Pandemic, technology, and the right to education

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The Latin American Network that Studies on Professor's Job (Red Estrado) was created in 1999 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The Network is a space where Latin American researchers converge, researchers who, from different perspectives and disciplines, approach the field of study on teaching work. Between Red Estrado and Red SEPA, there are points of convergence, closeness in sharing very similar objectives and interests that unite us in common struggles in Latin America.

Recently, Red Estrado, a survey was carried out on the situation of public education in times of pandemic, a collective work, carried out at the end of November and beginning of December 2020.

During the pandemic, face-to-face classes were suspended as a measure to protect students, however, the return to the classroom in Latin America took longer than in the rest of the world, according to UNICEF reports.

Therefore, as a Network, we carried out research in 13 Latin American countries with the purpose of knowing how the work of teachers was developed during the pandemic in public schools or those that received public financing, since our concern is focused on the right to education in the region, as we are the most unequal region globally.

It was very important for us to see how this work was developing and how the population was receiving the necessary public policies in the field of education during the pandemic. Among some of the conclusions, the following is detailed below.

La pandemia ha producido impactos distintos entre la población latinoamericana que es una región donde el 10% de los más ricos concentran el 68% de la riqueza. En medio de esta tragedia que viene generando más pobreza, la concentración de la riqueza no paró de crecer. Por el contrario, según el informe de la Oxfam (2020), 73 billonarios de América Latina y del Caribe aumentaron sus fortunas en US \$48,2 billones entre marzo (inicio de la pandemia) y junio de 2020.

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País	Respondentes
Brazil	15.654

Mexico	1.803
El Salvador	599
Honduras	1.475
Republica Dominicana	37
Costa Rica	1.203
Panamá	204
Colombia	3.826
Ecuador	653
Peru	988
Chile	744
Paraguay	669
Uruguay	560

Quantidade de respondentes:
- Até 500
- De 501 a 1.000
- Acima de 1.000

One of the most critical factors for carrying out teaching work during the pandemic in our countries has been the Internet connection. Seventy-five percent of upper class people are connected to the network, but among the 20% of the lower income population, only 37% have access to wi-fi. One of the most important issues we realized in the survey is that most teachers, about 90% of them, were working more during the pandemic. And although they were working from home, most of them were paying for their own Internet connectivity, their own electricity bills, they had their own laptops, their own mobiles.

What we observed was that teachers, despite working longer hours, also noted a reduction in their students' participation due to connectivity problems. This perception is also related to the lack of resources on the part of the students, such as technological devices and a good Internet connection from their homes. For teachers, the lack of good training or previous experience in this type of virtual environments and digital languages was a serious problem in most of the countries surveyed. The use of platforms, virtual teaching techniques using technologies that had to be adapted very quickly during the pandemic, which became a major challenge for teaching, as can be seen in the
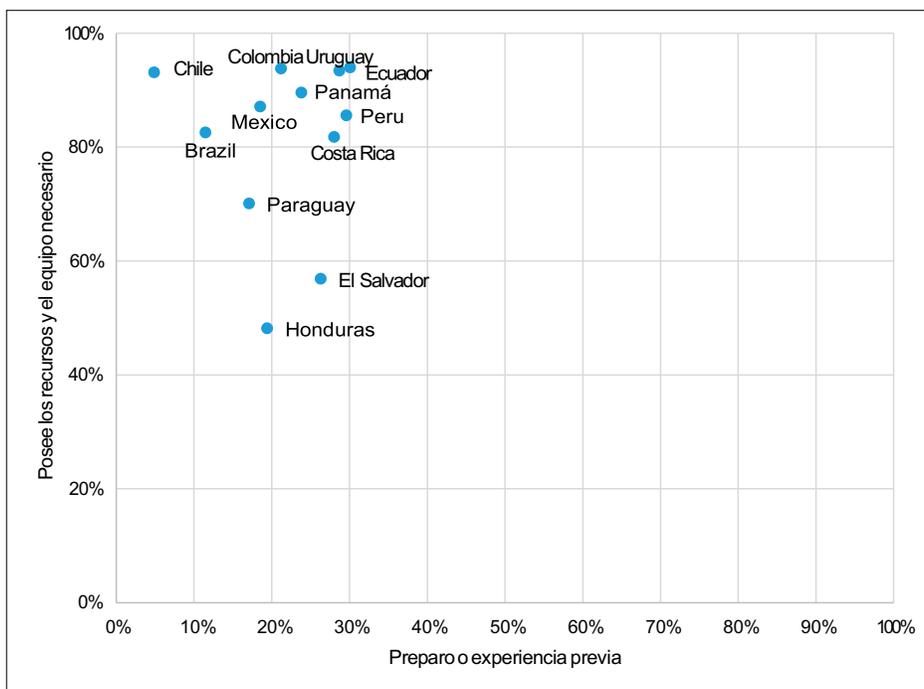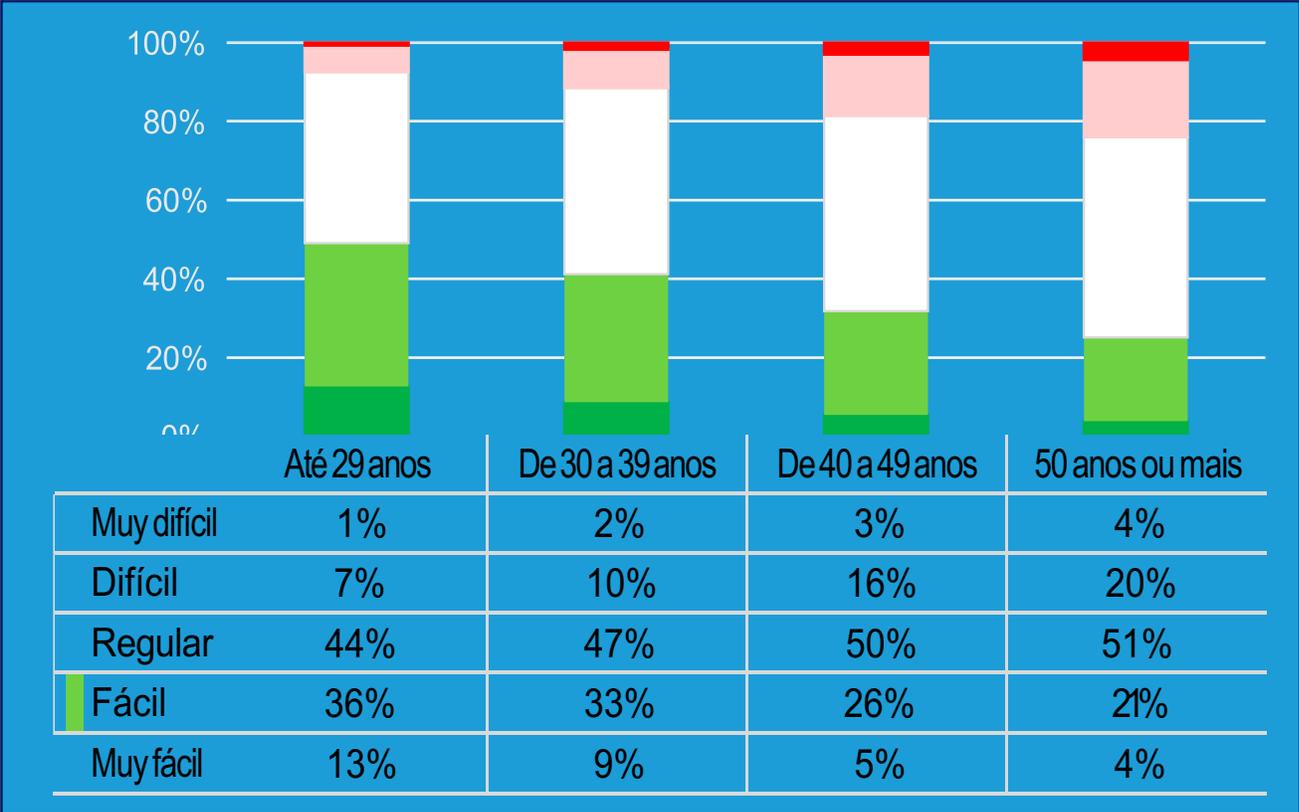

SOURCE: *TEACHING WORK IN PANDEMIC TIMES* (GESTRADO, 2020 A) AND *TEACHING WORK IN PANDEMIC TIMES* (GESTRADO, 2020 B) SOURVEY DATABANKS.

following graph. The best situation was found in the Chilean experience and the worst situation was in Honduras, which is one of the poorest and most unequal countries in our region.

Another question we tried to understand was the degree of difficulty teachers to deal with technology, and this is where we realized that this domain is related to age.

Younger generations had less difficulty dealing with technology, and people with more experience (and older) in the educational field reported more difficulties. This is somewhat worrying because in many countries most teachers are older than 40 years, i.e., they belong to generations that were not educated in a more technological world, where digital language is widely spread.
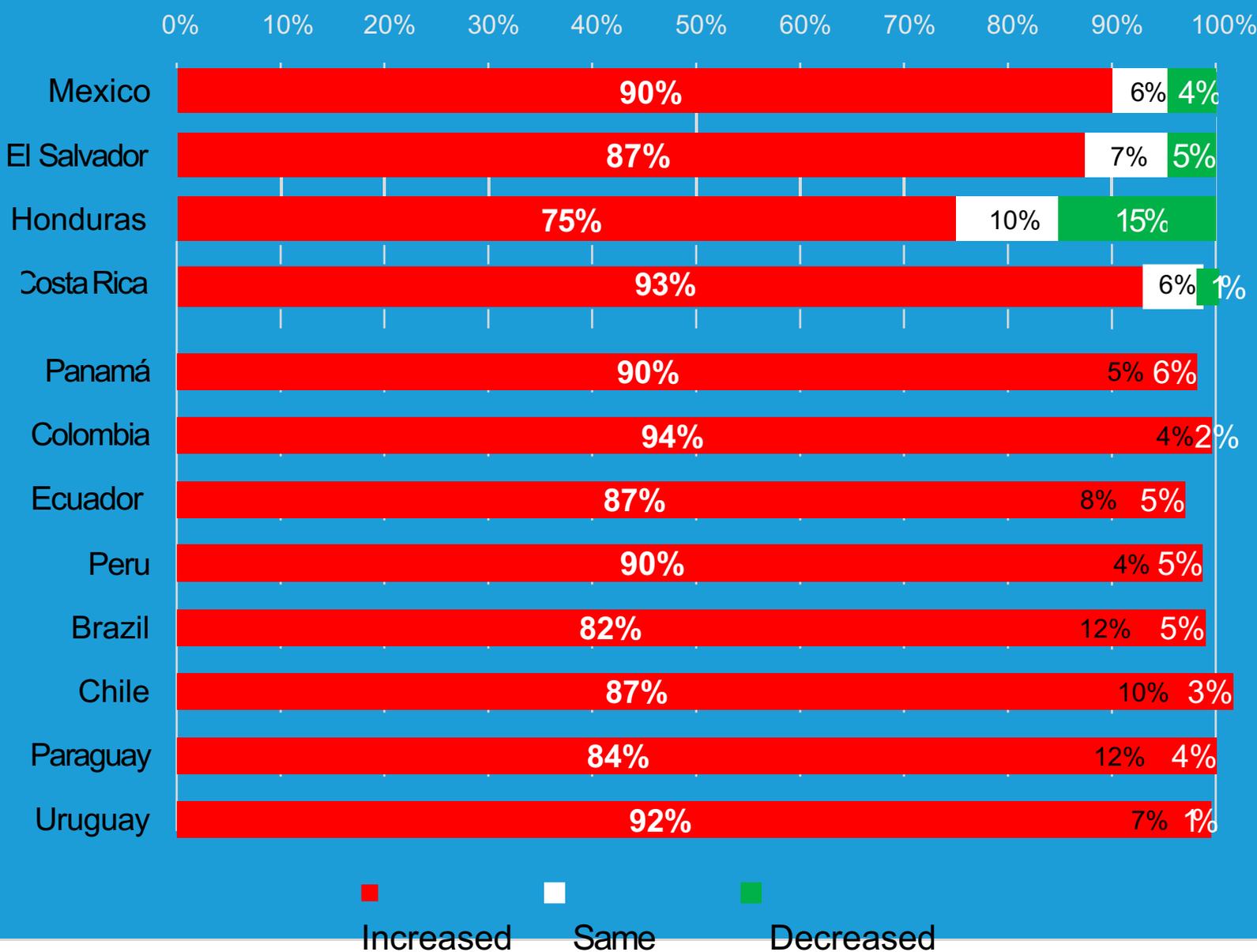
	Até 29 anos	De 30 a 39 anos	De 40 a 49 anos	50 anos ou mais
Muy difícil	1%	2%	3%	4%
Difícil	7%	10%	16%	20%
Regular	44%	47%	50%	51%
Fácil	36%	33%	26%	21%
Muy fácil	13%	9%	5%	4%

SOURCE: *TEACHING WORK IN PANDEMIC TIMES* (GESTRADO, 2020 A) AND *TEACHING WORK IN PANDEMIC TIMES* (GESTRADO, 2020B).

In the countries in which we applied the survey, thee were many data collected that offer us many possibilities for analysis. I have chosen a few only so that we can get an idea of the problems faced and the challenges that remain.

In the following graph, it is possible to see that in all the countries that participated in the survey, the majority of teachers report work, overload, in terms of how they had to prepare their classes compared to the pre-pandemic situation.

In the case of Mexico, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Panama, these are countries in which more tan 90% of the teachers surveyed responded that they were working much harder during the pandemic.

	0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Mexico	90%									6%	4%
El Salvador	87%									7%	5%
Honduras	75%								10%	15%	
Costa Rica	93%									6%	1%
Panamá	90%									5% 6%	
Colombia	94%									4% 2%	
Ecuador	87%								8%	5%	
Peru	90%									4% 5%	
Brazil	82%								12%	5%	
Chile	87%								10%	3%	
Paraguay	84%								12%	4%	
Uruguay	92%									7% 1%	

■ Increased   □ Same   ■ Decreased

SOURCE: *TEACHING WORK IN PANDEMIC TIMES*
(GESTRADO, 2020 A, GESTRADO 2020 B).

This increase in time is related to the preparation of classes for the following day, the development of new teaching strategies in an attempt to attract more students. These same teachers had the perception of less student participation, which leads us to reflect on the great educational and social debt that we have to consider in our region.

I conclude by saying that, for the post-pandemic era, we must take into account the high level of inequality in our societies. Therefore, there are many structural changes that are necessary: from a better distribution of wealth to ensuring some rights universally from now on, such as access to connectivity (Internet) to the availability of technological devices, as a public right that has to be guaranteed by the State in all countries.