

Report on the event

Technology and Education in Latin America:

Regional Consultation on the 2023 GEM Report



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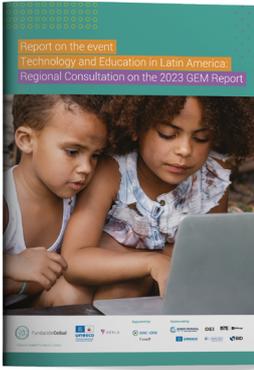


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Report on the event Technology and Education in Latin America: Regional Consultation on the 2023 GEM Report



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Abstract

This document presents a report on the event **Technology and Education in Latin America: Regional Consultation on the 2023 GEM Report**. The high-level activity, organized by Uruguay's Ceibal Foundation in collaboration with UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report, was held in the virtual format on March 29, 2022 with the participation of four Ministers and one Deputy Minister of Education and other stakeholders from the education community in the region.

The event took place in the context of UNESCO's 2023 GEM Report, whose objective is to monitor progress towards the education targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the United Nations to guide an action plan for the people, the planet and prosperity.

In addition to being a member of the GEM Report Advisory Board, Ceibal Foundation is the organization responsible for leading the regional consultation process in Latin America for the 2023 GEM Report on technology and education. The Foundation coordinates the Alliance for the Digitalization of Education in Latin America (ADELA), funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC Canada), in whose context the consultation was carried out. The activity was also undertaken in combination with other initiatives of the Foundation, such as Ceibal Foundation Digital Space and Gaming and Learning, also funded by IDRC Canada. The meeting was sponsored by IDRC Canada under the auspices of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank (WB), the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI), the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), the Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC/UNESCO Santiago) and the Office for Latin America of UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP).

The event featured a 120-minute plenary session, which was streamed live and made available on demand through Ceibal Foundation's digital channels. In addition, four consultation workshops organized into thematic discussion groups were held for registered participants. The meeting involved education authorities, representatives of international organizations, non-governmental organizations, researchers, experts, teachers, students and providers in the sector, among other members of the education community in the region, who reflected on the challenges and opportunities associated with working towards inclusive and equitable quality education. The debate focused on education and technology, based on the ideas presented in the concept note for the 2023 GEM Report and the publication "Education and Technology: the Challenge of Sustainability in Latin America", prepared by Ceibal Foundation.

From their different perspectives, the participating stakeholders agreed that technology is essential to building an education system oriented towards sustainable development, although they identified challenges common to all Latin America resulting from the profound inequalities in the region. Faced with this reality, the consensus was the necessity of working in coordination with different players and stakeholders in the education community – including areas of government, civil society and the private sector – on devising strategies that will provide innovation, resilience and equity, with a focus on the most disadvantaged sectors.



➤ Plenary Session

The plenary session of the event **Technology and Education in Latin America: Regional Consultation on the 2023 GEM Report**, organized by Uruguay's Ceibal Foundation in collaboration with the UNESCO GEM Report, presented the outlooks of high-level representatives of the international and regional digital education community, who reflected on **the challenges and opportunities associated with working towards inclusive and equitable quality education in Latin America with a focus on education and technology.**

The session, pre-recorded and broadcast live on March 29, 2022 on Ceibal Foundation's digital channels, consisted of 7 blocks lasting 120 minutes, i) Welcome and opening, ii) Main presentation, iii) Public policy panel, iv) International organizations panel, v) Non-governmental organizations panel, vi) Teachers and students Panel, and, finally, vii) Final thoughts and closing.

The structure of the exchange was based on the concept note for the 2023 GEM Report¹ and the publication "Education and Technology: the challenge of sustainability in Latin America"², prepared by the Ceibal Foundation.

The debate was presented in an original format, with post-production to facilitate its visual presentation, accompanied by graphic narration in some significant segments. After the event, the recording was made available on Ceibal Foundation's channels³, and access details were disseminated by the Foundation in coordination with GEM Report UNESCO-Paris.

Below is information on the presentations of the 7 blocks, including participants and their main ideas.

1 The Concept Note for the 2023 GEM Report presents the scope and approach proposed for the 2023 GEM Report on technology and education: [https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000378950/PDF/378950eng.pdf.multi2023 GEM Report Online consultation: https://2023gemreportconsultation.wordpress.com/](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000378950/PDF/378950eng.pdf.multi2023%20GEM%20Report%20Online%20consultation)

2 This publication brings together the outlooks of policymakers, leaders of international organizations and non-governmental organizations with a high impact on the region, as well as best practice experiences implemented in education systems in Latin America: https://fundacionceibal.edu.uy/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/FCEIBAL_Ed-and-Tech-Challenge-of-Sustainability-in-LA_V4.pdf

3 The recording of the plenary session can be accessed at: <https://fundacionceibal.edu.uy/noticia/segui-en-vivo-el-encuentro/>

Welcome and Opening

The first block was started by María Florencia Ripani, Director of Uruguay's Ceibal Foundation and member of the GEM Report Advisory Board, who welcomed the participants and invited Leandro Folgar, President of the Ceibal Foundation and Plan Ceibal, and Manos Antoninis, Director of UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report, to open the event. Federico Burone, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, International Development Research Centre (IDRC Canada), main sponsor of the event, also participated in the opening.

Highlighted Quotations



Technology plays a key role in today's education and even more so in that of the future. How to leverage the technological infrastructure to promote learning will depend on each country's possibilities".



Leandro Folgar
President, Ceibal Foundation and Plan Ceibal, Uruguay.



Systematizing and drawing attention to the ideas and perspectives of the key stakeholders in the region can contribute to strengthening policies for the promotion of the goals set by the 2030 Agenda."



Ma. Florencia Ripani
Director, Ceibal Foundation, Uruguay.



In this phase we can capitalize on recent learning in blended education systems by adapting technologies with different degrees of convergence, but we need the right balance of change and perseverance in the development of comprehensive skills in the students."



Federico Burone,
Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, IDRC, Uruguay.



The 2023 GEM Report will focus on the education problems that technology can solve and the conditions that must be met for technology to support education... These challenges are about access, equity and inclusion, quality and the development of basic and digital skills, technological development and management of the education system".



Manos Antoninis,
Director, Global Education Monitoring Report, UNESCO, France.

Main presentation

The main presentation was made by Fernando Reimers, Professor and Director of the Global Education Innovation Initiative at Harvard University, who stressed that the pandemic has been an extraordinary opportunity to experiment with the use of technologies in a crisis.

Reimers highlighted the power of technology for managing the operation of the education system and the innovation process itself in other ways, and enhancing the power of collaboration between teachers and different centres.

Highlighted Quotations



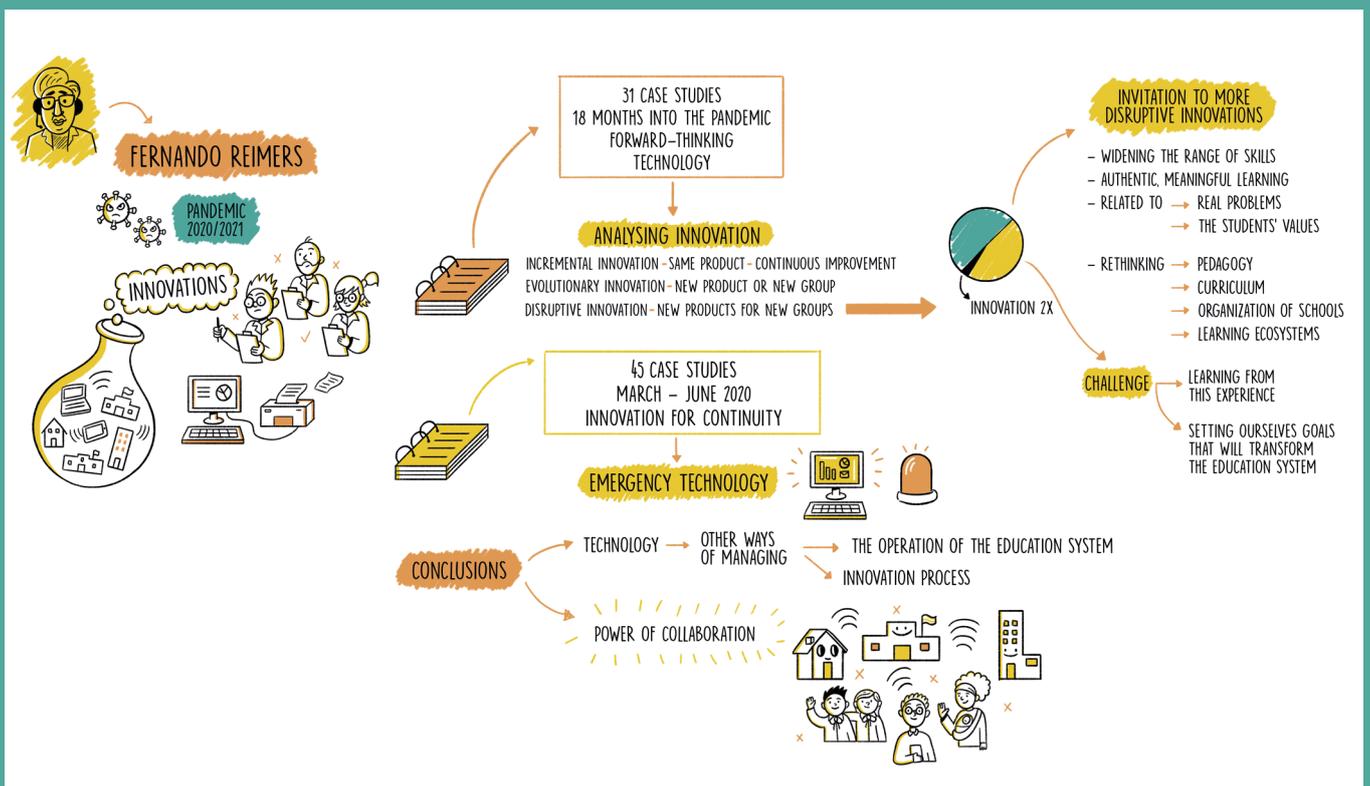
Fernando Reimers
Professor and Director
of the Global Education
Innovation Initiative,
Harvard.



“There is very little truly disruptive innovation in which technology is used to widen the range of skills and move towards more collaborative or student-centred forms of learning.”

“The challenge that lies ahead is to learn from the experience of the pandemic, from this immersion that we’ve all gone through in using technology, but we must set ourselves goals that will transform the education system, aligning it with a forward-looking approach.”

“This report is an invitation to more disruptive innovation. We must make learning authentic and meaningful by rethinking pedagogy, the curriculum, the teaching profession itself, the organization of schools and the creation of a learning ecosystem”.



Public policy panel

The heads of the Education portfolios in the region reflected on the challenges and opportunities of technology for education policies in Latin America. The officials highlighted the challenges posed by the pandemic in terms of inequality. They pointed out the significance of public policy orientation in relation to connectivity, access to devices, pedagogical aspects, and the need for collaboration between the different countries. This segment was moderated by María Florencia Ripani, Director of Ceibal Foundation. Fundación Ceibal.



Highlighted Quotations

“Those who master technology will be better prepared for an increasingly digitalized and challenging world. Technology is the true tool for progress, but there are still many challenges before equity in access is guaranteed”.



Esteban Bullrich,
former Minister of Education.
 Argentina

“It is necessary to strengthen a comprehensive transformation of the education system: make it more interdisciplinary, project-based, closer to the community, and think about digital citizenship, information and media literacy”.



María Brown,
Minister of Education.
 Ecuador

“The pandemic compounded pre-existing problems related to the proficiency of teachers, the level of connectivity, and the extremely high costs of internet services. The use of smartphones was a great opportunity”.



Daniel Esponda,
Minister of Education.
 Honduras

“By now, most of us have gone back to face-to-face attendance, and for those who still haven't, this is a priority: to fight for those families and children who have dropped out. But the second and more important priority is to bridge learning gaps.”



Ma. Victoria Angulo,
Minister of National Education.
 Colombia

“The vision that the Ministry of Education was promoting was strengthened in some way and became apparent with the pandemic, and this forced us to reflect on the use of technology, and in a way technology became essential.”



Ricardo Cardona,
Deputy Minister of Education, Science and Technology.
 El Salvador

“You can have connectivity and devices but fail anyway. There is a lot of work to be done in the pedagogical interface and the design of products and platforms. The other factor is the human one: none of the above works without properly trained teachers.”



Pablo Da Silveira,
Minister of Education and Culture.
 Uruguay

Non-governmental organizations panel

This panel, which brought together non-governmental organizations from the region, was moderated by Agustín Porres, Latin America Regional Director for the Varkey Foundation, and focused on investigating what best practices in the region can contribute to the debate on technology and education. In general, the panel underscored the possibility of highlighting the regional dimension: coming together and having views that are very different but greatly enrich the debate. Each of these investigations and their presentations bring the macro report to life because they show from different places evidence of what works and what is not yet known and helps to make better decisions. They highlighted the centrality of teachers in order to stress that as non-governmental organizations they have the challenge of being close to them and supporting them.

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 WHAT EVIDENCE IS THERE IN THE REGION THAT CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEBATE ON TECHNOLOGY AND EDUCATION?



Highlighted Quotations ↗

“We have to come out of our own organizations and learn from others so that construction occurs with an increasingly broader team. It is an urgent need of our system, which needs us, and we’ll hopefully rise to the occasion”.



Agustín Porres,
LATAM Regional Director,
Varkey Foundation.


Leda M. Muñoz,
Executive Director, Omar
Dengo Foundation.

“The pandemic and its widespread uncertainty have stimulated research on the subject of education and technology. This allows us to produce evidence that is extremely necessary for the discussion and definition of public policy.”

“Simply providing equipment doesn’t lead to satisfactory results. You need a teaching model and a guided use or a structured pedagogy that will contribute to the best use of this resource”.



Santiago Cueto,
Executive Director,
Group for the Analysis of
Development (GRADE).


Richard Culatta,
Chief Executive Officer,
International Society for
Technology in Education
(ISTE).

“The main factor for technology to have a positive impact has to do with teacher training. There is an infrastructure already in place which can be used to tackle inequality and bridge gaps.”

“I think the main thing is to see how we adapt these technologies, and that calls for evidence that’ll help us promote social justice in a region that is the most unequal in the world.”



Javier González,
Laboratory of Education
Research and Innovation
for Latin America and the
Caribbean (SUMMA).


Fernando Salvatierra,
Programme Specialist
on ICT, IIEP, UNESCO,
Argentina.

“Our research shows that until 2020 digital penetration in education systems was incidental, fragmented. At the regional level, with some exceptions, no state policies are sustained over time”.

Teachers and students panel

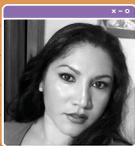
This segment involved the participation of teachers and students from Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Uruguay, who presented their ideas about how technology can promote teaching and learning. The panel was moderated by Carlos Vargas Tamez, Head of UNESCO's Teacher Development Section and Head of the Secretariat of the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (TTF). The students, a teacher and the rector of an institution highlighted the great potential of technologies for promoting inclusive education and jointly generating learning spaces and activities. However, there are challenges, such as training teachers in the use of technologies, which the region has yet to rise to. The promotion of equity requires full access to the technologies, connection, devices and material conditions that make their use possible.

Highlighted Quotations

“We know that technologies can lead to exclusion, but the panel will focus on how they can achieve inclusion, that is, how they can support learning processes for specific needs in the context of a crisis and disrupted education.”



Carlos Vargas Tamez,
Head of UNESCO's Teacher Development Section.



Leidy Pinargote,
Rector, Simón Bolívar Elementary School, Parroquia Santa Marianita.

 **Ecuador**

“Technology benefits students because it makes the lessons more attractive when videos, songs and interactive games are played. If you add the internet, the lessons are more investigative, reflective; you encourage reading”.

“Technology in education allows us to solve problems related to human needs by taking advantage of everything we have to improve the learning experience and enriching teaching practices.”



Nilson Fabián Díaz Martínez,
Teacher, Absalón Torres Camacho Educational Institution.

 **Colombia**

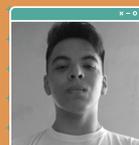


Ammie Zamora Villalobos,
Student, San Felipe Neri Special Education Centre.

 **Costa Rica**

“Technology is very important in learning. Through videos, we can do assignments, download games, talk to other people. I use my computer to learn and listen to my Christian music.”

“My generation are considered to be digital natives: we don't just depend on technology; we need it for our daily routine. Technology has been a turning point in teaching”.



Anthony Nieves,
Student, Secondary School N° 1 in Artigas.

 **Uruguay**

Final thoughts and closing

The closing of the plenary session was led by authorities of Ceibal Foundation and the GEM Report, who highlighted the importance of the ideas shared by the wide range of stakeholders from the regional education community that participated in the event. At the closing of this first part of the session, Leandro Folgar, President of Ceibal Foundation, Manos Antoninis, Director of UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, and María Florencia Ripani, Director of Ceibal Foundation and member of the GEM Report Advisory Board, highlighted the ideas presented, many of them drawing attention to the challenges of access to technology in the region as a result of inequality, as well as opportunities for innovation and change generated by the increasing awareness of the significance of technology in education in the context of the pandemic.

Highlighted Quotations

“Technology is not a solution for education, but there is no future in education without technology. In this respect, the challenge is directly linked to the reduction of inequalities in access to devices and connectivity, but also to suitable and meaningful use, and to quality education through technology.”

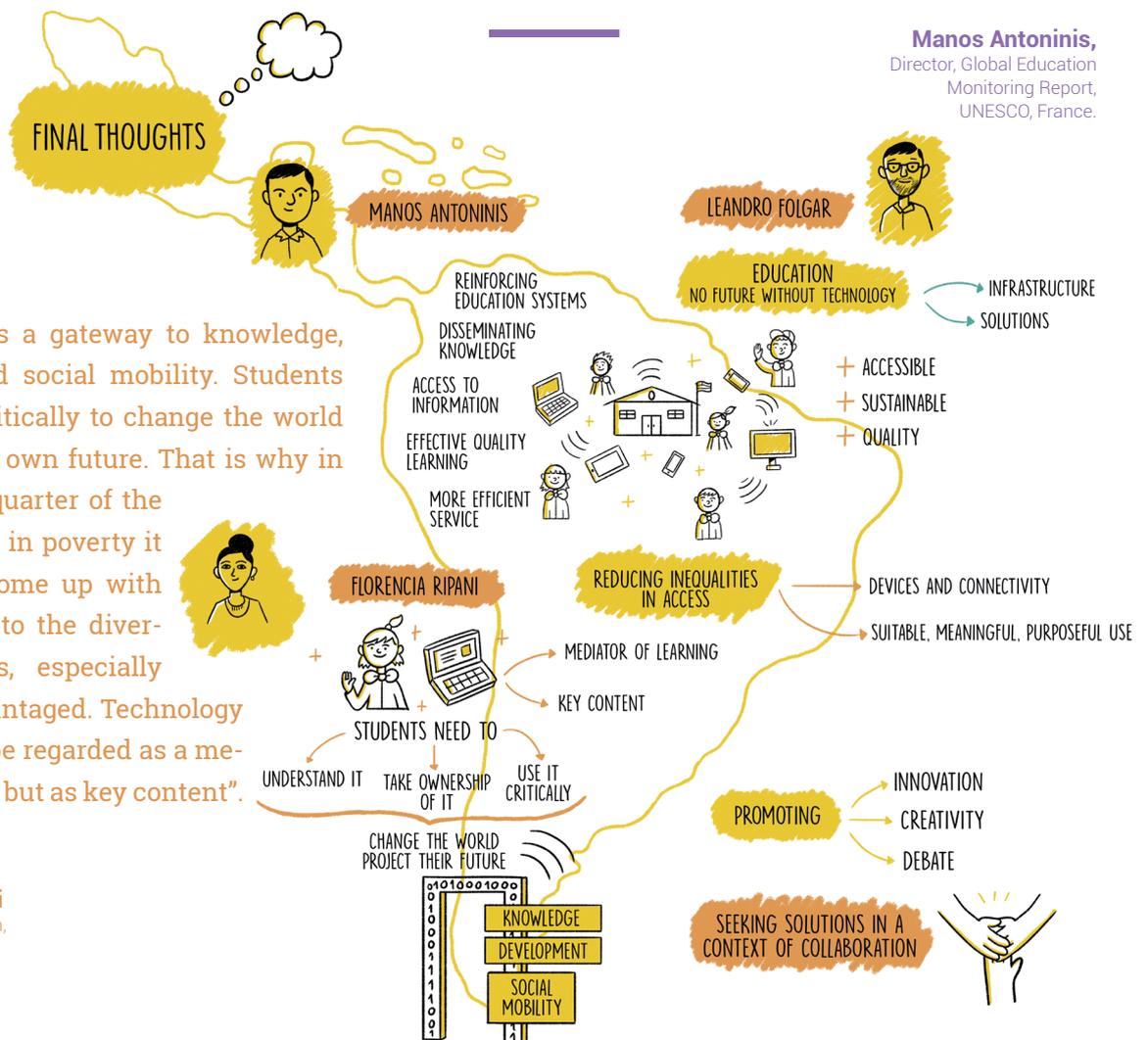
Leandro Folgar
President, Ceibal Foundation and Plan Ceibal, Uruguay.

“Although the outbreak of the pandemic has accelerated the use of technology in education, we must ensure that technology strengthens education systems, the dissemination of knowledge, access to information, effective quality learning, and a more efficient provision of services. Only in this way can technology be used to advance towards compliance with SDG 4.”

Manos Antoninis,
Director, Global Education Monitoring Report, UNESCO, France.

“Technology is a gateway to knowledge, development and social mobility. Students need to use it critically to change the world and project their own future. That is why in a region with a quarter of the population living in poverty it is essential to come up with solutions suited to the diversity of contexts, especially the more disadvantaged. Technology should not only be regarded as a mediator of learning but as key content.”

Ma. Florencia Ripani
Director, Ceibal Foundation, Uruguay.



Consultation Workshops

The second part of the event consisted of consultation workshops organized into thematic working groups, which included trigger presentations, exchange segments and a space for sharing and closing. The workshop participants were representatives of various stakeholders from education communities in Latin America, including technical teams from national education portfolios, international organizations, government organizations and other players, including research centres, think-tanks and technology providers with an impact on the region. Below are some of the ideas put forward by this wide range of actors.

Welcome and Opening

“Today more than ever we have to mobilize human and material resources, plan, adapt proposed curricula, diversify teaching formats and support students and families through the uncertainty of future times and situations.” **Denise Valliant**, Academic Director of the Institute of Education, ORT University, and member of the Board of Directors of the Ceibal Foundation, Uruguay.

“The challenge is to see how these tools, the new technologies, contribute to social cohesion; to make sure that they are more democratic and at the service of all students and that they improve learning”. **Andrés Delich**, Deputy Secretary General of OEI, Spain.

Working Group 1

The first group reflected on how providers can contribute to promoting access to technology and preventing gaps between different students and schools. This space was moderated by Laura Stipanovic, GEM Report Project Officer, UNESCO. The participants were Laura Álvarez Modernel, Head of Public Sector Programmes, South Latin America, Amazon; Mauricio Moreno, Business Development Director for the Public Sector and Education, LATAM, CISCO; Hernán Muhafara, Director for Public Sector and Education Sales for Latin America, Intel Corporation; Luciano Braverman, Education Lead, Microsoft Latin America, and Rodrigo Rodríguez, CEO, ODILO.

Working Group 2

The second group focused on discussing how to incorporate digital skills into syllabi, the design of educational resources and teacher training, and

was moderated by Fernanda Guliak, Executive Director of ReachingU Foundation, Uruguay. Participating as experts were Camila Morsch, Director of English Language, Education and Society of the British Council; Cecilia Rodríguez Alcalá, Founder of Paraguay Educa; Zelmira May, Education Specialist, UNESCO Montevideo, and Juan Pedro Mir, President, EDUY21.

Working Group 3

The third group, moderated by Alejandra Vargas, IDRC Canada Senior Programme Specialist, discussed how technology can promote inclusion in education by considering vulnerable contexts, special needs, and the gender gap. Participating as experts were Ma. Elena García Mora, Senior Specialist for Social Sustainability and Inclusion at the World Bank; Susana Martínez Restrepo, Managing Partner and Director of Research and Development at Corewoman, and Martina Bailón, Head of the Training Department, Plan Ceibal.

Working Group 4

Finally, the fourth group reflected on how education policies can promote access, equity and inclusion through technology. This space was moderated by Vanesa D'Alessandre, Associate Researcher of Education and Social Protection at CIPPEC. Participating as experts were Marissela Figueroa, Deputy Minister of Education of Honduras; Florencio Ceballos, Senior Programme Specialist, IDRC Canada; Diego Vázquez, General Coordinator of the KIX project of Ceibal Foundation, and Ana Castillo Leska, Senior Specialist, IDB Lab.

Highlighted Quotations

“The acquisition of digital skills is maximized in a teacher who feels they are the owner of their profession: a teacher in continuous training, driven by the urge to discover new ways of teaching”, **Fernanda Guliak**, Executive Director, ReachingU Foundation, Uruguay.

“We must integrate digital skills across the curriculum. There is a great opportunity for multidisciplinary work and the development of 21st century skills. Students must be able to transition from consumers to digital creators”, **Cecilia Rodríguez Alcalá**, Founder, Paraguay Educa, Paraguay.

“Scaling technological innovations in education with a gender perspective should be a regional priority. This should not only ensure inclusive access but also adapt content to reflect gender and intersectionality matters, including gender-based violence issues”, **Alejandra Vargas**, Senior Programme Specialist, IDRC Canada.

“This pilot (literacy app with the Ceibal Foundation) provides the public education system with a new way of playing its role by working with private innovators to continue implementing new solutions to the challenges of education and expand the range of technological solutions available to students and educators”, **Ana Castillo Leska**, Especialista Senior BID Lab, Uruguay.

“A successful transformation of education with a greater focus on equity and integrating technologies as learning accelerators calls for specialized institutions arrayed at the service of the education system which promote innovation”, **Marissela Figueroa**, Deputy Minister of Education, Honduras.

“In education and technology, partial, disjointed and short-term responses go against quality public policy. One part – pedagogy, access, training, industry, etc. – of a whole doesn’t work in isolation: there need to be spaces for the articulation of these integrated responses”, **Florencio Ceballos**, Senior Programme Specialist, IDRC, Canada.

“I am pleased to share experiences and put forward proposals that will guarantee the right to education. We promote the development of critical thinking and seek to ensure the safety of students and teachers. We work for fair, inclusive, equitable education of excellence every single day”. **Azucena Pimentel Mendoza**, General Coordinator @prende.mx, Mexico’s Secretariat of Public Education.

Closing

“Technology is not neutral. Plan Ceibal, a true education innovation agency, works to contextualize it, and we are strongly committed to teacher training”. **Gonzalo Baroni**, National Director of Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture and member of the Board of Directors of the Ceibal Foundation, Uruguay.

“Technology has given us freedom. How can we transfer that freedom to the students? It’s necessary to make a cultural change with the teachers to promote student autonomy”, **Pablo Bartol**, Social and Human Development Manager at CAF, Uruguay.



Conclusions

The high-level consultation event in Latin America for the 2023 GEM Report, organized by Ceibal Foundation of Uruguay in coordination with UNESCO, fully met the expectations in terms of the quality of the contributions, the range of sectors represented and the dynamics of the event, which made for a clear, well-structured presentation of ideas. Specific spaces were set aside for the exchange, and the plenary session was recorded and made available on demand.

One of the strengths was the quality and variety of speakers and participants from twelve countries in the region, which included Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Education from 5 countries (Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras and Uruguay), heads of the education departments of international organizations, such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, and regional development agencies such as IDRC Canada -sponsor of the event-, representatives of non-governmental organizations and professionals in the sector, such as the Inter-American Dialogue, ISTE, Varkey Foundation, Omar Deigo Foundation, GRADE and SUMMA, as well as specialists, academics, representatives of technology companies, teachers and students. In addition, the activity, which took place in the context of ADELA, was sponsored by IDRC Canada under the auspices of international organizations with a high impact and influence on education in the region.

The reflections of the various participants identified barriers to the use of the potential of technology in education that are largely related to inequality, which is a result of a lack of access to connectivity and devices and particularly affects the more disadvantaged sectors.

There was also agreement as to the opportunities that arose during the pandemic and the understanding that technology is essential for facilitating teaching and learning practices. Stress was laid on the need to strengthen teaching skills in digital education and work on modifying the curriculum in order to focus on key content and incorporate soft skills.

Although it was pointed out that the region exhibits different contexts and not all experiences are replicable in different countries, it was agreed that the possibility of sharing achievements and lessons learnt creates a unique opportunity that can contribute to strengthening education policies on technology.



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