5th International Conference On Advanced Research in EDUCATION
26-28 August, 2022 Cambridge, UK
EDUCATIONCONF

Overcoming Digital Inequalities in A Rural Context: The Key Role of Teachers and Technological Education

Dr. Isabel Pavez Andonaegui

Universidad de los Andes, Chile

Abstract

In Latin America, educational systems are vital as leveling agents in a region where inequality is one of the most distinct aspects. Therefore, schools are central to providing an Internet connection and acquiring digital skills. Authors have called it the equalizer element in digital inclusion, as they counterbalance socioeconomic inequalities by providing access and training in technologies, increasing the possibility of full participation in society (Formichella et al., 2020; González et al., 2021). However, rural children, particularly girls, face several disadvantages on both the educational and digital front. This paper aims to explore from a mixed-methods approach the elements that enable the perpetuation of inequalities in technological education in vulnerable rural contexts and what is the role of teachers in these complex circumstances. Through in-depth interviews with 32 participants, including principals, teachers, parents, and students from 7th grade, it analyses the context and discourses regarding access and development of digital skills and how difficult it is to incorporate those experiences into the classroom. Then, a face-to-face survey with rural students from 5th to 8th grade (N=219) was conducted. Results show that despite structural inequalities such as poor quality of internet access, most children have access to Smartphones and social media. However, they also face an outdated curriculum of technologies and a lack of digital resources and abilities. From a gender perspective, the analysis also shows that girls develop fewer digital skills than boys. Results discuss these findings and how public education policies have tackled this scenario in the global south.

Keywords: rural education; internet; digital skills; gender; vulnerability