

Digital Divide, Educational Divide

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Abstract

After approximately four decades since the beginning of the massification of ICT in education, once the massive provision of computer equipment in educational centers was promoted through government initiatives (Wellington, 2006), the efficiency of virtual education has been questioned in some countries in the time of Covid-19. For several years, the idea of improving education with the incorporation of ICTs in teaching has been energized and even thought about the consolidation of a virtual education model. Initiatives that aim at the articulation between traditional education and virtual mediation have been incorporated into educational policies. Despite the importance given to ICTs as determining factors of a new educational model, their true capacity to support pedagogical processes during the covid 19 pandemic has been tested. In the framework of the health contingency, educational institutions have been forced to move their activities to virtual scenarios, given the restriction of face-to-face activities for several months. Thus, extensive use has been made of virtual platforms and ICT tools in the provision of educational services.

In the context of LatinAmerica it became evident that virtual education presents many difficulties. Restrictions on access to digital networks by large sectors of the population highlighted the deep digital divide that characterizes the local population. In this sense, many school-age students have not been able to access educational spaces during the pandemic and have been limited in guaranteeing the universal right to education. Moreover, despite the fact that the expansion of educational coverage has been celebrated on many occasions, the digital divide may represent a step backwards in terms of educational inclusion. This text reflects on experiences with virtual school education during covid-19, based on an analysis of the relationship between access to digital infrastructure and educational inclusion in public sector institutions in Bogotá.

Through a qualitative approach based on surveys applied to students and teachers of three public institutions in the south of the city of Bogota, in addition to a semi-structured interview form implemented with management and administrative staff of the institutions, it was identified the existence of a deep digital divide that prevents the effective continuity of the educational process in large sectors of the population, so that many children and adolescents are excluded from the educational model proposed for the continuity of their educational processes during the pandemic. As a result, it can be affirmed that the covid-19 pandemic has shown that the digital divide is a determining factor in the educational gap.

Keywords: digital divide; ICT, virtual education, pandemic, Latin America