



Original article

Basic education: challenges for post-pandemic Ecuadorian education

Educación básica: desafíos para la educación ecuatoriana postpandemia

Educação básica: desafios para a educação equatoriana pós-pandemia

Marco Vinicio Duque-Romero¹



<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3198-0924>

Amparito Katleen Puebla-Molina¹



<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5641-8439>

¹ Indoamerica Technological University. Ecuador.



marcoduque@uti.edu.ec,
apueblamolina@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

After the pandemic and the changes that it produced, a series of challenges that education is going through can be glimpsed. The objective of the article was aimed at analyzing the innovations implemented in education in the post-pandemic, through bibliographic research, to identify existing challenges. It was based on research with a qualitative approach, using a descriptive approach with a bibliographical analysis of information; For this, documents from the last five years were selected. The main results obtained highlight countries that have created protocols for face-to-face progressive returns; The Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI) suggested different percentages of return to school depending on each country. Hybrid education is presented as an innovation, it is insisted on not returning to the traditional style of education, but readapting these activities with the technology that was part of the pandemic. It is crucial to highlight the effort that each country makes for face-to-face return, seeking strategies to reduce digital gaps. A hybrid education is proposed, accepted by all countries, but not very executed due to the adjustment of existing budgets. It is concluded that tax education is the most affected by the lack of resources in the institutions and the economic situation of each family.

Keywords: hybrid classrooms; educational challenges; long distance education; post-pandemic education.

RESUMEN

Luego de la pandemia y los cambios que esta produjo, se vislumbra una serie de desafíos por los que está atravesando la educación. El objetivo del artículo estuvo dirigido a analizar las innovaciones implementadas en la educación en la postpandemia, mediante una investigación bibliográfica, para la identificación de los desafíos existentes. Se basó en una investigación con enfoque

qualitativo, utilizando un enfoque descriptivo con un análisis bibliográfico de información; para ello se seleccionaron documentos de los últimos cinco años. Los principales resultados que se obtuvieron destacan a países que han creado protocolos para retornos progresivos presenciales; la Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos (OEI) sugirió diferentes porcentajes de regreso a clases dependiendo de cada país. Se presenta la educación híbrida como una innovación, se insiste en no regresar al estilo tradicional de educación, sino readaptando estas actividades con la tecnología que fue parte de la pandemia. Es crucial destacar el esfuerzo que cada país realiza para el retorno presencial, buscando estrategias para disminuir las brechas digitales. Se plantea una educación híbrida, aceptada por todos los países, pero no muy ejecutada por el ajuste de presupuestos existentes. Se concluye que la educación fiscal es la más afectada por la falta de recursos en las instituciones y la situación económica de cada familia.

Palabras clave: aulas híbridas; desafíos educativos; educación a distancia; educación postpandemia.

RESUMO

Após a pandemia e as mudanças que ela produziu, uma série de desafios que a educação está enfrentando é iminente. O objetivo do artigo foi analisar as inovações implementadas na educação no pós-pandemia, por meio de pesquisa bibliográfica, para identificar os desafios existentes. Baseou-se em uma pesquisa com abordagem qualitativa, utilizando abordagem descritiva com análise bibliográfica das informações; Para isso, foram selecionados documentos dos últimos cinco anos. Os principais resultados obtidos destacam países que criaram protocolos para retornos progressivos presenciais; A Organização dos Estados Ibero-Americanos (OEI) sugere diferentes percentuais de

retorno à escola dependendo de cada país. A educação híbrida é apresentada como uma inovação, insiste-se em não voltar ao estilo tradicional de educação, mas readaptar essas atividades com a tecnologia que fez parte da pandemia. É fundamental destacar o esforço que cada país faz para o retorno presencial, buscando estratégias para reduzir as brechas digitais. Propõe-se uma educação híbrida, aceita por todos os países, mas pouco executada devido ao ajuste dos orçamentos existentes. Conclui-se que a educação tributária é a mais afetada pela falta de recursos nas instituições e pela situação econômica de cada família.

Palavras-chave: salas de aula híbridas; desafios educacionais; Educação a Distância; educação pós-pandemia.

INTRODUCTION

This study addresses the challenges presented by basic education in post-pandemic times. In 2019, the pandemic declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) for COVID-19 forced the development of a new education model.

In Ecuador, face-to-face classes were suspended as of March 12, 2020, with many educational centers assuming virtual activities (Castro-Castro *et al.*, 2020). In May 2021, the Ecuadorian state calls for the restart of school activities with a mixed modality; This post-pandemic stage is presented with an educational variant little explored in our region, such as hybrid education, combining face-to-face with virtuality.

In this context, the application of hybrid education presents itself with some difficulties, from an inadequate infrastructure in schools to teachers with

little training in the use of this technology, and the accompaniment of students in this mixed modality that is experienced in the post-pandemic. Additionally, there are deficient budgets in the states for education; the family economy has also suffered a breakdown, which is why school dropouts have increased.

The United Nations Organization for Culture, Science and Education UNESCO (Lardé, 2021) states that education in the period of a pandemic has remained absent from the investments of world governments; it has only benefited from 0.78%, which is aimed at recovery plans on a global scale.

According to data from the Economic Commission for Latin America, ECLAC and UNESCO (Lardé, 2021) establish that in the 25 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean there has been an economic contraction due to the pandemic, decreasing by 9% between 2019 and in 2020. It should be noted that the United Nations (UN) analyzed that in low- and middle-income countries, 40% do not support economically disadvantaged students, considering that at least 10% of all countries in the world they have laws that guarantee inclusion (Cáceres-Correa, 2020).

In Ecuador, in the budget for Education, according to Gómez-Ponce (2020), the government decreased from 5,147 to 4,569 (figures in millions of dollars). Castro-Castro *et al.* (2020) indicate that in Basic General Education (EGB) there is a lag of 2.62% and a dropout of 2.00%, and it is stated that the number of students who are not attending classes regularly increased by 14,000 girls, boys and adolescents; this is due to all the problems that the pandemic brought with it.

Everyone's commitment is crucial at this stage; educational institutions must meet the administrative challenge of equipping their facilities with up-to-date technology, transforming them into learning spaces

where social relationships are always present (Ruiz-Mejías, 2020); teachers will accompany their students, aware that the pandemic caused new psychological needs; they are the ones called to show solidarity with the boys and girls in this transition process.

ECLAC AND UNESCO have published documents that analyze the challenges for education, making recommendations to address the impact caused by COVID-19. Within this, prioritizing expenses is mentioned, bearing in mind that education is a fundamental right of every human being, creating resilient systems for a better social recovery and response to crises; without neglecting equity and inclusion. In this way, it will be the vulnerable groups that are not left out of the path of knowledge. Maintaining the quality of the study contents, giving socio-emotional support and specialized training to teachers (Lardé, 2021).

According to the UN, there is a vast unexplored resource to reestablish basic educational services, but it is essential to accelerate positive change in teaching-learning, promoting consultation and communication mechanisms, without forgetting to maintain social equity, but supporting the preparation of teachers, broadening the definition of the right to education to include connectivity. The government is responsible for keeping the principles faithful and carrying out reforms (Good, 2021).

The Ministry of Education of Ecuador presents the campaign *Education is the way*, which guides the plan *Together we learn and take care of ourselves*, thus giving guidelines to overcome the challenges that arise, providing resources and platforms that help vulnerable children in the country, Thus, it is encouraged to continue and deepen all efforts that guarantee education for all (Burgos & Villagómez, 2021).

This study is aimed at the academic community because, by posing the challenges that post-pandemic education presents, it aims to give a global and systematized vision of what it is going through, putting into practice what has been learned during the pandemic; Despite being a difficult transition stage, it also left positive things that must be rescued and improved during the post-pandemic.

The research presents as objective: to analyze the innovations given in education in the post-pandemic, through bibliographical research, to identify the existing challenges.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present work was carried out through a study with a qualitative approach, which is a research design that is based on observations to reach conclusions. A method of bibliographic analysis and information systematization was used, as it is conclusive when collecting bibliographic data that can be analyzed to obtain characteristics of a population. An analysis of documents in the educational field was carried out to identify authors and trends on the subject.

The research was carried out in scientific articles and documents of world and national organizations, issued for example by ECLAC, UNICEF, World Health Organization, Ministry of Education of Ecuador and other countries, taking into account a publication period between 2016 and in 2021. This ensures that the located data is updated; Digital resources were used in search engines such as Harzing's Publish or Perish and Google Scholar, and in portals such as Scielo and Dialnet. During the investigation, articles with the keywords were selected: post-pandemic education, post-pandemic education challenges, post-pandemic education challenges, hybrid classrooms, distance education.

The initial number of sources that were selected was forty. No blogs, web pages, wikis, or sources in general that could not be validated as scientific were chosen; that is, they did not present the proper bibliography, publication dates or authors. Subsequently, the documents that support the topic, which are primary and secondary research, were selected and documents with a similar methodology to the one applied in this study were considered.

RESULTS

It has been a great challenge for the educational community to face the new post-pandemic stage. Teachers in the pandemic had to be trained to use ICTs; In the post-pandemic, teachers must guarantee the transition, maximizing the available resources, using synchronous and asynchronous modalities, in short and interactive sessions, keeping virtual environments together with face-to-face classes, to educate the child to be a future technical professional, it must adapt these models to traditional education, analyzing and using its advantages and improving its disadvantages (Ríos-Sánchez, 2021).

Regarding the family: although mom and dad are not teachers nor do they know about pedagogical tools, they have had to be patient with their children, listen to them and do their best to help them, and give them adequate space, without neglecting their work obligations. But the difficult access to technology due to costs and because they are extended families that economically do not allow them to access a good internet and computers, tablets or cell phones has created a great digital gap, which is desired to improve in the post-pandemic period (Mena-Manzanillas & Gutierrez-Franco, 2021).

It is important to direct efforts to face the pedagogical challenges produced by the

pandemic, mainly the detachment from the school, produced by the closure of the institutions, the low quality of education; For this, in the post-pandemic, significant learning must be provided to boys and girls and protected so that they develop their full potential (Gagliardi, 2020).

There is an increase in school dropouts; abandonment is approximately 24 million children worldwide. In Ecuador, around 90,000 are outside the educational system, and there is a possibility that many children will drop out of the educational system even more. The post-pandemic marks a very complicated challenge, such as the re-entry of these students to the classrooms, for which UNICEF calls for the reopening of education centers with necessary security measures, this will somewhat mitigate the high school dropout rate (Pulido-Montes & Ancheta-Arrabal, 2021).

Apparent decline in educational quality and teaching. Guidelines must be established to minimize the negative impacts on learning and school retention, especially for the most vulnerable (Chaverri-Chaves, 2021). In the pandemic there was a decrease in learning, mainly in mathematics, reading and writing due to the reduction in the duration of classes; time lost in education must be recovered, for this it is important that teachers, after carrying out an evaluation through learning tests, use appropriate strategies that allow marking releveling axes (Navarrete-Cazales et al., 2021).

Governments see the safe and progressive return to face-to-face classes as a solution and priority, for which they have developed plans, programs and protocols taking into account the new needs. Table 1 refers to the protocols generated by some countries as a measure for said return.

Table 1- Protocol adopted by Latin American countries for post-pandemic education.

COUNTRY	PROTOCOL AND GUIDELINES FOR THE REOPENING OF SCHOOLS	RETURN PROGRAMS
Ecuador	- Instructions and guides of the Institutional Plans of Educational Continuity. - Preparation of a ministerial agreement.	together we we care
Argentina	- Framework protocol and federal guidelines for the return to face-to-face classes in compulsory education and in higher institutes. - Management and control of COVID-19 in educational establishments.	We continue studying or continue educating. General connectivity plan Juana Manso
Brazil	Guide for the Implementation of Protocols for the Return of Face-to-Face Activities in Basic Education Schools.	no data
Chile	Guidance for the 2020 School Year	Chile, Recover and Learn
The Savior	-Pedagogical and management guidelines for the educational continuity of students at all levels and modalities. -Guidelines for the application of the second and third phase of the strategy for educational continuity due to the COVID-19 emergency. The joy of returning to school: guidelines for the safe return to educational institutions in El Salvador	"Links to Education" "The joy of going back to school"
Guatemala	- Institutional protocol of the Ministry of Education. - Protocol for the return to school: for Departmental directors, teachers, supervisors and educational directors.- Protocol for the return to learning spaces: for the director or person in charge of the learning space and Departmental Coordination of Extracurricular Education.- Emotional support protocol and resilience for the return to school.- Recommendations for school transport: for educational centers-	pilot plan

	Guide to incorporate prevention measures against the spread of COVID-19 and the school response plan in the school safety plan of the educational center.- Plan for the prevention, response and recovery against Coronavirus (COVID-19).	
Panama	Establishment of biosecurity measures to reduce the risk of contagion of COVID-19 in official and private educational centers nationwide.	Early Childhood Care Center CAIPI
Paraguayan	-Protocol and operational guide for the safe return to educational institutions. - Guidelines for the prevention and control of COVID-19 in educational institutions.	National Risk Management Plan (PNEGER) and Minimum Education Standards in Emergency Situations (INEE)
Peru	Protocol for the start of the face-to-face educational service for the 2020 school year.	I learn at home AEC
Uruguay	Guidelines for the 2020 school year.	Global Framework for the reopening of schools

Fountain: Azerrat et al. (2021); Burgos & Villagómez (2021); Demera-Zambrano et al. (2021); Squire (2021); Morales (2020); Castro-Castro, et al., (2020); Salirrosas-Navarro et al. (2021)

Next, the information presented in Table 1 will be expanded with specific data for each country.

In Ecuador, information has been found indicating that the Ministry of Education (MinEduc) has educational support networks such as education centers, and teachers who have committed to innovation, change, and improvement in the participation of students. students, in order to guarantee the continuity of education (Demera-Zambrano et al., 2021).

According to article 347, numeral 8 of the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, it is the responsibility of the State to incorporate educational technologies and according to

Ministerial agreement -2020-0044-A of September 14, 2020, the National Educational Authority issues the guidelines for educational continuity, school permanence and progressive use of educational facilities, the Juntos nos cuidamos program is created (Castro-Castro et al., 2020). It was found that until July 25, 2021, of 1,825 fiscal institutions, 511 returned to face-to-face, and of 204 private institutions, 65, counting on a voluntary return, only 0.47% of schools have returned to work in person (Demera- Zambrano et al., 2021).

The Ministry of Education of Ecuador resolved the return to face-to-face classes as of December 2021, but due to a resurgence of the pandemic, it decided to suspend the return for February 7, 2022 in the Sierra and Amazon region, to start to the second semester, with a capacity of 100%, and on May 3, 2022 for the Costa and Galapagos regime, for the start of the new school year (Ramos-Serpa et al., 2022). But at the moment the situation of the return is still on hold, since in this last month of December the infections have increased considerably.

In Brazil there are different realities according to the zones, but Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro reach a percentage of almost 100% of schools that have a mixed modality of return; that is, mandatory and voluntary (Azerrat et al., 2021). A great obstacle was the educational offer in public education, despite education being a right, budgets are low, so inserting the technological field is complicated, it is expected that this will be consolidated with the new form of face-to-face and interactions of educational agents, mainly in small cities and rural areas.

In Chile there is the "Chile, Recover and Learn" plan, which is presented in three axes that are: recovery, leveling of learning and socio-emotional well-being. One of the objectives of Chile is the retention and school reinsertion of all students who withdrew from

school in the COVID-19 stage; the return is voluntary from kindergarten to higher levels of basic education, a return of 38% was achieved; In a balance of the first semester, it is observed that 63% of educational institutions opened their doors, 57% of the total are schools and 72% kindergartens. Private schools had a greater presence with 91% (Escudero, 2021).

In El Salvador, programs promoted by the government were found, which gives thousands of computers to students enrolled in public education, they are simple instruments loaded with drive, classroom, Wikipedia, and others that have a free internet package so they can connect (Romero-Segovia & Rivas-Rodríguez, 2021). According to the local newspaper Cea, until October 4, 2021, these computers were delivered to 14.2% of students. The school must provide the necessary times for children to express their emotions and recreate themselves, thus having good mental hygiene (Reyes & Valdés-Rodríguez, 2021).

In Guatemala, the Pilot plan for the application of safe return to blended classes for elementary and secondary level schools is presented as a reinforcement and leveling plan after a prior diagnosis that shows emotional skills, conceptual learning, for which it has the support from UNICEF and emphasizes joint work with all organizations and thus achieve the comprehensive development of students. And it is observed that there is a 100% return, the return is voluntary (Santiso-Rodríguez, 2021).

In Panama, for the reopening, a situational diagnosis, an operational plan, the reopenings and the evaluation of processes and standards are considered; For this, an operational plan, a reopening and constant monitoring are required, as well as spaces for inter-institutional and community articulation and coordination according to levels, with different strategies and the CAIPI

program (Center for Early Childhood Care). Despite the gap, efforts are made so that education reaches all students; The aim is to implement a hybrid system in different schools in the region, although this modality is underdeveloped (Ríos-Sánchez, 2021).

In Paraguay there is insufficient ICT training for teachers, the most used applications are the platform given by the Ministry of Education and WhatsApp messaging; there is a problem in the lack of connectivity: there is a gap that must be overcome through teaching digital competence and the use of new strategies that help students develop their potential in a positive way; the return to classes is voluntary (Azerrat *et al.*, 2021).

Peru focuses on aspects such as distance and blended education, with the Aprendo en Casa (AeC) strategy, using good virtual learning strategies, tablets (which they have received with free internet packages), workbooks, tutoring, and educational guidance; Actions to be developed in 2021 are proposed, such as consolidation, continuity and reinforcement (Salirrosas-Navarro *et al.*, 2021; Morales, 2020). The request to families is emphasized so that they have a suitable place for the children to study.

In Uruguay, the objective of the return is to achieve greater face-to-face attendance, taking into account the health situation, establishing a pedagogical plan based on reception instances and curricular prioritization, giving special attention to vulnerable students, and technological support for teachers and students, considering the socio-emotional; strategies should be used to improve blended education organized and supervised by stakeholders; it can be rescued that 87% of students in initial and primary education have returned to face-to-face classes, on a mandatory basis (Azerrat *et al.*, 2021).

Nicaragua did not close its classrooms even during the pandemic, attendance was

mandatory; Public health expert staff said that it is reckless for classes to continue in person, since that will not allow children to comply with prevention regulations to avoid the spread of COVID-19, but Rosario Murillo, vice president and first lady of Nicaragua He described it as the caravan of knowledge and the future despite the criticism received; however, in view of the provision, attendance is low in schools for fear of the pandemic (Díaz-Arias & Viales-Hurtado, 2021).

A new modality can be observed in post-pandemic classrooms such as hybrid classrooms, where distance education is combined with face-to-face (García-Aretio, 2018); Currently, face-to-face education advances in online access options, which is limited by educational inequality. It is imperative to change the concept of face-to-face learning based on memorization, for an entry to teaching resources, increasing access to information, interacting students in the classroom and in the virtual environment, and developing the capacity for self-criticism on both sides. For this reason, education is committed to a socio-constructivist model, which encourages the student to research (Ruiz-Mejías, 2020).

Today there is talk of a new normality, which is expected not to return to the same pre-pandemic style of education, but rather a readaptation of daily activities. For this, the teacher must be flexible and carry out an educational renovation that goes beyond the will. Planning is necessary that, with innovations in teaching practices, modification of curricular designs and adaptation of technology, leads us to this uncertain but important change, if external and internal elements are taken into account (Prince-Torres 2021).

As technology becomes an ally for education in the pandemic, educational changes must be focused on this line, allowing not to advance in a globalized society, but transforming teachers and students thanks

to the applied methodology. ICTs are advantageous because they allow continuous knowledge to be provided and expand the possibility of serving a diversity of students and accessing populations with little academic offer (Prince-Torres, 2021).

It is essential to think of a hybrid combination; that is, the combination between face-to-face and remote education, so that problem-solving skills are automated and personal digital learning spaces are created that allow interaction, reinforce knowledge more effectively and with a critical spirit (Ruiz-Mejía, 2020). For this reason, access to platforms by students must be guaranteed (Ruiz-Mejía, 2020), generating institutional projects that include ICT as something comprehensive and long-term, reaching genuine inclusion.

Hybrid education is the mix between face-to-face education and distance education; Despite the limitations due to the economic situation, the scarce knowledge, and the little technology, efforts are being made to make this education a good option for students, since it brings them closer to a physical reality and encourages them to be researchers. It is important to have a networked society that connects to many opportunities, but this online education must be adapted to the traditional one (García-Aretio, 2018; Ríos-Sánchez, 2021).

Hybrid classrooms are a conglomerate of opportunities and challenges that will allow students to build their knowledge, both face-to-face and virtual; In this way, they can follow a live class live, giving it autonomy and the teacher being a guide and a cooperater of their knowledge (Prince-Torres, 2021). A new paradigm of command and control is appreciated in students now with technology; The hybrid student seeks to extract the best of the *online* and *offline environment*, to accelerate his path, being the architect of his ethical leadership and

developing better projects that energize education.

DISCUSSION

A reality that has been assumed within education is the use of ICTs, which have been adopted by most countries. García-Aretio (2018) emphasizes that despite the fact that these tools are essential, they also marked a great digital divide, due to the economic inequality of families and states.

The efforts of students, teachers, parents and governments that in a short time knew how to face the challenges of the pandemic and that are willing to face the challenges in the post-pandemic should be applauded; As the author Ríos-Sánchez (2021) indicates, teachers are called to guarantee the transition and the family to support this new challenge.

The psychological conditions produced by the closure of schools cannot be ignored. It is convenient to give attention to children who have dropped out of the educational process due to the different effects of the pandemic, from socioeconomic and socio-emotional issues, as indicated by Burgos & Villagómez (2021); the author García-Aretio (2018) also joins this call and suggests recovering lost time in order to reach a correct level of education.

The author Burgos & Villagómez (2021) indicates that Latin American countries look at the convenience of a face-to-face return, aware that this will help minimize digital and economic gaps; For this, it calls on the countries to carry out an analysis of their situation, each state elaborates protocols to guarantee a safe return. The ministries of these countries have established biosafety regulations and programs that help return to normality, which became a common factor in all regions.

It is crucial to highlight the effort that each country makes for face-to-face return, preponderating the school reinsertion strategies that they propose, with Chile emphasizing them the most. All the countries seek to reduce the digital gaps that are so marked, but El Salvador is striking, as it is establishing a budget for the delivery of simple computing instruments with the Internet; In the same way, Argentina, with its Juana Manzo Plan, tries in some way to mitigate this digital problem. It is observed that Guatemala is the one with the highest percentage of readmission with 100% and Ecuador the lowest with 0.47%. Something surprising is that Nicaragua did not close its schools.

García-Aretio (2018) invites to combine distance education with face-to-face; For their part, Prince-Torres (2021) and Ruiz-Mejías (2020) call for hybrid education as a strategy that will create new learning, redesigning a new education that combines the traditional with the virtual. In this sense, all the authors focus on an advance in education and not a return to the traditional pre-pandemic school.

After carrying out the bibliographic studies, it is observed that there are many challenges that education must go through in the post-pandemic.

It is concluded that the countries have tried to innovate education through a series of protocols that they have created to try to cover the different shortcomings that occurred in the pandemic, mainly in the lower quality of teaching, school dropout and the technological gap; For this, they start from a return to face-to-face with a change in the development of education.

What has been proposed so far leads to one of the biggest changes in education that should be given, such as hybrid education, which is recommended by all countries, but which is not very advanced due to low

budgets for education; This could be considered the greatest innovation in post-pandemic.

Tax education is the most affected, because during the pandemic the states have reduced their budgets for education. In addition, the family economy has not allowed them to have technological instruments and internet connectivity has not been adequate; This has influenced the fact that students cannot access a good education, even producing a large dropout.

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The authors participated in the design and writing of the work, and analysis of the documents.

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