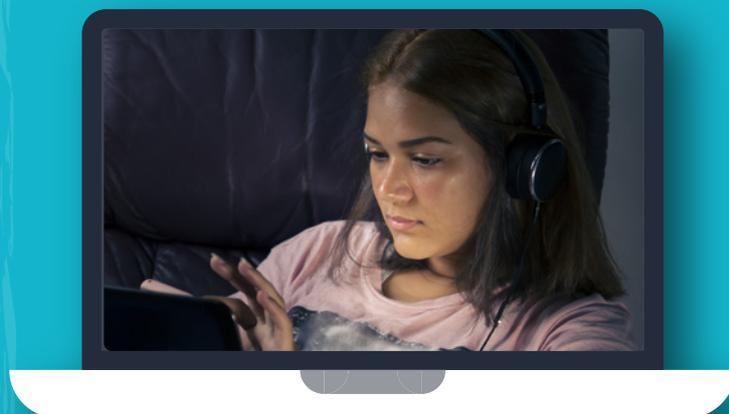
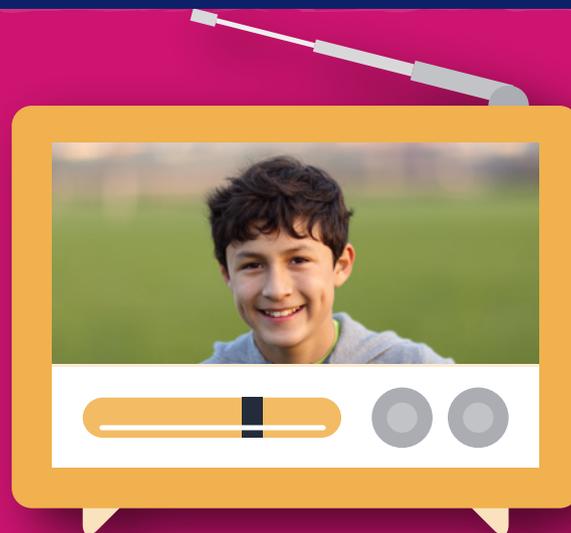


Mexico: Aprende en Casa (Learning at home)

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The coronavirus crisis led schools and universities to rapidly transition to a distance-learning mode, via the Internet, television or radio. This series documents some country initiatives that ensured education continuity for all using technology and provided support to teachers, students, and their families.

General description

The programme *Aprende en Casa* (Learning at Home) was created by the Secretary of Public Education of Mexico in order to provide pedagogical continuity to 25 million students from preschool, primary and secondary education across the country, following the closure of all schools nationwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The backbone of the initiative was educational TV, a field in which Mexico has long-standing experience gained since the creation, in 1968, of *Telesecundaria* (the programme *Telesecundaria* is implemented by the General Directorate of Educational Television in Mexico (Dirección General de Televisión Educativa), at Mexico's Secretary of Public Education), a national literacy initiative based on TV programmes for secondary schools in rural and isolated areas.

The main component of *Aprende en Casa* is audiovisual content, which is broadcast across a network of TV stations and streamed through internet platforms. It included specific slots for each educational level, complemented with activities and assessment questions which are available online and delivered in print among unprivileged areas with no internet access.

The programme, which focuses on public education, also included a special radio strategy to reach students from indigenous communities. Radio programmes are aired in 15 different languages through a network of community and indigenous radio stations and the National Institute of Indigenous Peoples. The radio programmes were complemented with relevant activities considering the cultural



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background of the different communities. In addition, the initiative offers teacher training in digital skills, which is possible thanks to a public-private partnership strategy.

Aprende en Casa started immediately after the suspension of face-to-face classes across the country. Its rapid deployment was possible because it relied on the country's previous experience of TV-based educational programme: *Telesecundaria*.

Telesecundaria involved the creation of a national system for digital educational television using satellite technology. During the 2017-2018 school cycle, it reached 1 398 273 students, accounting for 21.4% of the overall enrolment at secondary education level in Mexico, although it had had an even wider coverage in 2000, with 53% of reach. According to the information provided by the Secretary of Public Education, students from *Telesecundaria* showed outstanding results in national standardised assessments in Spanish and maths¹.

With less than half of the rural population with Internet access, Mexico managed to provide pedagogical continuity expanding its TV learning strategy for secondary education to primary and preschool levels. Its delivery focused on providing equal access to educational resources and was original in that it combined the traditional approach of *Telesecundaria* with updated features, such as a TV and online platforms network strategy to deal with the exponential increase of the target audience.

Main problems addressed

The main problem was to design a continuity contingency plan capable of coping with the challenges associated with the massive scale and high diversity of the Mexican educational system, which comprises more than 233 000 schools, 1.2 million teachers, and 25 million students, including from indigenous populations.

One of the main challenges was to find a proper output that could be accessed by students and teachers across the country. As only 47.7% of users from rural areas have access to the Internet, but 92.5% of households have at least one television², and considering Mexico's well-established experience with *Telesecundaria*, *Aprende en Casa* opted for educational television as the main delivery platform. The General Directorate of Educational Television, the body in charge of *Telesecundaria*, had the necessary technical, operational, and technological infrastructure and capabilities to develop a large-scale strategy, rapidly adjusting to the emerging needs resulting from this educational disruption.

The second problem addressed related to the exponential increase in coverage and scope of the target audience. *Telesecundaria* was meant to provide services in Spanish for secondary education students in rural areas. Apart from generating new content, *Aprende en Casa* had to reach all students from preschool up to secondary education. This challenge was addressed by creating a network delivery strategy encompassing traditional TV broadcast with online streaming. To this end, *Aprende en Casa* built partnerships with public and private television networks and technology companies, including the Mexican State Public Broadcasting System. In addition, a special initiative broadcasts audio contents in 15 different indigenous languages through radio networks with a high reach among indigenous communities.

Mobilising and developing resources

The pre-existing resources, infrastructure, and experience were the main pre-existing pillars for developing *Aprende en Casa*, facilitating the creation of new specific contents for preschool and primary education.

¹According to the information provided by the Secretary of Public Education for this paper, the referred assessments are ENLACE (Evaluación Nacional de Logros Académicos en Centros Escolares) and PLANEA (Plan Nacional para las Evaluaciones de los Aprendizajes).

²The information was provided by Secretaría de Educación Pública and the Dirección Nacional de Televisión Educativa from Mexico quoting information extracted from reports of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) of Mexico.

After five decades of educational TV services, Mexico had more than 3 000 television programmes aligned with the secondary school curriculum.

In order to extend the offer to preschool and primary education, teams from educational TV and curricular areas from the Secretary of Public Education cooperated to create the new content within a limited timeframe. They developed a content proposal based on pre-existing textbooks for each level following the national curriculum, which are regularly produced and distributed by the Mexican state³.

New features included support and educational resources for teachers, families, and students, with dedicated sections on the programme's site, including on-demand access to TV programmes, textbooks, activities, educational games, and personalised folders to upload completed assignments. In addition, the programme developed its own YouTube channel with specific playlists for each educational level.

Fostering effective use and learning

A first means to foster effective use is to connect the programmes to the national curriculum. Audio-visual content and activities of *Aprende en Casa* were designed in alignment with the curriculum and include activities and questionnaires to evaluate learning outcomes, which will be assessed by teachers once schools reopen. The material covers 25% of the curriculum of each educational level, since it was estimated that by the time schools closed, students had already learnt 75% of the annual study programme.

A second way is to apply a specific format to audio-visual materials to facilitate a clear and dynamic presentation of contents in order to secure students' engagement. The collection of audio-visual pieces are properly labeled with relevant information about the corresponding level, year, subject, and topic. Moreover, they articulate with interactive activity books. Each programme starts with a general presentation of the broad topic, followed by a sequence of short fragments focusing on specific subtopics. Each subtopic includes an introduction, an explanatory section with relevant supporting images and settings, followed by a closing segment with a summary of the contents presented. This format provides a dynamic pace to the programme, which is fundamental taking into consideration the target age group. It also facilitates the modularisation of the programme, since each of the subtopics become a short standalone video suitable to be published on YouTube (see this [example](#)). In order to promote identification and empathy with students, the presenters are usually adolescents who engage in problems and challenges, which work as prompts to facilitate the plot development.

Thirdly, the initiative was designed for a broad reach. TV programmes are broadcast through TV networks for 10 to 14 hours a day from Monday to Friday, and organised in dedicated slots for each level. They are also available on demand on online platforms and through an app, which facilitates access to all the complementary material (see a presentation of the [app](#) in Spanish). The programmes can be accessed by TV, phone or computerised devices, and the corresponding activities are available online or in print for underprivileged communities with no Internet access.

In addition, a substantial part of student and teacher engagement in the initiative is based on the coordination of solutions with regional authorities, teachers, and school authorities across the country. This includes establishing guidelines for remote interaction with students. Teachers have been interacting with students and their families, using the programme's site and instant messaging apps (notably WhatsApp) to facilitate the use of educational materials and activities created by *Aprende en Casa* and keep a dynamic communication exchange with them.

³ The National Commission of Free Textbooks is a decentralised public entity of the Federal Public Administration which produces and distributes free textbooks for each school year for students enrolled in the National Education System.

Implementation challenges

The main implementation challenges related to providing contents, digital enhancements, and teacher training in a noticeably short period of time. Many of them were overcome by public-private partnership solutions. For example, in order to create an effective output to deliver the programme's online audio-visual material, *Aprende en Casa* partnered with Google to create a dedicated YouTube channel.

In addition, further partnerships were built with national and international private and public organisations in order to gather educational resources and provide training for teachers to develop digital and distance learning skills. As a result, 20 courses and a massive webinar have already been offered, benefiting more than 1 million teachers. Partners included technology companies, non-profit organisations, and universities⁴.

In order to guarantee content provision to students from rural and isolated communities with no Internet access, *Aprende en Casa* delivered 300 000 printed educational materials. This was done with the collaboration of the National Reading Programme, which develops literacy activities targeting vulnerable communities. For this reason, this governmental area had the information and logistics already available to identify and deliver hard copies to unprivileged students through a decentralised regional process involving employees and volunteers.

Monitoring success

The monitoring of *Aprende en Casa* relied primarily on a national survey answered by more than 300 000 teachers, which was jointly implemented by the Secretary of Public Education and the National Labour Union of Education Workers (*Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación* [SNTE]). According to data provided by Mexico's Secretary of Public Education, the survey showed that 82% of teachers reported having weekly interactions with 9 out of 10 of their students, and 61% considered that the actions implemented to develop the educational programme were 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent'.

Regarding how teachers accessed the programme's contents, the survey suggested that 50.2% used their mobile phones, nearly 30%, other devices, 14.5%, television, and 0.3%, radio, while the rest relied on other instruments and materials.

In addition, the Secretary of Public Education is planning to further monitor and assess the programme after the reopening of schools. By then, teachers will access and review further activities completed by students in order to assess learning outcomes.

Adaptability to new contexts

The strategy implemented in Mexico shows the potential of a distance learning strategy based on television and audio-visual material, particularly in contexts with unequal internet access. The approach of *Aprende en Casa* may be transferable to low and middle-income countries, particularly if they have previous experiences in educational TV.

Considering that Internet infrastructure continues to be limited in many regions across the globe, resorting to traditional and accessible technological solutions might be an alternative until more sophisticated resources become available.

The strategy is also applicable in countries that have made great investments in their Internet infrastructure but have not yet reached a high level of maturity of associated pedagogical services. In this context, a

⁴ Partner organisations include: Khan Academy, Fundación Carlos Slim, Microsoft, Fundación Telefónica, Google and Red Magisterial.

combination of educational television with radio and online education could be a potential solution for guaranteeing pedagogical continuity.

Mexico's lines of implementation, involving the use of several complementary outputs, resources and services – such as radio, printed materials, online contents, and teacher training – as well as public-private partnerships, could be easily further developed in the future and adopted by other countries in a post-COVID scenario. This would help to properly address diversity by selecting resources tailored for specific groups of students. In an increasingly complex and unpredictable world, partnerships might contribute to work in cooperation with a number of key public and private organisations that could provide some of the resources that education services need and cannot procure on their own.

Key points to keep in mind for a successful adaptation

1. Explore the availability of audio-visual, radio, and digital material in your own organisation and with potential partners to cover the targeted curriculum.
2. Analyse the infrastructure and possible networks to deliver content (TV, radio, and online).
3. Consider delivery outputs accessible to students, families, and teachers, including vulnerable groups.
4. Select the platform with the highest potential to reach the educational community and plan accordingly, integrating complementary outputs.
5. Segment your target audience and identify relevant resources and possible enhancements depending on the delivery platform.
6. Involve teachers, parents, school leaders, and regional authorities in the design and implementation process.
7. Make the learning experience enjoyable (students learning from home need more motivation).
8. Build necessary partnerships with national and international public and private organisations.
9. Create a clear and organised strategy with available resources, including a plan to assess learning outcomes.
10. Monitor your programme and make it flexible in order to make necessary adjustments.

Acknowledgements

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References

Aprende en Casa online resources have been presented in the following websites:

<https://aprendeencasa.sep.gob.mx/>; www.televisioeducativa.gob.mx/; <https://www.aprende.edu.mx/>;
<http://jovenesencasa.educacionmediasuperior.sep.gob.mx/>; <https://libros.conaliteg.gob.mx/>;
<http://tripulantes.sep.gob.mx/>. Accessed the 1st June 2020.

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