

THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON THE RESULTS OF THE 11TH KNOWLEDGE TEST IN RURAL CONTEXTS OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF JAMUNDÍ

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ABSTRACT

The invisibility of rural contexts is revealed in the results of the Knowledge 11th tests in pandemic and post-pandemic, especially in the local analysis of the municipality of Jamundí, in relation to the various virtual and remote strategies implemented by communities to access education despite the health emergency. This article analyzes objectively from a didactic point of view in order to reflect and open a discussion that includes the realities and needs of the territories located in areas distant from the municipal capital that present serious deficiencies in terms of access roads, connectivity and infrastructure. Finally, some points are recommended to the Ministry of National Education to contribute to the improvement of the quality of education in rural areas of Colombia.

Keywords: rural education, connectivity, educational quality, evaluation, standardized tests, pandemic, social gap.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to take a look at education in a local context in the face of the KNOWLEDGE 11 test and the abysmal existing gaps in the rural contexts of the municipality of Jamundí that were exposed during the post-pandemic pandemic, thus providing possible solutions. This journey begins with the contextualization of COVID-19, the incidence at world level and the

need to establish strategies for school attention.

In order to fulfill the outlined purpose, the development of education in the context of the pandemic is reviewed, specifying the rural realities, the approaches to remote education, the failure of virtuality, the influence of the armed conflict and its consequences.

In this sense, it is necessary to include a section exposing the efforts of the Ministry of National Education, with different strategies and programs aimed at educational quality and at the same time a critical review of their scope, limitations and omissions.

With the same lens, the results of the KNOWLEDGE 11th Tests from the last five years are reviewed and analyzed, with a greater emphasis from 2019 to 2021, thus recognizing the impact of the pandemic. And finally, reflections on the findings, seeking that rural education be vindicated.

The declaration of COVID - 19 as a pandemic in more than 190 countries in the year 2020 brought with it a challenge for the school. According to data from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), by May 2020, more than 1.2 billion students worldwide had stopped having face-to-face classes in school. After four months of total confinement, the world tried to continue the rhythm of life and with it, the return to the educational process of learners.

According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC] (2020), based on a study carried out in 33 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, the most used strategies for school attention during confinement were: 29 countries implemented autonomous and distance learning tools; 26 countries were able to establish online communication to accompany student learning; 24 countries implemented offline learning strategies and 23 countries generated learning through the transmission of radio and television programs.

PANDEMIC AND EDUCATION

In Colombia, different strategies began to be implemented to attend students without them leaving their homes, the most used were the use of virtual platforms, different communication channels and the sending of printed guides, which had to be picked up by the students in the educational institutions or in some cases these were sent to their own homes.

The municipality of Jamundí was no stranger to these circumstances, Jamundí is located in the southwest of Colombia, in the department of Valle del Cauca, it has 16 educational institutions, six of them in the urban area and 10 in the rural area. These 10 are divided: five in the flat rural area in the villages of Timba, Robles, Quinamayo, Villa Paz and San Isidro; the other 5 are in the high rural area (defined as such by its topography) in the villages of Potrerito, La Estrella, San Antonio, Villa Colombia and La Liberia.

Unfortunately, the strategies for the return to the educational process in the rural zone did not obtain satisfactory results. Especially in the rural area of the municipality of Jamundí, since in conditions that can be called normal, the school in the rural area is full of deficiencies in resources, infrastructure, lack of teachers, support staff, didactic materials and without connectivity and, in addition, many are still immersed in the armed conflict, what could we expect with this situation caused by COVID-19 in the rural context with all these difficulties?

The armed conflict in Colombia is a scourge that still afflicts the rural areas of this country. The cultivation of coca leaf is the engine of this situation and in the municipality of Jamundí today is the place that has more than half of the coca leaf planted in the entire Cauca Valley, according to the Ministry of Justice and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) went in the last 3 years from 60 to 1319 hectares of coca planted, this means that 1200 peasant families are engaged in the planting of coca and as a result the escalation of violence has been evident.

In addition to an area without connectivity, the community did not allow the teachers to travel to the territory to bring the printed guides, arguing that they feared that the teachers would carry the virus with them, since the quarantine in the upper rural area was much stricter than in the urban area, and was also guaranteed by indigenous communities and in some cases by illegal armed groups.

All this situation generated a substantial abandonment of school activities under this modality of remote or assisted education. After several months without the presence of the school in the community, the students of the upper rural area of Jamundí dispersed in their territories, most of them dedicated themselves to farm work in their traditional farms, although a percentage of students also dedicated themselves to coca leaf collection; others were seduced by illegal armed groups operating in these areas and in the case of adolescents, some formed families and/or became pregnant.

The above in the words of Moreno (2013) can be considered as the phenomenon of school dropout since the student abandons the educational system due to several factors that do not allow them to advance in their schooling such as the dynamics of the school itself, the social, family and individual context, and other aspects such as low purchasing power or economic lack to solve the immediacy, the armed conflict and forced displacement. This leads to exacerbate the situation of marginalization and educational backwardness of the population, since the possibilities to grow and build socially in school are minimized and also to be able to contribute to the community from different fields of knowledge with ideas and critical positions, which can ultimately lead to the poor development of society and the increase in poverty circles.

Although the Colombian state has implemented strategies through educational models designed for rural areas, these areas continue to present unfavorable conditions, such as unemployment, extreme poverty, illiteracy, etc. In general, rural areas in Colombia are still in a state of invisibility and discrimination, since they continue to be impoverished territories with reduced possibilities of access to the educational system, due to geographical location, remoteness, trails, infrastructure, among many factors that hinder pedagogical development.

It is for this reason that it is proposed that education contemplates the knowledge, the context, that teaches them to live and survive in an environment that they can improve, that is to say, adapted and flexible curricula; that the peasant knowledge be valued, included in the curriculum, and why not, also in the tests.

QUALITY OF SCHOOL EDUCATION

While it is true that talking about quality is a complex matter, from the perspective of education, of the subjects immersed in this dialogic action, the diversity of contexts where they underlie and everything that implies betting on it; this is not something isolated, it is required to broaden the horizon of expectations, it is to reach the rural roads, those popularly called “bridle paths” to go to the territories to know the realities.

Within the government’s efforts to aim at quality, pedagogical strategies have been established, among them “*Everyone to learn*” which began in 2012 with the objective of improving learning in the areas of mathematics and language in the basic primary levels (first to fifth) with cascade modality, that is, trainers who qualify tutors who come to the educational establishments, providing educational tools that respond to the needs and specificities of the environment. However, they

have focused on some schools, leaving others out of this focus, precisely the high rural areas of difficult access, so much so, that tutors are restricted to reach these areas by all the difficulties of displacement and public order, a situation that is regrettable, because teachers do arrive, where is the equality of rights? Or do they simply become privileges?

Then, the tool “*E Day*” day of excellence is established, since 2015, it is a tool that seeks to strengthen educational processes, making an analysis of the current situation of the institution to establish improvement actions from preschool to middle school, setting its synthetic index of quality. This situation has led to a resistance among teachers, not based on whims, but on the latent needs of their communities, where they do not want to delegitimize the measurement, but they demand conditions and investment, because the needs should not be naturalized, it is a harsh reality that many teachers in Colombia work from the shortage, with no infrastructure, however, they want to encourage everything with the recursion and creativity of the teacher. Then, there is a lack of taste when betting on “*Colombia the most educated in 2025*” everything can be possible, but as long as the budget and valuable ways for territorial progress are guaranteed. Otherwise, we will continue with simple slogans that promote public policies for educational quality.

It is here where a line must be drawn to point to continuous improvement, it is contextualized teaching and learning that transcends the standard of the simple fact of judging, as expressed in Document No. 3 of the Ministry of National Education (MEN), taking into account the autonomy in the classroom with conditions. As expressed by Szekely (2013) “*Education is undoubtedly one of the most effective levers for development. In education converge economic, political, governance impacts, and a scope that reaches practically all sectors and families of society.*” (p. 11)

In this order of ideas, the line drawn should contemplate the relevance of the context, the roots and the identity of the subjects who learn, because from there an environment of reflection is created around the teaching process, it is closer to what potentiates a true meaningful learning, what they learn is dynamized in their daily life. Standardizing, ignoring all multiculturalism and plurality, is not the way that favors quality, if in order to understand a text one must know the context, how much more the context of the children, adolescents and young people who learn. Mejía (2011) states the following:

“He proposes a school that breaks down the walls to go to the community, reconstructing the relationships between knowledge and knowledge, in which the methodological elements are very explicit as part of the pedagogical conception. And in this sense it

seeks the replicability of these transformations in the school processes linked to social movements, seeking that the educator not only controls the technical processes that he applies and changes in his educational practice, but also controls the reflection and the foundation of these elements that constitute the other part of the experimentation.”
(p. 34)

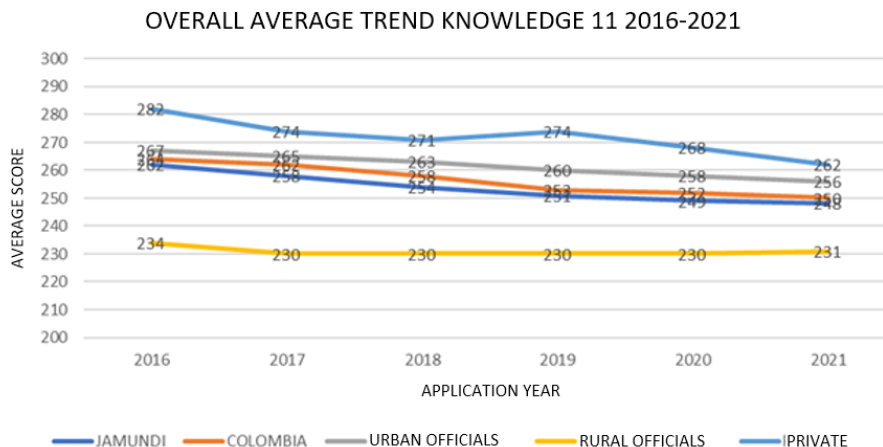
From our role as teachers, we must establish a pedagogy of a thousand colors, a thousand forms and a thousand textures, which includes everyone, allowing us to establish an autonomy based on the conformation of a flexible curriculum, tailored to the interests, needs and expectations of the learners.

In the same way, promoting knowledge and being, as mentioned above, in classroom practice it is essential to negotiate, to create scaffolds that dynamize the teaching and learning processes, this implies that teachers are able to advance in other possible worlds, that is, educational practice has a constant dialogue between realities, new technologies and the various ways of communicating, all in order to build citizenship without abandoning their being, being aware that there is a world immersed in multiple transformations. With this, teachers are really betting on an “educational reform” from a different approach to that proposed by the MEN, starting from their own, attending to the diversity of students, acquiring meaning, valuing the differences to be forceful in the continuous improvement so that students can really know and know how to do with what they learn.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF THE KNOWLEDGE 11 TEST IN THE LOCAL CONTEXT

Among the mechanisms used by the MEN to measure educational quality are standardized tests, one of them is the Knowledge 11 Test, applied by the Colombian Institute for the Evaluation of Education (ICFES), which inquire about the level of competencies achieved by students throughout their schooling (MEN, 2020). According to the MEN, the purpose of the Knowledge 11 Test is to establish information that serves as a reference for the construction of education quality indicators and at the same time as an element of inspection and surveillance of the public educational service. They also provide important information to educational institutions to generate a reflective process about pedagogical practices in order to consolidate or reorient them.

The following is data shared from the educational quality area of the municipal education secretariat of Jamundí (Rizo, A. group communication, June 9, 2022):



Graph 1: 2016 - 2021 Municipal Average.

According to the data provided in the graph, the municipality of Jamundí has always been below the national average and according to the national averages provided by the ICFES, this certified territorial entity (ETC) is ranked 50th. However, the statistics of private schools and urban educational institutions (IE) show an average above the national average. While the official educational institutions in rural areas have been below the national and territorial margins and averages. With this, it can be affirmed that the gap in educational quality is very wide in the communities with territories far from the municipal capital, which ratifies the deficiencies in the acquisition of competencies and learning levels that allow students to have opportunities such as the entrance to higher education.

However, there is also a decrease in the averages of each of the focus groups presented since between 2019 and 2021, private schools decreased 8 points; urban official educational institutions, 4 points; the national and territorial average, 3 points. Meanwhile, the rural area average was not affected since it went up one point, but continues at a low level with respect to the other averages.

Now, we review the overall averages of the Knowledge Test of the municipality, considering only the public education offer in the official IE. In the following table, these averages are shown by educational institution from 2017 to 2021 (Rizo, A. group communication, June 9, 2022).

OVERALL AVERAGE KNOWLEDGE 11th 2017-2021					
ETC - Educational establishments	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
ETC JAMUNDI	258	254	251	249	248
IE Técnica Industrial España	281	277	274	273	266
IE Rosa Lía Mafla	274	272	253	260	258
IE Técnica Comercial LITECOM	266	257	259	251	251
IE Simón Bolívar	245	261	250	247	245
IE Central De Bachillerato Integrado	249	249	255	245	242
IE Alfredo Bonilla Montaña	236	234	231	235	242
IE Alfonso López Pumarejo	254	255	231	235	237
IE General Santander	245	237	220	227	236
IE San Antonio	236	222	202	220	231
IE Sixto María Rojas	224	235	210	222	216
IE Presbítero Horacio Gómez Gallo	227	229	225	213	216
IE José María Córdoba	205	206	209	202	211
IE Luis Carlos Valencia	212	219	205	205	203
IE Gabriela Mistral	225	229	178	200	198
IE General Padilla	243	228	235	234	185

Table 1: Overall average per IE

In Table 1, three colors are denoted, blue to characterize the urban IEs; gray indicates the IEs in the flat rural zone and green shows those in the high rural zone. In the IEs of the urban zone of the municipality there was a slight decrease in the overall average of the test with respect to the year 2019; meanwhile, the IEs of the flat rural zone three of the five decreased the average taking into account the 2019 figure and two increased the overall average; on the other hand, in the institutions located in the high rural zone a little expected phenomenon occurred, four IE raised the overall averages in relation to the year 2019, however, the IE General Padilla presented a significant decline by dropping 49 points in 2021, going from the seventh position to the fifteenth.

The above exposes some of the premises already mentioned in previous sections, since this IE was unable to return to the classroom due to minimal sanitary and health conditions for the care of students, in addition to the presence of illegal groups, little or no connectivity and the limitations of the population in terms of access to electronic devices.

Thus, it can be affirmed that the achievement of good results in the Knowledge 11 Test could be conditioned to the access and use of information and communication technology tools, the socioeconomic status and context of the student, the schooling of the parents, whether the

educational offer is public or private, the infrastructure of the IE and even the displacement to the school environment.

The above ratifies the considerations made by the Criterio Journal (2022), which states that in Colombia there has always been a difference between rural and urban areas in the results obtained in state tests. This is due to the conditions mentioned above. But in times of pandemic this difference increased against the rural zone widening the existing gap.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the advances raised in the expansion of access to education in recent times, a greater segmentation of achievements and quality of services provided has also been generated (Acosta et al., 2021). This situation has led to the perpetuation of the inequality gap between generations, not because some have access and others do not, but rather because the population has differentiated access with respect to educational quality, as well as opportunities for interaction and the construction of social and cultural networks for the future, which will have a direct impact on their development capabilities.

Before the pandemic, the rural area already suffered inequality with respect to the urban area and during the pandemic this inequality increased and we saw this reflected in the surveys conducted in educational institutions which showed that 30% of the students did not have access to internet and in many cases not even with a technological device, be it a cell phone, tablet or computer. While between 70% and 80% of students from higher socioeconomic contexts have laptops at home, only between 10% and 20% of students belonging to those with lower incomes have these devices (ECLAC, 2020).

While it is true that the inequality gap increased in the rural areas of Jamundí, it is worth emphasizing that the student population in the urban area was also affected in the results of the KNOWLEDGE 11 tests (see graph 1). The lack of infrastructure, connectivity, teaching staff, didactic material, school transportation, food, among others, are shortcomings that affect the entire educational system.

The premise that was put forward during the end of the confinement and the implementation of the alternation model, “*virtuality is here to stay*” is false according to the teaching experience, because both students and teachers expressed their desire for total presence, because the conditions

for remote education were not given. Other factors such as physical and social contact and the opportunity to attend to students in their entirety were also determining factors in their longing for a return to the physical structure of educational establishments.

Finally, this article offers some recommendations from an objective perspective that can help to strengthen the conditions in the different official educational establishments of Jamundí.

- Rethinking the curriculum

The school should think about the reformulation of teaching based on the students' previous knowledge and interests. In this regard, Lopez (2006) states:

“The inhabitants of the rural world, due to their conditions of isolation, dispersion, their relationship with the natural environment, the occupations they develop, their particular forms of housing and social organization, require an education that responds to their population particularities. Both the 1991 Constitution and the General Education Law pay attention to the needs of the rural population by establishing priorities and parameters to meet their educational needs; however, the practical development of special attention in education is very limited”. (p 17).

- Strengthening access to and use of devices and technologies

COVID 19 taught us that at any time the world can become isolated and must make use of technology to continue its march in education. It is important that the national government invests in training for teachers in the use of digital platforms, evaluation tools and design, implementation and evaluation of didactic and pedagogical strategies that are cross-cut by technology. Similarly, it is necessary that schools have enough devices available to students, tablets, desktops and laptops should become the equivalent of a notebook, this in the spirit of affirming that we must be prepared, trained and equipped to address a situation like the one presented and also to adopt hybrid models that in some specific contexts ensure access to schooling remotely.

In rural areas in particular, connectivity must be strengthened so that it is effective and allows students in these areas to have access to the outside world. The creation of public policies aimed at strengthening education in rural areas with guarantees and quality of life and equity without ignoring their way of life.

- Mental health protection

During the confinement many members of the educational community presented episodes of

depression and anxiety caused by the lack of contact with their peers. In the case of teachers, the lack of use of digital devices and platforms, and this added to the low participation in some cases of their students in their virtual classes due to connectivity failures were the cause of increased stress. Accordingly, it is suggested that strategies should be implemented to monitor the mental and emotional health of teachers and students and that there should be psychological support to continue curricular activities.

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