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The EdTech Issue



Education has been described as Latin America's great equalizer for decades, and technology now promises to accelerate that mission. Artificial intelligence tutors, digital classrooms, adaptive learning platforms, and online credentials have created new opportunities for the future of education across the region. As startups continue multiplying and governments begin to launch ambitious digital learning initiatives, it remains to be seen if the digital revolution still remains out of reach for those with the least access.

The Latin American EdTech market is [now estimated at between \\$10 and \\$16 billion and is growing at roughly 12–14% annually](#). Artificial intelligence in education is expanding even faster, with projected growth rates [exceeding 30% per year](#). Despite this momentum, the region still faces a profound learning crisis. According to the [OECD's PISA 2022 assessment](#),

approximately 75% of Latin American fifteen-year-olds fail to reach minimum mathematics proficiency, while more than half do not achieve basic reading proficiency.

Technology alone has not solved these problems because access itself remains unequal. According to data compiled by [the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean \(ECLAC\)](#), approximately 77% of urban and only 38% of rural households have internet connectivity; broadband consumes between 12% and 14% of household income for low-income families, positioning connectivity as a privilege.

No country illustrates the promise of EdTech better than Brazil. Home to more than a thousand active EdTech startups, Brazil accounts for nearly half of the region's top companies and roughly 80% of all EdTech investment. [Khan Academy's expansion in Brazil](#) increased public-school participation in the online tool from roughly 70,000 users to 1.7 million, and the country became the first outside the United States to pilot Khanmigo, the organization's AI-powered learning assistant. At the same time, government initiatives such as [Pé-de-Meia](#) are helping keep nearly four million low-income students in school through conditional cash transfers, targeting some of the country's most vulnerable populations. Yet Brazil also demonstrates the limits of market-driven innovation. Many startups chase private schools and paying consumers, while [public-sector adoption remains slower and more complicated](#), since centralized government procurement tends to favor a few scaled incumbents.

If Brazil represents scale, Uruguay represents strategy.

Nearly two decades ago, Uruguay launched a pioneering effort to provide every public-school with a connected device, named [Plan Ceibal](#). The program now reaches [roughly 700,000 students](#) and has become one of the most studied EdTech initiatives in the world, [recognized by UNESCO](#) as a model for the region. Last year, Uruguay continued those efforts and created [EduIA Lab, within Plan Ceibal](#), as the region's first public hub for artificial intelligence in education. Ceibal's computational thinking and AI program now reaches [95% of urban public schools and 65% of rural schools, with more than 4,100 teachers](#) working on the foundations of AI in the classroom. Uruguay's ongoing efforts emphasize that educational equity through innovation can be accelerated with deliberate policy action. Through Plan Ceibal, technology was designed as a public good rather than a market product. This allowed devices, connectivity, teacher training, and curriculum integration to be built into the system from the beginning.

A related tension runs through the debate over foreign versus local platforms. International giants such as Duolingo, Coursera, and Khan Academy dominate the consumer learning market, and their scale and resources are difficult to match. Yet many of the most successful regional companies thrive precisely because they understand local realities better. Platforms such as [Platzi](#), [Crehana](#), [Cogna Educação](#), and [Hotmart](#) adapt readily to local curricula, language preferences, labor markets, and connectivity constraints. Their success

shows that EdTech works best when it is translated linguistically, culturally, and institutionally, but local fit is not the same as equity, because these platforms are still built for paying, connected customers.

That gap becomes harder to ignore as artificial intelligence enters the classroom. The Inter-American Development Bank recently [catalogued 193 AI-in-education initiatives across 22 Latin American and Caribbean countries](#), but warned that relatively few have been rigorously evaluated, leaving limited evidence on what works, and for whom. The same caution recurs across the IDB, the World Bank, and UNESCO, which warn that without teacher training, governance, and basic connectivity, AI is more likely to deepen gaps than close them. A tool that reclaims hours for a connected teacher in a well-resourced school does nothing for the rural household that cannot get online.

The countries narrowing this divide are doing so through intentional public investment and policy design, not market momentum, and that choice is what separates a transformation that reaches everyone from one that simply compounds the access some students already had.

La Charla



This week Angel Melguizo talks to [Rebeca Grynszpan](#), Costa Rica's official candidate to become the next UN Secretary-General. She currently leads UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), a post she has held since 2021. Previously served as Ibero-American Secretary General and as Costa Rica's Second Vice President. An economist by training she could become the first woman to serve as United Nations Secretary-General in the organization's 80-year history.

Latin America, a region that knows inequality, migration, and the search for multilateral solutions firsthand, already demonstrated its capacity to lead the UN with Javier Pérez de Cuéllar. Could the region once again take that seat at the global table—this time with a woman at the helm—offering a different vision for an increasingly fragmented world?

What the world needs today is leadership capable of building trust when trust is eroding.

I have spent my professional life precisely at that intersection. I have been vice president of my country, negotiated debt crises, led international institutions, and worked on some of the most complex challenges of our time. I know that behind every political decision there are real consequences for millions of people.

When I took part in the Black Sea Initiative negotiations at the start of the war between Russia and Ukraine, we weren't just discussing trade or shipping. We were trying to prevent a global food crisis. And we succeeded! That experience reaffirmed a conviction in me: diplomacy matters.

Latin America has a long tradition of dialogue, consensus-building, and international cooperation. Despite our differences, this is a region of peace among nations, one that has turned to international justice when disputes have arisen between countries. And it is a nuclear-weapon-free region. This is valuable experience at a time of growing conflict on the international stage.

This election should be about leadership—about the ability to build bridges and forge agreements, and the ability to deliver results.

You could become the first woman to lead the UN. Beyond the symbolism, how does female leadership transform the way we govern and build consensus?

I'm not asking for any advantage. I'm only asking to be evaluated by the same standard as any other candidate.

It would be historic for a woman to lead the United Nations for the first time in eighty years, and I understand what that would mean for many women and girls. But member states must choose the person best prepared for this moment.

I have governed, negotiated economic crises, led international organizations, driven institutional reforms, and worked in complex diplomatic processes and conflict settings. My track record shows I am prepared to take on this responsibility.

Women often bring valuable experience in consensus-building and coalition-building. But ultimately, leadership is defined, on one hand, by the ability to generate trust, open space for dialogue, make difficult decisions, and deliver results. And on the other hand, by the ability to inspire and generate the options that lead us toward a better world for everyone.

The next Secretary-General will inherit a world marked by wars, polarization, debt, climate crisis, and technological disruption. What do you consider the greatest threat to global stability over the next decade?

I have seen how a war can turn into a food crisis, an energy crisis, or a debt crisis for countries thousands of kilometers from the conflict. Our problems are increasingly connected, but our capacity to act together seems increasingly weakened.

That's why I've said the United Nations has become an institution that is risk-averse, and that shouldn't be the case. We must always try to prevent, mediate, put ideas on the table, and use the Secretary-General's "good offices" to their full extent—the greatest risk for the UN today is not trying.

The deepest threat is not any specific crisis, but losing the capacity to cooperate in the face of challenges that no country can solve alone. That's why I've said that even if we can fragment our actions, what we cannot do is fragment our problems.

Peace must return to the center of the UN's work. Because when diplomatic efforts fail, the consequences end up reaching everywhere.

As an economist focused on development and inequality, do you believe the international financial architecture still works for emerging countries, or does it need deep reform?

Geopolitics and geoeconomics can no longer be separated.

I learned this first from government, and I've seen it since at the UN. Today a war can disrupt trade routes, send food and energy prices soaring, worsen debt, and generate political instability far from the original conflict.

The international architecture needs deep reforms. It was designed for a different world. This is true for political institutions and for financial institutions alike. Today too many countries face financial constraints that limit their ability to invest in development, climate adaptation, and growth.

When a country spends more resources servicing debt than on education or health, the problem stops being purely economic and becomes a problem for stability, development, and security.

Artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and digital concentration are redefining global power. What role should the UN play in technology governance without stifling innovation?

The question isn't who controls artificial intelligence. The question is who benefits from it.

Innovation is one of the greatest opportunities of our time. The UN's role isn't to slow down the future. It's to help ensure the future has room for more countries and more people.

Artificial intelligence can accelerate development, expand opportunities, and improve lives. But it can also deepen inequalities if its benefits remain concentrated among a few actors.

The UN's task is to help build common principles, reduce digital divides, and ensure that the benefits of knowledge, innovation, and technology reach as many people and countries as possible. We need faster, broader technology diffusion, intensive digital capacity-building, and a great deal of cooperation.

You've noted that climate change is also an economic and geopolitical crisis. Is the international community acting with enough urgency? What role should the UN take on?

The climate crisis is already a present reality.

I've seen it in small island states, in coastal communities, and in regions affected by desertification. For millions of people, climate change is already a matter of development, security, and survival.

The international community is not acting at the speed the challenge demands.

The UN must help put adaptation at the center of the global agenda, facilitate access to climate financing, and connect discussions on climate, debt, and development. We cannot ask for climate resilience from countries that lack the fiscal space to build it.

Mass migration is becoming an increasingly sensitive and polarizing issue. Is the international system prepared for this new era of human mobility? How should security, rights, and cooperation be balanced?

Migration is not a problem that gets solved at a border.

The best way to manage human mobility is to address the causes that force people to leave their homes. When there are opportunities, security, and prospects for the future, migration stops being a necessity and becomes a choice.

Distrust of international institutions is growing, especially among young people. How can the UN reconnect with a generation that feels the global system doesn't address their concerns?

Young people don't want to be spectators of the future. They want to help build it, and they need a UN that responds to the problems they're already living through.

Trust isn't restored through campaigns. It's restored through results. When young people see wars that don't end, inequalities that grow, or difficulties accessing opportunities—especially well-paying jobs—it's natural for them to question institutions.

But we also need to change the way we work. It's not enough to listen to young people. They must actively participate in the decisions that will shape their future.

You describe yourself as a "reformist multilateralist." What concrete reforms does the UN need today to regain legitimacy and results? What would your priorities be in the first 100 days?

The legitimacy of the United Nations will increasingly depend on its ability to deliver results.

I have reformed and improved every institution I've led. And I've learned that reform isn't about rearranging boxes on an organizational chart. It's about responding faster, coordinating better, and serving people better.

My priorities will be clear. First, returning to the peace negotiation table—putting prevention and mediation at the center of the organization through earlier, more active diplomacy. Second, driving a reform oriented toward results rather than processes. And third, preparing the United Nations for the great challenges that will define this century: technology, climate, debt, and economic fragmentation.

But the organizational culture also needs to change. We need a United Nations capable of partnering on problem-solving with regional organizations, civil society, and the private sector. I've said that the United Nations has a legitimacy and convening power that make it unique and irreplaceable—but being unique doesn't mean being alone. We need to focus better on our objectives and build deeper, more stable partnerships.

The UN must show it can act effectively in today's world, not yesterday's.


You were born into a family marked by European exile after World War II. How personal is your connection to the founding ideals of the United Nations?


I am a daughter of peace. My parents arrived in Costa Rica as refugees from World War II. There they found dignity, opportunity, and the chance to rebuild their lives.


My own story is the result of what peace makes possible when institutions work and when international cooperation fulfills its purpose.


That's why, for me, the UN Charter is not an abstract document. It's a lived experience. I deeply believe in the principles that gave rise to this organization because I've seen how they can transform real lives. And perhaps that's why I still believe that, even in a world as complex as this one, it's not only worth continuing to try—it's a responsibility we must take on.

Elsewhere in Latam

 [No clear winner was produced in Peru's June 7 presidential runoff](#), with leftist congressman Roberto Sanchez and conservative Keiko Fujimori separated by fractions of a percentage point. Sanchez edged ahead as rural votes came in late, resetting Fujimori's previous lead. Still, the official count is not expected until mid-July.

 México's annual inflation rate fell to 3.94%, [back below the 4% threshold](#), while the World Bank projects [Mexico will grow under 2% through 2028](#) and warned of risks from the USMCA/T-MEC renegotiation, after Sheinbaum defended the trade deal's continuity following Trump's comments about possibly scrapping it. The Trump administration has issued [a caution to American citizens traveling to Mexico for the FIFA World Cup](#), reiterating a late-May travel advisory recommending they avoid certain parts of the country.

 [Colombia's presidential race heads into a June 21 runoff](#) pitting far-right outsider Alberdo de la Espriella against far-left Senator Ivan Cepeda post neither securing a majority in the first round. De la Espriella surged to first place with 43.7% against Cepeda's 40.9%, surprising most pre-election polling which had anticipated a three-way race. The result is being read as a broad rejection of outgoing President Gustavo Petro's record on security and economic management. For Washington, the outcome will be a key indicator of whether Colombia swings back toward closer bilateral cooperation on counternarcotics after years of friction under Petro, or whether the left consolidates enough to maintain continuity with his political project.

 [Venezuela's acting president Delcy Rodriguez traveled to New Dehli to meet with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi](#), as India moves to diversity its energy supplies beyond the Middle East and deepen commercial ties with Caracas. Despite US sanctions and Washington's isolation strategy, the visit signals Venezuela is finding partners that are

willing to absorb its oil exports. In fact, India is expected to import [above 300,000 barrels a day of Venezuelan crude oil in June](#), rising past the 280,000 barrels a day that have been imported in April and May.

🇪🇨 Ecuador's country risk ([Emerging Markets Bond Index](#)) fell to 386 points on June 12 – its lowest level since September 2014 – with a cumulative drop of 1,630 points since Pres. Noboa took office in November 2023.

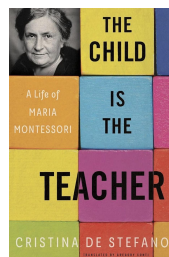
🇨🇺 [Carilda Peña García, Cuba's deputy health minister, addressed the impact that the decades-old US embargo is having on the national health system](#). The human rights office, [OHCHR](#), reports childhood cancer survival rates have fallen from 85 to 65 percent; infant mortality has doubled to 9.9 per 1,000 births; essential medicines are now available at around 30 percent of normal supplies; and food production output is down 60 per cent with basic costs rising.

La Cita

"Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself."

[John Dewey](#), a preeminent American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer.

La Lectura



The Child is the Teacher: A Life of Maria Montessori by Cristina De Stefano is a biography of one of history's most influential educators, drawn from original letters, diaries, and notes. De Stefano traces how Montessori developed her child-centered philosophy and fought to bring it to scale, making it a natural read for anyone interested in rethinking how education systems are built and for whom.



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