

**Abstract**

**Education and digitalisation in the Global South. A reflection from the Colombian case**

By: Rocío Rueda Ortiz (Prof. Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, Bogotá- Colombia)

ICT are believed to have mostly positive effects for development in the Global South. Potential benefits of ICT implementation allegedly include better economic performance, better access to health care, more opportunities for expression and political participation, and higher levels of education. Countries from the South Hemisphere experience particularly diverse, unequal and unfair contexts, where digital education goes along with (involuntary/forced) approbation of conditions and policies set by major companies from the Global North. The educational politics of ICT in Colombia in the last 20 years use a discourse which relate ICT with: progress, development, quality of live, richness and happiness. ICT are seen as neutral tools for the development of the country. But they are shaped by implicit and explicit global and local choices and thus incorporate a set of values, norms, economic interests, and assumptions about how the world and life is or should be.

Thus, the process of incorporating these technologies into education in Colombia has taken place in the midst of several contradictions and challenges. The rhetoric on technologies tends to reduce everything to the problem of the digital divide and the consequent access to technologies. But Colombia as many other countries in the Global South required a multidimensional comprehension, where social hierarchies such as age, family status, gender, ethnicity, origin, language, and geography (urban/rural) are very important. These categories have resulted in different types of the social divide.

In this regard, I would like to address the following questions: How far can digital technologies improve global digital justice in the field of education, e.g. by facilitating access to education for pupils and students in the Global South and thereby reducing digital exclusion? And What could/should be done in order to empower excluded people from the “modern intellectual tradition of humanism” to become active agents, designers and decision makers rather than marginalised users exposed to data exploitation?

Based on my research conducted on the incorporation of information and communication technologies (ICT) in secondary schools, faculties of education and with social movements in Colombia, I would like to highlight the following three aspects to show challenges and opportunities of this process:

- Firstly, the ICT discourse linked to progress and development as solution to all educational problems and the contradictions which it entails in relation to a humanist educational project.
- Secondly, new paradoxes and contradictions at the University as “Institution of Knowledge”.
- Thirdly, the emergence of new (alternative) universities related to social movements as possibility of resistance and social transformation.