

## The challenges of **education** in Mexico

Teachers give their opinions about online education

The access to new technologies, teacher training, and economic factors are some of the limitations that teachers face in the context of online education.

**T**he educational sector is the most affected by COVID-19 pandemic. Online education was the solution during this sanitary contingency, but people realized that the digital gap is enormous in Mexico, and in different parts of the world. In Mexico, the strategy the government decided on seems like an “express solution” that does not consider the needs and lacks that people have.

Millions were invested to pay four TV stations in the country to broadcast classes 24 hours a day, and that was one of the solutions that the Federal Government came up with to face this difficult situation. We may infer that they decided on the resources that the TV offers because most homes have one. However, many communities in the country do not even have electricity so, we cannot give an opinion about new technologies in those areas. For that reason, we deduce that the strategy was not a global one.

On the other hand, there are technological and pedagogical limitations on teachers to develop online teaching because group management in a virtual context became the biggest challenge for them. For those reasons, we asked teachers of public and private schools their opinions about distance learning.

**The Program called “CMT Supportive Contribution to Technology and Connectivity” supports communities with telecommunication equipment and data transmission via satellite, cellular, microwave, and others**

### Teachers: a challenge for the teaching-learning process

Thalía Ponce Dimas is a University teacher in charge of teaching 90 students in the “Universidad Insurgentes” in Mexico City. She considers that online teaching is much harder than in-person classes. Besides, she mentions that the challenges in education are more focused on learning how to use technologies and the search for students learning.

In her case, she learns as she teaches; and she also believes that the biggest problem for students is connectivity. She mentions that it is necessary to improve the quality of internet connectivity in the country, and she also thinks that the educational system in Mexico is not ready for distance learning because not everybody has access to the basic technologies.

She states: “Teachers must be more comprehensive, but in the meantime, they must design didactic strategies to make learning easier because the virtual process modifies many things as attention and participation; for me, human interaction is necessary”.

Meanwhile, Zayra Silvia Hernández, who teaches 69 students in a high school called “Telebachillerato Comunitario #67” in San Francisco Coatlán, a community located in the southern region of the mountains in Oaxaca; mentions that her teaching context does not have the technological tools to develop her professional activities easily. Besides, the economic aspect is an issue as young students must also help their families by doing work and activities in the fields to contribute to their economy.

People in that community believe that distance learning is not the most ideal one because teachers do not have contact with students. Teachers cannot really know the learning level of each one, and as a consequence they cannot follow up on their students. More to the point, teachers must be available 24 hours a day because the students’ context does not allow them to have a regular schedule for their classes.

She says that they need economic resources to get technological equipment, digital platforms, internet service, and training on digital tools for the teaching-learning processes; so it also becomes a limitation that students and teachers must face.

Many students in the area need to fulfill their basic needs like food, housing and clothing before buying a card to have access to the internet. That is why it is important to show empathy to the situation that each student has to live every day.

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• **The UN warned that the gap is becoming bigger due to the closure of schools. They also mentioned that security must be a priority before making any decisions about reopening schools**

• **This situation has affected more than 1,000 million students, and it is important to add to this number more than 250 million kids in school age that were outside the educational system before the pandemic**



She states: “The performance is not the same, because in-person classes allow students to interact, express their emotions, learn from their partners; they develop specific strategies to get meaningful learning. Therefore, as students do not reach their school objectives they feel frustrated, which also contributes to school dropping”.

**The program called “CMT Supportive Contribution to Technology and Connectivity” helps teachers and students access:**

- Mobile phone plans and mobile data
- Desktop or laptop computers
- Electronic tablets
- Smartphones

### **Monserrat Molina Zavaleta**

Monserrat is an elementary school teacher who teaches to first grade students in the school “Benito Juárez” in Santa Catarina Juquila; and she is responsible for teaching 12 girls and 8 boys. She thinks that distance learning is difficult because not only teachers and students get involved, but also parents; which makes more difficult to reach the objectives for the teaching-learning process.

She considers that it is important to give training to teachers on technologies, programs, and applications to improve the educational process. It is also necessary to create the conditions to display that knowledge, because it is useless to master technology and contents if you do not have basic services in your community such as internet, a telephone line or electricity.

Accordingly, teachers need to work harder to investigate and design educative strategies to provide knowledge despite the obstacles. In a classroom, the teacher observes the performance and abilities of the students, but also their weaknesses; and in that specific moment they need to take actions to improve the students’ development. At home, students face several obstacles because parents do not follow the instructions they are given. For example, parents do their children’s homework, they do not encourage regular schedules to study, they do not set an ideal environment with no distractions to study, etcetera.

Finally, Mayra Nancy Fabián Rojas is a fifth-grade teacher in an elementary school called “Motolinía de Antequera”, and she is responsible for 23 children. For her, online education is a challenge because she has the chance of learning, however, she knows that many students do not have internet service, a good computer, or an ideal space for their classes. She is aware that some students do not have a printer to print the materials she sends, so she needs to make changes in order to reach her objective.

Online classes are difficult due to technical matters, for example, electricity blackouts that obviously affect internet services too. Additionally, she believes that the educational system is not ready for this kind of learning because not all the students have the same conditions so, disadvantages always appear.

She mentions: “It is not the same with this modality because techniques, tools and adjustments must be done. In addition, the performance will not be the same either in all the cases because there are students that need personalized and closer follow-up”.