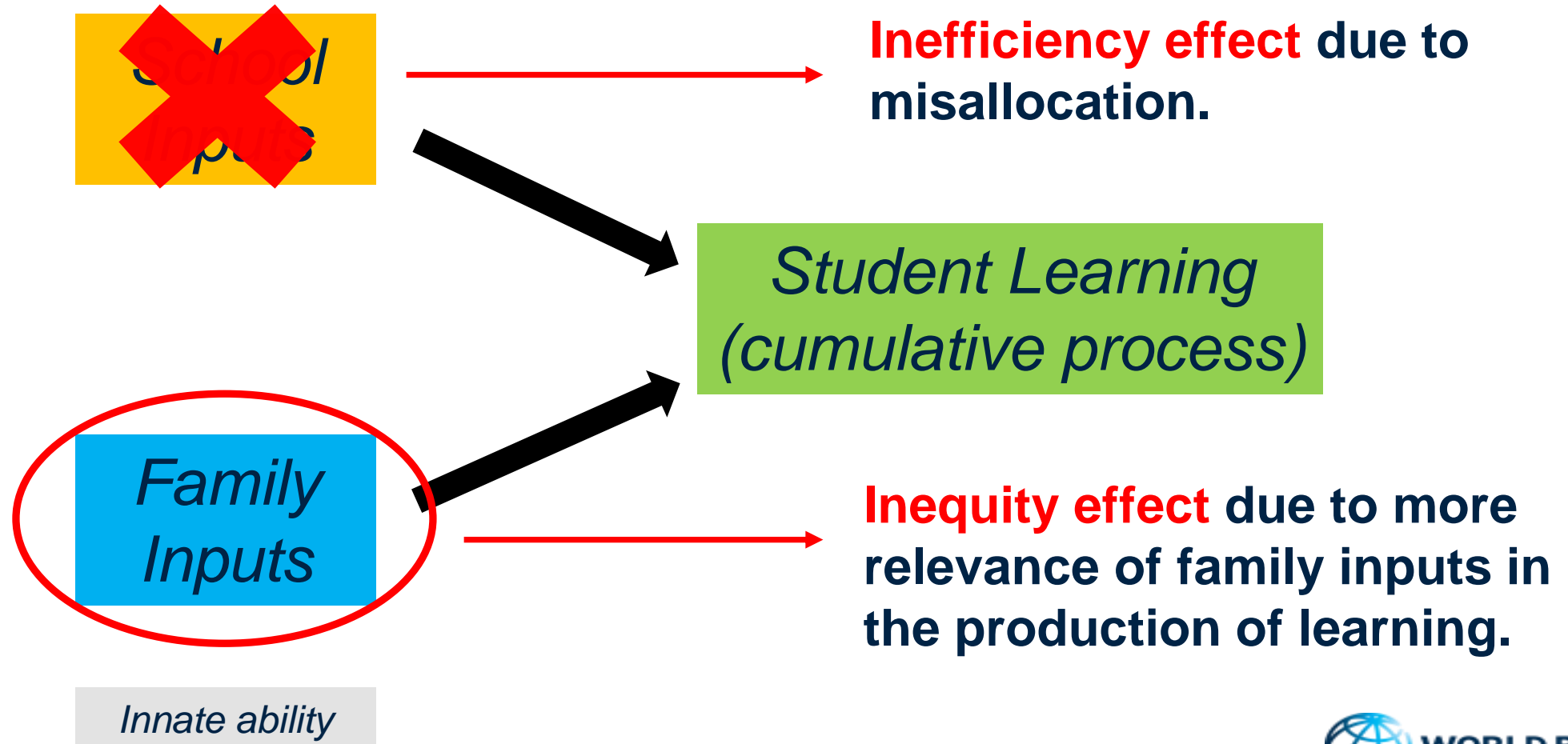Prague, June 21, 2020

Outline of the report

1. COVID, school closures, and student learning.

2. How did countries face the pandemic?

3. Policy options to address the learning loss.

4. Opportunities to build a more resilient education system.

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COVID, school closures, and student learning.

How does learning happens?

What are the implications of the "production" of learning and school closures?

1. There is general loss of learning explained by inefficiency effect.

2. The negative effect on learning is larger for disadvantaged students.

3. If not addressed, the learning loss will compound over time, with negative consequences for growth and social mobility.
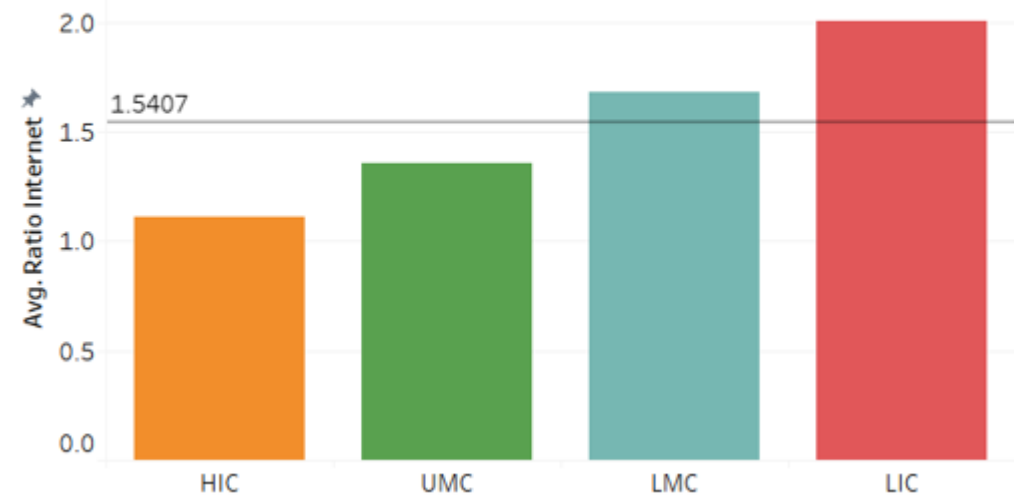
The poor do not have the conditions to learn from home

1. Lower parental schooling and time to help with learning process.

2. Lower access to a device with internet connection from home.
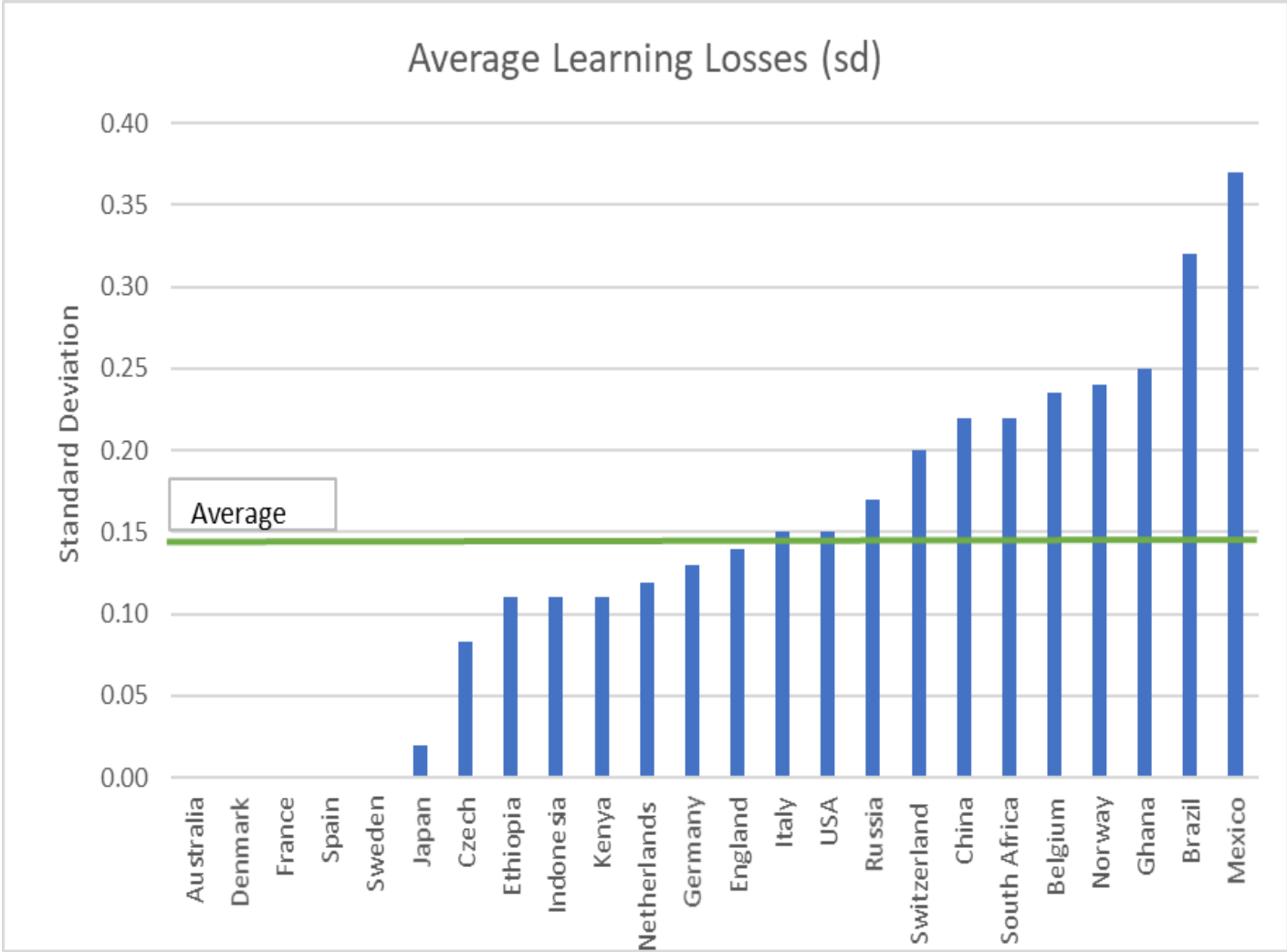

Internet Access - All
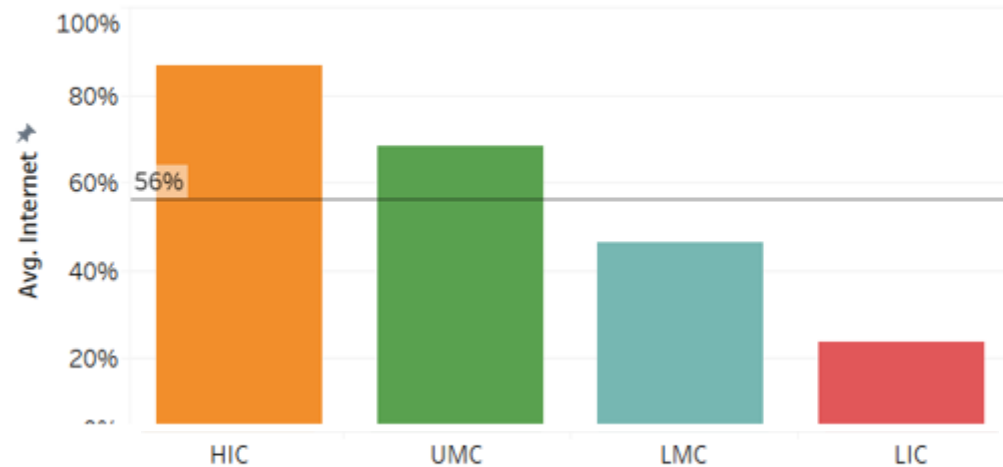
Ratio of Internet Access by the Top 60 vs Bottom 40 (of income)

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The evidence, based on pre- and post-COVID standardized tests, shows a significant learning loss

Source: compilation by Harry Patrinos

Within most countries, the lost is higher among disadvantaged students.

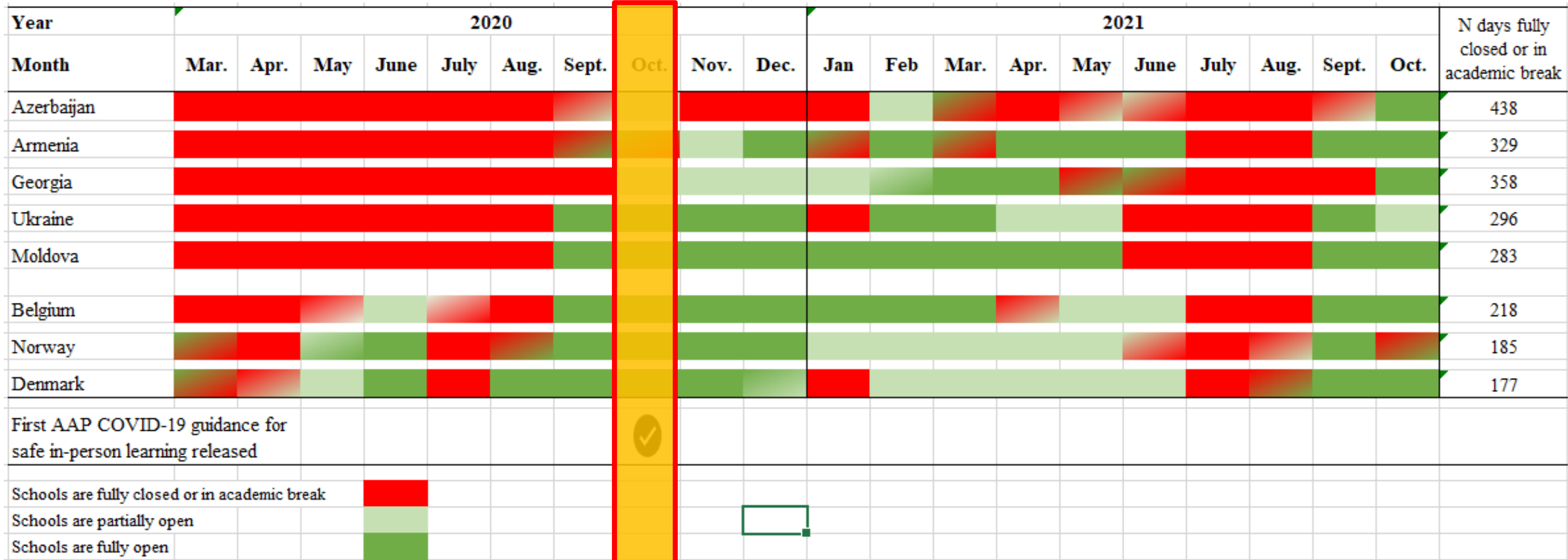WORLD BANK GROUP

How did countries face the pandemic?

Most of the efforts where concentrated in improving remote education, but the impacts are explained by school closure

Policy Alternatives

**Re-open Schools—half the class, some areas, some days.**

Keep schools closed, and try to improve the effectiveness of remote learning

# Schools remained closed more than what it was expected given the evidence.

Year	2020										2021										N days fully closed or in academic break
Month	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan	Feb	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	
Azerbaijan																					438
Armenia																					329
Georgia																					358
Ukraine																					296
Moldova																					283
Belgium																					218
Norway																					185
Denmark																					177

First AAP COVID-19 guidance for safe in-person learning released ✓

Schools are fully closed or in academic break
Schools are partially open
Schools are fully open

Source: Chinen and de Hoyos (forthcoming)

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Countries with poorer learning results prior to the pandemic, were also the ones that left schools closed longer.
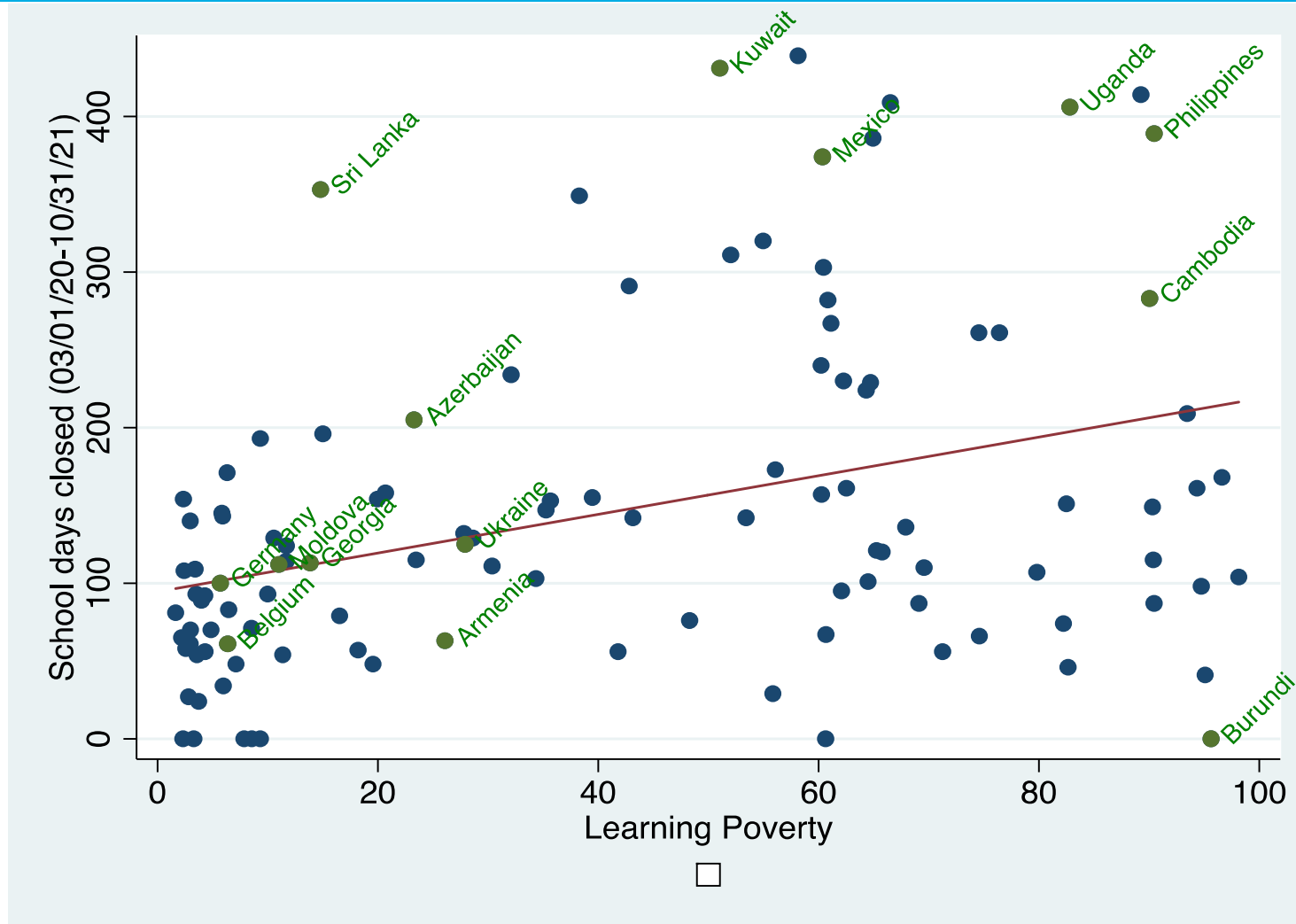
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Therefore, the learning gap between well-performing and poor-performing systems was exacerbated by COVID.
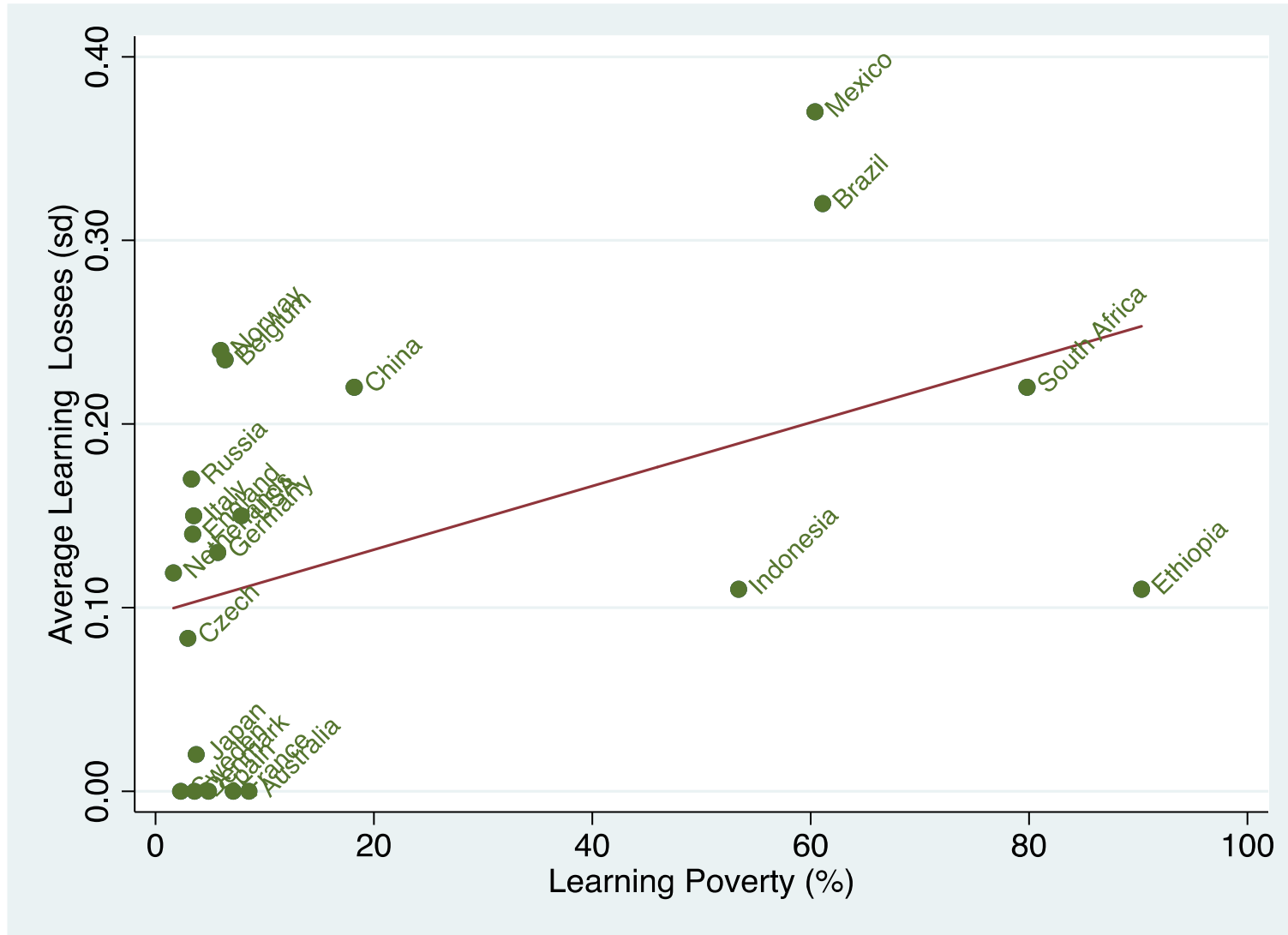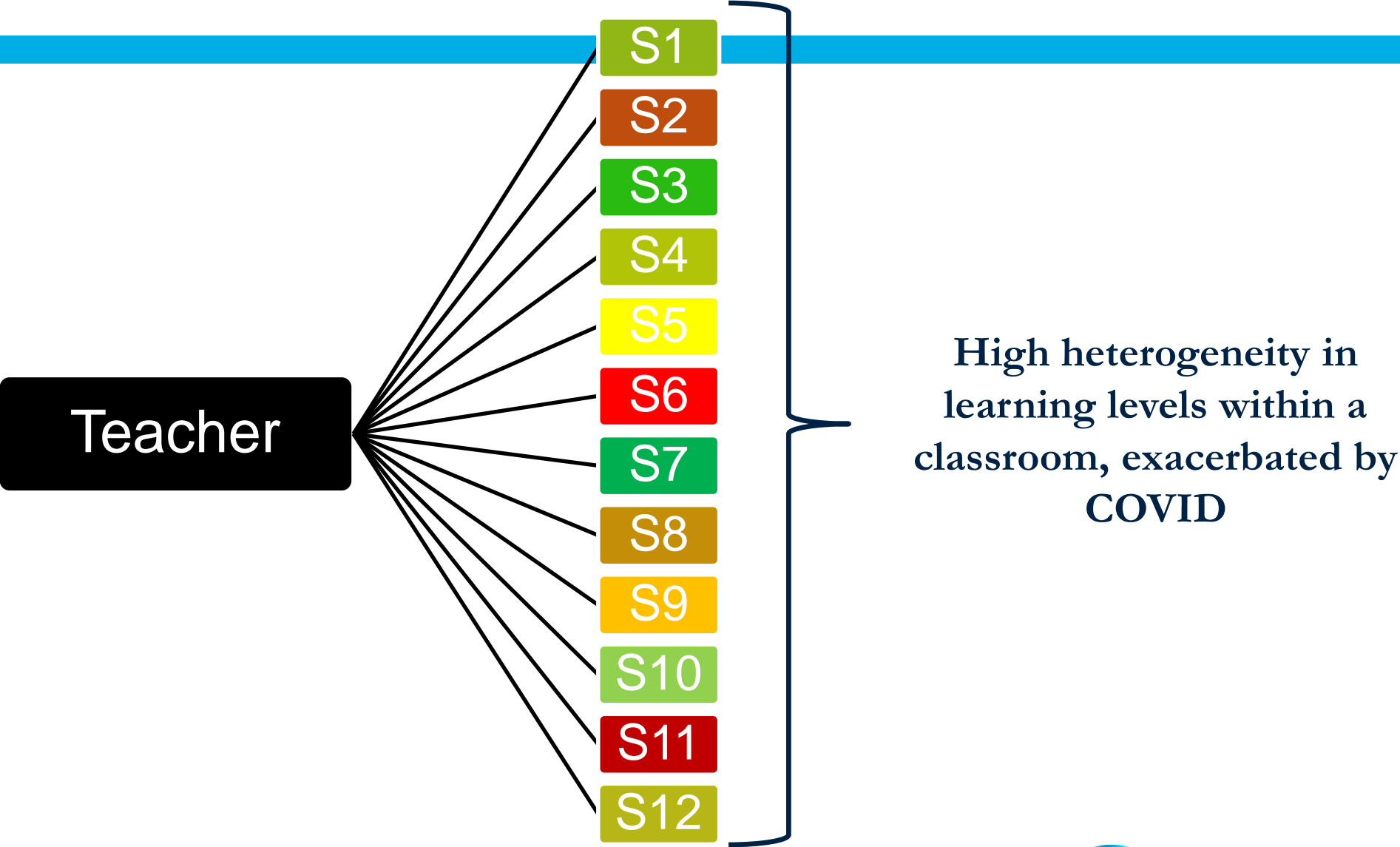
Policy options to address the learning loss.

Learning Recovery Plan

1. **Simplify**: the curriculum to prioritize foundational skills (numeracy, literacy, socio-emotional skills)

2. **Measure**: foundational skills through standardized testing.

3. **Remediate**: bring lagging students up to level through remediation policies

Learning Recovery Plan: High-dosage Tutoring as a Remediation Strategy

Country	Learning Outcome (SD)	Unit cost (per year)	Cost per 0.1 SD gain
		Online tutoring	
Italy	0.26	$55	$21
Spain	0.26	$330	$127
USA	0.55	$32	
		Tele-mentoring	
Bangladesh	0.75	$20	$3
		SMS	
Botswana	0.12	$19	$16

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Learning Recovery Plan: CAL as a Remediation Strategy

High heterogeneity in learning levels within a classroom, exacerbated by COVID

Banerjee, Duflo et al (2007), Muralidharan et al. (2019)

Learning Recovery Plan: CAL as a Remediation Strategy

Teacher

S1
S2
S3
S4
S5
S6
S7
S8
S9
S10
S11
S12

Step 1: identify learning skills of each student using diagnostic assessment.

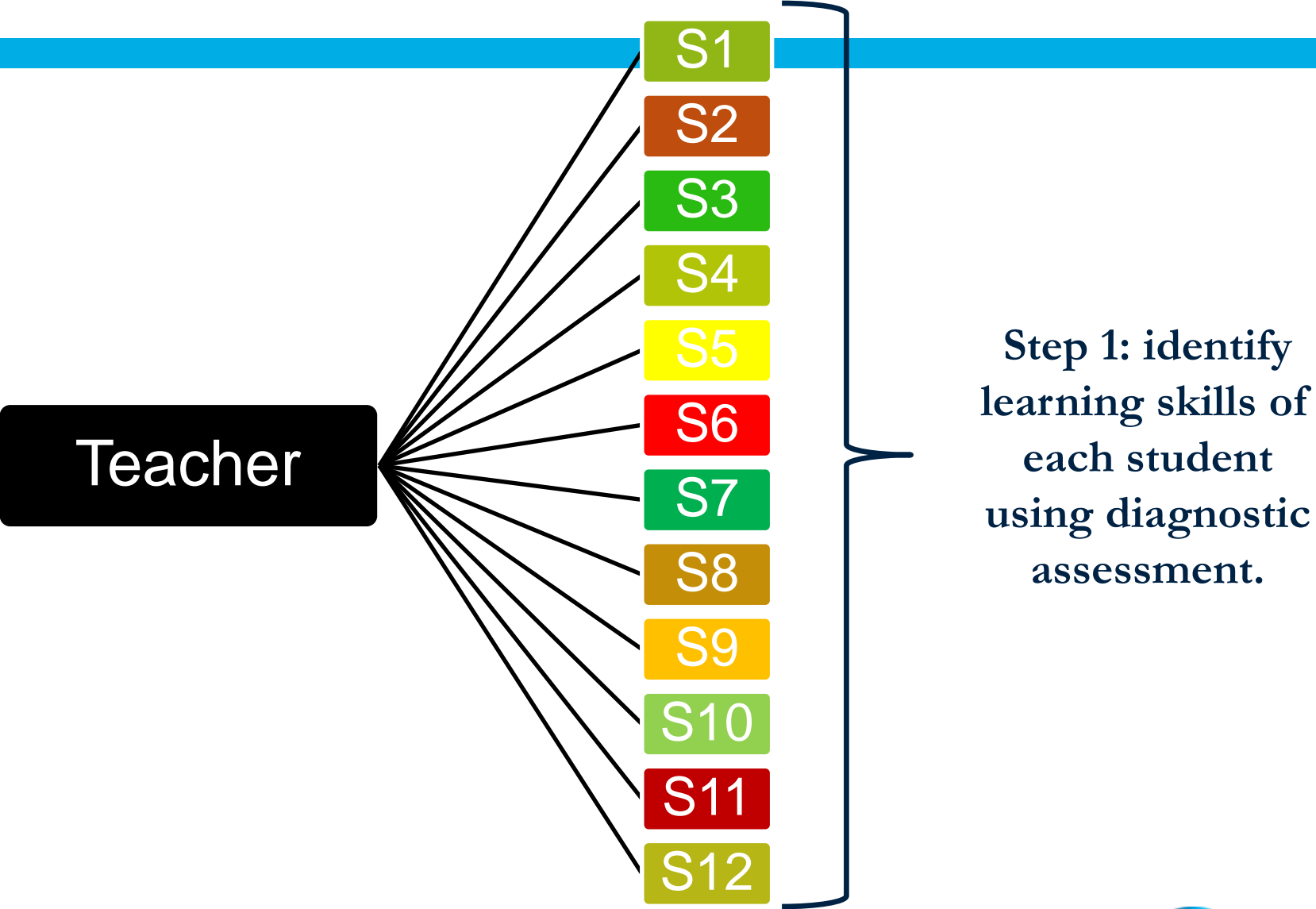Banerjee, Duflo et al (2007), Muralidharan et al. (2019)

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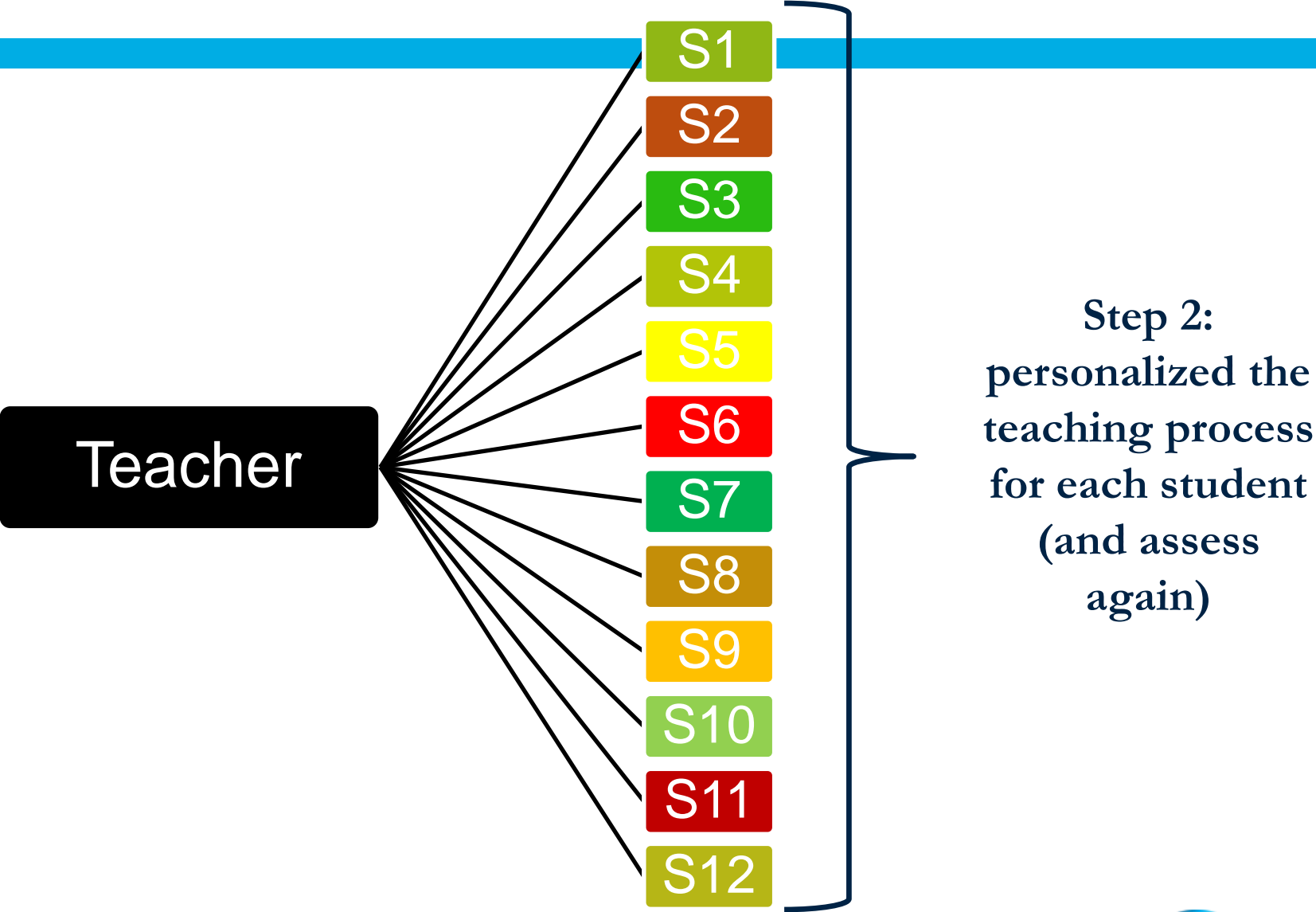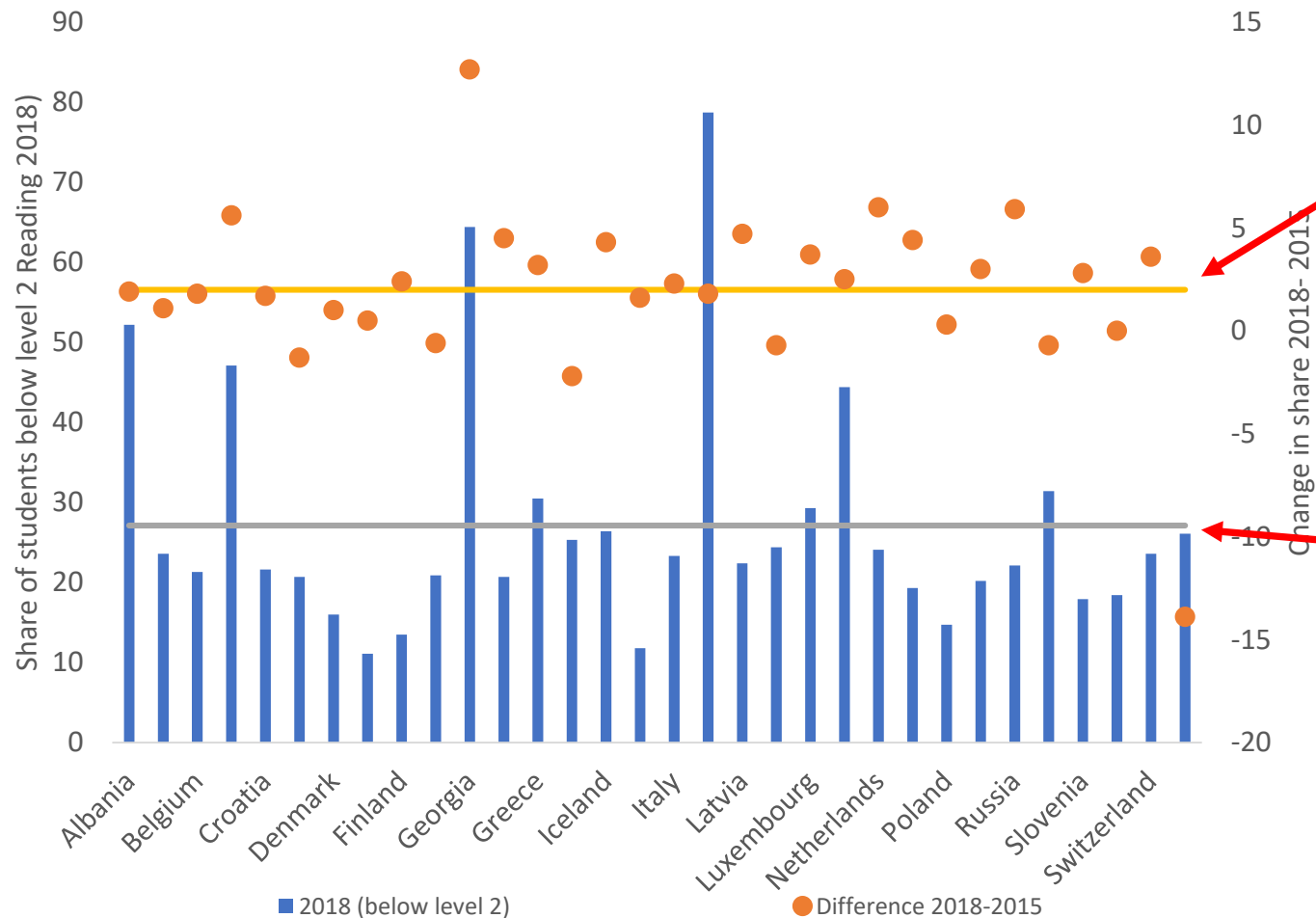
Learning Recovery Plan: CAL as a Remediation Strategy

Banerjee, Duflo et al (2007), Muralidharan et al. (2019)

Towards the construction of a resilient education system.

Before COVID we had a huge learning challenge in the region

And this share was increasing (even before COVID)!

Close to 1 in 3 students in the region are functionally illiterate. Most of them from poor households.

■ 2018 (below level 2)   ● Difference 2018-2015

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COVID can be an opportunity to address the learning crisis

1. Unequal systems are vulnerable systems. Close the gaps with permanent learning recovery plans:
   - **Prioritize**
   - **Measure**
   - **Remediate**

   Identifying good practices and introduce them as permanent characteristics of education systems.

2. COVID forced the digitalization of many areas of education systems:
   - **Development of remote education platforms and content.**
   - **Improving teachers' and students' use of technology.**

3. Lessons learned from COVID open the possibility of reaching out rural, marginalized students with effective remote education:
   - **Online Tutoring**
   - **CAL**

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COVID can be an opportunity to address the learning crisis

But none of these strategies are feasible unless two necessary conditions are met:

With more resources allocated to schools that serve the marginalized

Political leadership to create a coalition and achieve continuity

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Thank you!

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