

Pandemic, technology and the right to education

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The Latin American Network for Studies on Teachers' Work (Red ESTRADO) was created in 1999 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The Network is a space where Latin American researchers come together to address the field of study about teaching work from different perspectives and disciplines. Between the Red ESTRADO and IDEA Network², there are points of convergence, sharing similar objectives and interests that unite us in common struggles in Latin America.

Recently, Red ESTRADO, conducted a survey about public education in times of pandemic. This collective work was carried out at the end of November and early December 2020.

During the pandemic, face-to-face classes were suspended in many parts of the world 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.

As a Network, we carried out research in 13 Latin American countries with the purpose of understanding how the teachers' work 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 important for us to see how this work was developing and how the population was receiving the necessary public policies in education during the pandemic. Some of the key conclusions are detailed below.

The pandemic has produced different impacts among the population of Latin America, a region where the richest 10% concentrate 68% of the wealth. During this tragedy that has generated more poverty, the concentration of wealth continued to grow. According to Oxfam's 2020 study *¿Quién Paga la Cuenta?*, 73 billionaires from Latin America and the Caribbean increased their fortunes by 48.2 billion dollars between March (the beginning of the pandemic) and June 2020.

One of the most critical factors for carrying out

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SURVEY OF TEACHING WORK IN PANDEMIC TIMES / COUNTRY-PARTICIPANTS

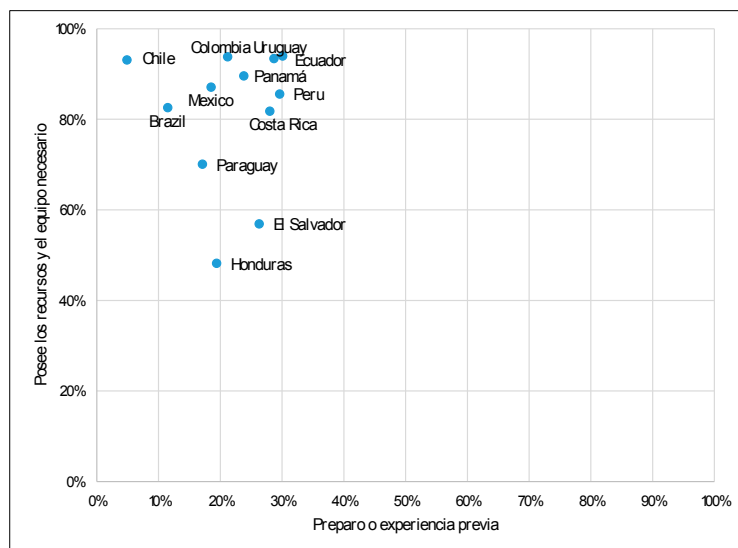
teaching work in our countries during the pandemic has been the Internet connection. 75% of upper-class people are connected to the network, but among the lower income population, only 37% have access to wi-fi. One of the most important issues we discovered through the survey is that most teachers, about 90% of them, were working more during the pandemic. And, although they were working from home, most were paying for their own Internet connectivity and their own electricity bills. They used their own laptops, and their own cell phones.

These teachers, despite working longer hours, 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 students, such as technological devices and a good Internet connection at home. For teachers, a lack of training or previous experience in virtual environments and digital languages was a serious problem in most countries surveyed. The

use of platforms and virtual teaching techniques using technologies that had to be adapted very quickly during the pandemic became a major challenge for teaching, as can be seen in the following graph. The best situation was found in the Chilean experience and the worst situation in Honduras, one of the poorest and most unequal countries in our region.

Another issue we tried to understand was the degree of difficulty teachers faced when handling new technologies, an issue that has been shown to be closely connected 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 over 40, (i.e., they belong to generations that were not educated in a more technological world, where digital language is widely spread.)

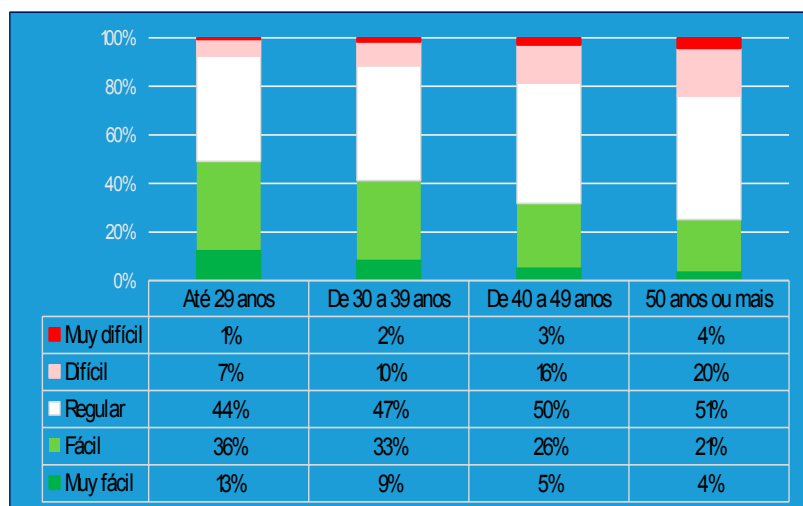
In the countries where we applied the survey, the



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

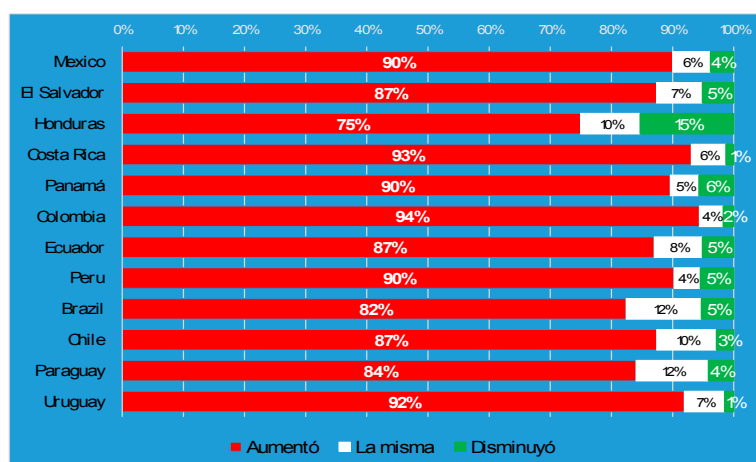
data collected offers us many possibilities for analysis. I have chosen only a few here to provide an idea of the problems faced and the challenges that remain.

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



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

SOURCE: DATABASES OF THE SURVEY TEACHING WORK IN PANDEMIC TIMES (GESTRADO, 2020A) AND TEACHING WORK IN PANDEMIC TIMES (GESTRADO, 2020B).



since the pandemic began, which leads us to reflect on the great educational and social debt that we must consider in our region.

I conclude by saying that, in the post-pandemic era, we must consider the high level of inequality in our societies and its negative impact on public education.

In the cases of Mexico, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Panama, more than 90% of teachers surveyed answered that they were working much harder during the pandemic. This increased workload is related to the preparation of classes for the following day and the development of new teaching strategies to better engage students. These same teachers had the perception that there has been less student participation

There are many structural changes that are necessary: from a better distribution of wealth to ensuring some rights are universal from now on, such as access to connectivity (Internet) and the availability of technological devices as public rights that must be guaranteed by the State in all countries.