EDUCATION DURING A PANDEMIC

The case of Uruguay

June 8, 2021
The Oriental Republic of Uruguay

- Is a unitary and democratic republic with national elections every 5 years
- Is located in South America and has an area of 176,215 km²
- Is divided into 19 departments

- It has a population of 3,505,985 people
- With an HDI of: 0.817
- Gini Index: 0.38
- Unemployment: 9.7%
- Population below the poverty line: 11.6%
Governance of Education in Uruguay

The Ministry of Education is a part of the National Executive Branch, but, unlike in other countries, there is also an autonomous administration that is independent of the Ministry. The National Administration of Public Education (ANEP) is responsible for the design and development of education policy, the management and administration of early childhood, primary, general secondary and technical education, as well as for teacher training for the country as a whole.

www.anep.edu.uy
ANEP has the following tasks:

• Prepare, implement and further develop education policies for education programs at all levels within its purview.
• Guarantee the delivery of education to all inhabitants of the country at all levels and for all modalities within its purview, overseeing entry, retention and exit.
• Ensure that the general principles and guidelines for education outlined in national law are complied with in all areas under their purview.
• Promote the participation of the society in the formulation, implementation and development of education in the Republic.
The National Administration of Public Education (ANEP)

In 2020:
704,519 students
52,517 teachers
13,370 staff members
178,000 children using school cafeterias

- Students in public establishments:
  - 92,340 in early childhood education
  - 244,303 in primary education
  - 5,639 in special education
  - 225,667 in secondary education
  - 104,320 in technical and vocational education
  - 32,250 in teacher training

- Students in private establishments
  - 115,285 at all levels
About Education Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>• Children from 3 to 5 years of age</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary Education</td>
<td>• Students from 6 to 11 years of age</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Grades 1 to 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower Secondary Education</td>
<td>• Students from 12 to 14 years of age</td>
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<td>• High schools and technical schools</td>
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<td>• Grades 1 to 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Upper Secondary Education</td>
<td>• Students from 15 years of age and up</td>
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<td>• High schools and technical schools</td>
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<td>• Grades 4 to 6</td>
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The General Strategy
Vaccination of Teachers/Education Officials

Priority accorded to those working in educational centers throughout the country for the first phase of the vaccination program, starting on March 1, 2021.

Of the 149 countries around the world with a vaccination program, only 17 accorded priority to education workers.

Vaccines were made available to 84,500 teachers and officials.
Vaccination of Young People/Students

A decision was made to bring forward and proceed with the administration of vaccines to children between the ages of 12 and 17, starting on June 9.

This means that all teachers and education officials as well as lower and upper secondary students will be immunized.
The Education Strategy
In-person classes were suspended on March 13, 2020 and the following strategies were put in place:

- Maintenance of the educational community – student/family link (socio-emotional aspects)
- Implementation of coordinated actions to promote the process of virtual teaching and learning (Technology-assisted education)
- Looking after the food needs of the most disadvantaged sectors
- Preparation of the return to in-person classes
General Approaches and Guidelines

- Pedagogical guidelines and suggestions
- General resolutions and decisions

https://www.anep.edu.uy/15-d-codicien-genera-herramientas-ante-el-desafio-educacion-distancia
Distance Education Challenges

Preparations have begun for the return to classes

- Documents with technical, labor and health guidelines


Strategic Alliance with Technology

• Plan Ceibal was created in 2007 as a plan for inclusion and equal opportunities, with the aim of supporting Uruguayan education policies with technology, while building on other actions already under way for a number of years, such as the national plan for educational center connectivity.
• Every child has access to a computer for personal use, with a free internet connection from the educational center.
• The process to develop policy instruments and tools to oversee and monitor teaching and learning was subsequently launched.
Educational Platforms in Uruguay

- **CREA educational platform**: The virtual classroom for teaching and learning.
  - 570,633 active users up to December 31, 2020.
  - 655,765 active users in May 2021.
- **Mathematics platforms**: PAM (Adaptive platform) and Matific.
  - Over 41 million activities completed on the PAM platform and over 6 million on Matific, up to December 31, 2020.
- **National Library (Biblioteca país)**: Recreational reading for all ages, school textbooks, audio, still images, video and teaching material, all freely available.
- **Language Platform** – The procurement process is now under way and the system is expected to be up and running by next July.
Global Learning Network, a tool for today and for the future

• This is an international collaborative initiative that seeks to introduce **new forms of teaching and learning** into educational institutions in different parts of the world, using a standard action and research framework.

• **To advance, systematize and evaluate a package of educational practices** that promote “Deep Learning” and the development of “crosscutting life skills.”

• **Technology plays a central role** on the Network as a tool for significantly expanding access to information and fast-tracking pedagogical outcomes.

• The Network equips teachers with a **methodology for analyzing and evaluating the practices** being used in each institution, with a view to improving, expanding and enriching them with their own ideas.
Phases for Returning to the Classroom

2020 - 2021
In 2020, educational centers were reopened in four phases

- **April 22**
  - Rural schools with only one teacher.
  - The process of opening all rural schools in the country begins, except in the Canelones Department.

- **June 1**
  - Rural education throughout the country
  - The most vulnerable schools in terms of educational and social aspects
  - Special education schools
  - Final year of secondary school (Except Montevideo and Canelones)

- **June 15**
  - Early childhood and preschool education
  - Public and private schools (except Montevideo and Canelones)
  - High schools and secondary technical education (except Montevideo and Canelones)
  - Final year of secondary education

- **June 24**
  - All other primary, secondary and technical educational centers in the country, both public and private (all levels), are authorized to reopen.
Rigorous Protocols for the Return to In-Person Classes


In-person and virtual education in 2020: Clear and specific guidelines for year end

- General guidelines on assessment and support mechanisms for the end of the school year; establishment of promotion criteria

- Three examples of student assessment conducted as part of the student support system, in November – December 2020 and February 2021

- In 2020, 1.7 percent of secondary school students were not promoted (it may be assumed that they dropped out) compared to 1.6 percent in 2019

- In 2020, 0.1 percent of students in technical schools were not promoted. The figure for the same group in 2019 was 3.5 percent.

- At the primary level, 4.6 percent of students repeated a grade in 2020, while in 2019, the figure stood at 3.47 percent.
In 2021, full in-person learning resumed with clear instructions and guidelines

- Students at the early childhood, primary and lower secondary levels returned to the classroom on March 1.

- Lower and upper secondary school students returned to in-person classes on March 8

- The “Plan de Inicio de Cursos” (School Reopening Plan) was put in place, with 4 clearly defined objectives, each with its accompanying strategies (See: www.anep.edu.uy)
Guidance and support for educational communities in light of the renewed suspension of in-person classes

There has been a return to virtual classes, with educational institutions remaining open to allow students to have access to Wi-Fi and electronic devices, in shifts of at least three hours.
Six stages for the reopening of educational centers in 2021

- May 3
- May 18
- May 24
- June 7
- June 14
- June 21
Rural schools with a single teacher resumed classes on **May 3**

Rural schools with up to 50 students, and institutions for children 0 to 5 years old, resumed on **May 10**

On **May 18**, all students from the first to third year of primary school went back to school, except in the Departments of Montevideo and Canelones. In those Departments, the ‘Aprender’ and full-time schools resumed
Next three stages in 2021

Starting on June 7, students in the first to third grade of primary school in Montevideo, Canelones and Salto will go back to school.

Children in fourth to sixth grade of primary school in Montevideo and Canelones will start on June 21, thus ensuring 100 percent face-to-face learning at the early childhood and primary levels.

All students in fourth to sixth grade of primary school, with the exception of students in Montevideo and Canelones, will resume on June 14.
Needs, perspectives and the voice of stakeholders
The purpose of the survey was to shed light on the views of the teachers and educators on the training processes used in distance education

- The survey was divided into four modules:

1) Student participation during the period of suspension of in-person classes

2) Evaluation of educational activities during the period of suspension of in-person classes

3) Evaluation of work-related activities during the period of suspension of in-person classes

4) Opinion of the teachers on the return to in-person classes
Student Survey – October 2020

• To know the opinions and impressions of the students during the period of suspension of in-person classes.

• To get a feel for their experiences and expectations for the future in the current context.

• To help define the current situation and to gain insights on ways to plan future actions, drawing on the vision of the students themselves, in order to better understand their experience and identify possible changes and suggestions for their return to school for in-person classes.
Family Survey – May 2021

To know the opinions and the suggestions of families

• Difficulties encountered or inconveniences faced in taking classes in 2020, and the related reasons
• Family/Student relationships that support the educational activities of students
• Monitoring of and support to students in the family unit
• Patterns of behavior and family life together during the pandemic, possible disruptions in family life, among other factors.
Projected Progress in Virtual Education
Strengthening of Connectivity as an Outreach/Linking Strategy

- Know the opinions and suggestions of families
- Connectivity in inaccessible rural areas, agreement with State-owned telecommunications company on the provision of access to remote populations
- Free access to video conferencing (Conferens) – the maximum number of video conferences achieved in a single day was 120,000
- Free access to the CREA educational platform and to all the services provided at: edu.uy
- Prompt and speedy delivery of devices to students under the Plan Ceibal (96 percent of devices delivered within two months of the start of the 2021 school year)
- Improve connectivity for educational centers, upgrading them to 4G
There was a significant increase in the use of the platforms in 2021 in comparison to the previous year.

- The highest number of daily logins was recorded on 13/4, with 433,743 users accessing the platform. This exceeded the maximum number of logins for all of 2020.
The number of unique visitors increased by 81,510 in comparison to the same period in 2020.
Most students communicate with their teachers through the CREA Platform

May 2021

- 655,765 students and 40,834 teachers are included in this survey.
- 431,956 students from Primary and Secondary schools or UTU (vocational) visited the CREA Platform at some point.
- 109,628 (25 percent) logged in over all 10 days of the survey, 56 percent logged in on at least 7 days and 70 percent logged in on at least 5 days.
- 84 percent of students visited the platform at least one day over the two weeks of the survey.
Many students also use the Matific platform to carry out their activities

May 2021

- In May, an average of 11,084 users logged on per day
- The maximum number of daily visits was recorded on 15/04, with 14,910 users logging into the platform, exceeding the number of logins during the period of blended learning in 2020.
Agreements with telephone companies to facilitate universal access of teachers and students to digital tools
Some Lessons
- Importance of all government actors working in coordination

- Importance of professional coordination between different levels of the education system, with a focus on the welfare of students

- Need to attend to socio-emotional issues as they relate to students, teachers and families

- Need to develop new strategies to promote student learning and support their educational pathways

- Need to strengthen the professional development of teachers; development of digital skills

- Importance of more extensive and effective linkages between education and technology, both in terms of classroom practice and curriculum design and development

- Urgent need to promote greater harmonization within our education systems as well as with other government actors and civil society in order to address the historical challenges to education at the social level, focusing first and foremost on the needs of our children and young people as they grapple with the imminent and far-reaching changes that will have a direct impact on their future social inclusion.
Muchas gracias

June 2021