

ELÉUTERA

HONDURAS



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
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Centroamérica

HONDURAS: EDUCATION & THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

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HONDURAS: EDUCATION & THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

THE SITUATION OF THE EDUCATION IN HONDURAS PRIOR TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Before the suspension of face-to-face classes due to the COVID-19 epidemic, data from the Household Survey of the National Institute of Statistics (INE) reflected that 44% of boys and girls between 3 and 17 years old are out of the school system.

Boys and girls in the groups with the highest level of exclusion from educational coverage are those who live in rural areas (48.7%), those between 3 and 5 years old (65%), and adolescents between 12 and 14 years (55.1%) and 15 to 17 years (74.6%).

The Household Survey shows that the main cause of non-attendance in basic education is the lack of economic resources, and that four percent of students abandoned school in order to work. In this context, the Secretary of Education at the end of 2019, reported that more than 175,000 students in Honduras abandoned their classrooms in the last four years. It is important to point out that the government investment of Honduras per student in the mentioned year was only 19 lempiras per day, which represents less than US \$ 1.00.

PUBLIC POLICY ON FORMAL EDUCATION DURING THE COVID19 PANDEMIC

In Honduras, no public policy has been developed specifically to lessen the impact of the digital gap on the education during times of pandemic.

By means of Decree No. 60-20 of the Legislative Power “virtual” mode classes have been authorized. This Decree also indicates that “during the school year beginning in 2020, and as long as the classes are not resumed, classes of the public education system, in person, all companies that offer internet service, including the use of mobile data nationwide, must provide free internet service to the Ministry of Education so that both teachers and the students of the public education system can carry out the activities entrusted to the strategy defined by the Ministry of Education for the delivery of virtual classes”.

On the other hand, the National Congress of the Republic approved a Decree in order to enable all local cable, television and radio companies to give in within their programming field, between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 pm, at least one hour a day to disseminate the content provided by the Secretary of Education.

During these hours, a work program was established in which the educational lessons were organized and the teaching-learning process would continue even if the benefited students did not have digital coverage. In case the students do not have the means either, the Decree indicates that they would be sent fascicles through the community development offices that exist in the 298 mayors of Honduras.

Ministerial agreements are also registered by the Ministry of Education that indicate specific guidelines for non-governmental education, as well as instructions on the "functionality of Home Education". A policy has not been issued that is of relief for students who do not have access to a basic telecommunications infrastructure to access their remote or virtual classes.

INTERNET ACCESS IN RURAL, SEMI-URBAN AND URBAN AREAS

In Honduras, only 16 out of every 100 people have access to a computer in urban areas; while in rural areas, where we can find the largest population of children, only 1.9% do. The data show that the difficulties are greater in rural areas, where only 29% of students have had links with their teachers through digital connections, a figure that grows up to 45% in urban areas.

This difficulty of access has caused that at least half of the 2.9 million students of the system, of which the majority are in rural areas, can't receive classes since they do not have a computer, and neither the Internet for development of their classes, as detailed in the report "The Honduran educational situation in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Scenarios for the future as an important opportunity for improvement" prepared by the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán (UPNFM)

The high levels of poverty and social inequality in Honduras increase the digital gap among students, mainly in rural areas where only 29% of students have had links with their teachers through digital connections.

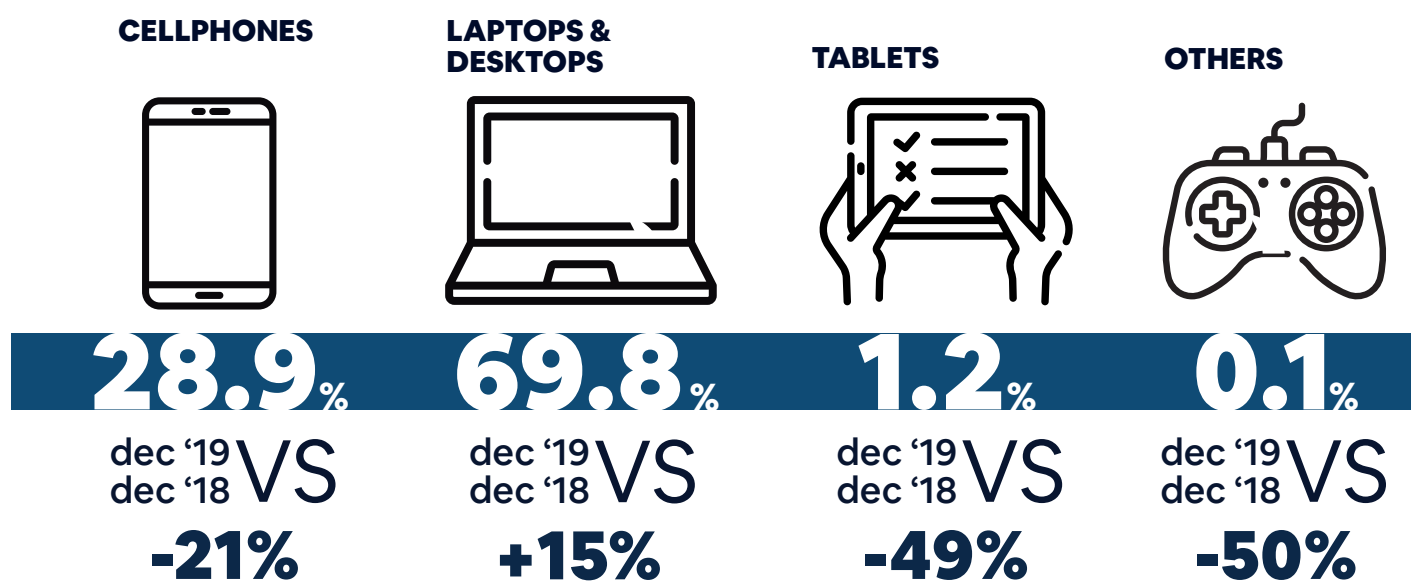
In Honduras, the report details, two-thirds of the population lives in poverty and therefore access to internet is limited. In this regard, according to the National Institute of Statistics (INE), only 16.6% of the 9.3 million Hondurans have access to the internet at home and only 12.8% access this service from a computer, while 87.2% do so from a mobile phone.

ACCESS BY DEVICES: CELL PHONE, TABLET, COMPUTER.

In Honduras, 28.9% of the search flow and Internet browsing is through cell phones, however there has been a 21% drop compared to last year, while the flow presented by laptops or desktop computers is 69.8% having an increase of 15% compared to figures from previous years.

SHARE OF WEB TRAFFIC BY DEVICE

Each device's share of total web pages served to web browsers.



BROADBAND PENETRATION: QUANTITY PER INHABITANT, COVERAGE AREA.

Honduras has 9.83 million inhabitants, of which 57% live in urbanized areas and 83% of the population has cell phones with mobile connections, which represents 8.20 million citizens.

According to the Digital Policy Law, only 40 out of 100 citizens use the Internet in Honduras (landline or mobile), which translates into around 3 million 600 thousand users. 4G signals reach 92% of the country's head municipalities, which represents a coverage growth of 2.4 percentage points compared to the fourth period of last year.

Honduras still has a way to go in terms of telecommunications. In the latest reports, the market shows a decline in the number of lines in almost all services, which can be explained by a reordering of the market. For more details on broadband consumption in Honduras, visit this reference.

HONDURAS

The essential headline data you need to understand the state of mobile, internet and social media use.

TOTAL POPULATION



9.83

MILLIONS
urbanization:

57%

CELLPHONE CONNECTION



8.20

MILLIONS
vs. population:

83%

INTERNET USERS



4.10

MILLIONS
penetration:

42%

SOCIAL MEDIA USERS



4.10

MILLIONS
penetration:

42%

THE STUDENT POPULATION ATTENDED VIRTUAL CLASSES AND TEACHERS WERE TRAINED IN ENVIRONMENTS THROUGH DIGITAL PLATFORMS.

According to an analysis carried out by Honduran experts and disclosed by Jorge Galeano, director of World Vision Honduras, indicated that these reports were based on a survey with more than 2,300 children, they showed that approximately 70% are worried about losing their school year, and 76% miss going to school, while only 37% are having access to education online.

Galeano also pointed out that 54 out of 10 children and young people are receiving support from their teachers, while 39 out of 100 parents have described this assistance as “regular”. In the private education sector, students, through creative ways from both teachers and parents, can be connected and receive their classes, however, in rural areas the reality indicates that only 7% have access to a computer or to Internet.

Nevertheless, education in Honduras already had “comorbidities” prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, since at that time it was estimated that 1 in 3 boys and girls between the ages of 3 and 17 were out of the educational system and perhaps they do not have the conditions to return to it. Regarding the training of teachers in a virtual way, the Secretary of Education, Arnaldo Bueso, has indicated that “14,994 teachers have been trained in a variety of topics that are binding on the reality that is lived today.”

SEGMENTATION OF VIRTUAL TOOLS FOR EDUCATION

Currently, according to the study "The Honduran educational situation in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Scenarios for the future as an important opportunity for improvement", carried out by the Universidad Pedagógica "Francisco Morazán", teachers have managed to implement a wide variety of strategies to communicate with their students even when most used their mobile phone as an instrument and not a computer.

Among these strategies, phone calls to parents stand out, 81.2% used this tool, WhatsApp groups with parents, 74.8% said they also used this method.

In addition, direct telephone calls to students are implemented in 58.6%, WhatsApp groups with students in 54.9%, the educational portal of the Ministry of Education on YouTube was used in 33.9% by teachers; Facebook pages of the Ministry of Education, municipal district departments or educational centers 31.9%.

Another tool used is a personal Facebook with students or parents in 27.7%, basic TV programs in Suyapa educational TV 25.8%, educational platforms such as Google, Classroom, Moodle, Blackboard, among others: 15.6%. Some applications such as Skype, Zoom, Hangouts, or others, with students or parents, teachers are using them in 14.6%, likewise, email is used with students 11.7, email with parents 9.3% and the teacher's personal educational account on YouTube by 8.1%

STRATEGIES THAT STAND OUT	% OF USAGE
Phone calls to parents	81.2%
Whatsapp Groupchats with parents	74.8%
Direct phone calls with students	58.6%
WhatsApp groupchats with students	54.9%
Ministry of Education Portal	33.9%
Ministry of Education Facebook	31.9%
Personal Facebook	33.7%
Suyapa educational Basic TV	25.8%
Educative Platforms (Zoom, Blackboard, Google, Moodle)	15.6%
Skype, Zoom, Hangouts, etc.	14.6%
Emails with students	11.7%
Emails with parents	9.3%
Teachers' educational accounts on Youtube	8.1%

CONCLUSIONS

The digital gap can not only be seen as a technological problem, but as a social and economic complexity that limits the capacities of new generations to be able to enter new learning, health and production processes.

Honduras, like the other countries in the region, must begin to walk along the path of computer resources and not see them as mere devices or instruments, but as a way to face the crisis before, during and after the pandemic.

It is time to permanently adopt virtuality in the form of “hybrid education”, in such a way that this modality is combined with the professional training that the younger generations will need for the eventual labor market that awaits them, which will have a high percentage of virtuality adopted from the lessons learned during the contingency months due to COVID-19.

PUBLIC POLICY REFORMS IMPLEMENTED IN EDUCATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA DURING THE PANDEMIC

Comparative analysis of the situation of regional education with respect to Honduras.

Country

Belize

Public Policies implemented in education

According to the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA, 2020), in Belize:

The Ministry of Education works in conjunction with international organizations including Unicef and other educational organizations, which include leaders of schools, teachers and the media, to develop strategies that guarantee distance and home learning for each educational level. (p.20).

- The Ministry of Education uploads online resources daily on its website (SICA, 2020)
- Broadcast of daily lessons on radio and television stations since 27 April 2020;
- The Ministry of Education announces the reentry to classes through distance learning as of September 7 for preschool and primary schools, and as of October 5 for High schools, for which home learning packages will be delivered (SELA, 2020)
- Printed publications for preschoolers provided by the Ministry of Education, these are available in supermarkets, banks and also in newspapers.
- As a guideline of the Ministry of Education, preschool and elementary level teachers should inform and encourage relatives to use various learning methods and to check the progress of students.

Status

Currently the educational centers remain in virtual mode and their reopening is in the process of preparation. On September 4, 2020, the education ministry summoned teachers to return to schools, however, it emphasized that the modality will continue to be face-to-face, but its preparation for a future reopening is of vital importance. (Babb, 2020)

Guatemala

The guatemalan government sign the Agreement 1622-2020 on “Temporary Norms in 2020, due to the suspension of face-to-face classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, for specific areas of teaching practice, supervised practice and seminar at the Middle Education level, cycle of Diversified Education, of the Subsystems of School and Extracurricular Education ”, which includes diverse online alternatives for the continuation of the educational program.

Currently in Guatemala, educational centers remain closed. Operating only in virtual mode. (UNESCO, 2020)

The guatemalan government sign the Agreement 1622-2020 on “Temporary Norms in 2020, due to the suspension of face-to-face classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, for specific areas of teaching practice, supervised practice and seminar at the Middle Education level, cycle of Diversified Education, of the Subsystems of School and Extracurricular Education”, which includes diverse online alternatives for the continuation of the educational program.

- Program “Apendo en Casa” (Renna Gallano, 2020), through the Ministry of Education is a platform created to provide support to teachers, where by email they receive material to achieve leveling at the end of the emergency. Likewise, printed materials with educational activities translated into indigenous languages have been distributed.
- According to the Ministry of Education (Mineduc), in its "Comprehensive plan for prevention, response and recovery from coronavirus (COVID-19)" stipulates the following platforms as resources for teachers and parents:
 - Mineduc digital
 - PruebaT.org
 - Programa Nacional de Educación Alternativa del Ministerio de Educación (PRONEA)
 - TOMI.digital
 - WujApp.gt
 - Brain Pop
 - ProFuturo
 - Coursera

Nicaragua

Nicaragua, unlike the rest of the Central American countries, did not choose to take restrictive measures for face-to-face education, except for certain private schools that requested temporary authorization to continue in virtual mode. As part of its action plan, the Ministry of Education has implemented and presented instruments for the strengthening of online education "teleclasses to strengthen study content" (MINED, 2020).

Some of the measures adopted by the government of Guatemala are the following:

Nicaragua Educa Platform and with a special "safe internet" section.

Currently schools in Nicaragua remain open, following biosecurity protocols. On October 19, 2020 there will be the launch of the Enrollment Day for the 2021 School Year, which will be held online and in person, distributed by days and educational levels. (Bermúdez, 2020) **8**

- Implementation of the “Aprendo en Casa” program (Renna Gallano, 2020).
- Agreement with Microsoft, allowing the use of "high-level" data, generating email accounts for the target population. Allowing access to free Office 365 packages, Teams, and other online communication and collaboration tools.
- Working table with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Telecommunications and the Ministry of Education
- Program “Hogares Conectados”, initiative to provide computers and / or internet to 46,500 families.
- Audiovisual support for communities with low or no connectivity, in alliance with national television stations, it was possible to establish television programs aimed at developing didactic and educational activities, teacher professional development and issues of living together at home.
- Radio programming, implementing the Letter of Understanding with the National Radio Chamber, 70 educational radio programs are produced daily on 26 stations. (MEP, 2020)

Own platform:

- Aula virtual abierta (Open virtual classroom)

El Salvador

The Ministry of Education establishes the measures taken by Higher Education Institutions, where a protocol for attention to students with economic and academic problems was created in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic (MINED, 2020b) Likewise, the Ministry of Education in El Salvador, as first measures, implemented a process to accelerate the certification of bachelor's degrees for undergraduate students during the pandemic (García, 2020). On the other hand, the Salvadoran government, as part of its educational plan during confinement, has distributed computers and tablets for elementary students. (Renna Gallano, 2020)

Currently the educational centers remain closed.

According to Renna Gallano (2020), El Salvador and Jamaica in alliance with partners have secured a call center and dozens of educational telephone lines for teachers, students and families, and many countries have used social networks to maintain daily communication of learning groups such as the use of text messaging for awareness and information to the population and school communities.

Honduras

Honduras determined to close schools indefinitely as the first measure to face COVID-19. The country's higher education council presented an agreement in March 2020 establishing the academic suspension of the 21 universities represented in the country (UNAH, 2020). The Secretariat of Education (2020) through the Undersecretariat for Technical Pedagogical Affairs (SSATP) and the Sub-directorate General for Pre-basic Education (SDGEPB) created the Strategy that is called "TE QUEREMOS ESTUDIANDO EN CASA (WE WANT YOU LEARNING AT HOME)" with the purpose of giving continuity to the learning processes of the students of the level of pre-basic education.

Some of the measures adopted by the Government of Honduras are:

- Mandatory classes in virtual mode by executive decree.
 - Implementation of the strategy "WE WANT YOU LEARNING AT HOME" developed in three stages:
 - studying at home (aims to support students to continue studying at home)
 - Covid-19 (orientation for the correct use of biosecurity measures)
 - socio-emotional health (feeding instructions, mental health)
 - implementation of the "Workbooks" strategy aimed to reach third grade students.
 - Radio classes (Secretary of Education in conjunction with radio stations, television stations and cable operating companies).

Own platform:

- Educatrachos (IDB, 2020a)
- Cevirtual (Virtual Educational Center)
- Youtube Channel Educational Portal
- Influencer 504 Program

According to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB, 2020), "public educational centers do not have digital and interactive educational platforms as of today. 70% of private schools do use these tools". Currently the educational centers remain closed.

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