



Four educational trends transforming learning in 2026

During a panel discussion at IFE Conference 2026, experts agreed that **artificial intelligence (AI)**, **digital platforms**, and **new immersive technologies** are redefining what it means to teach and learn this year.

However, beyond the tools, the challenge is how to use them effectively, said **Myriam Villarreal**, Director of **Pedagogical Innovation and Design** at [Tec de Monterrey](#).

*“(This is so that) **teaching** becomes an intentional, reflective process designed to transform the learner”, she added.*

Villarreal and other specialists in educational innovation explored the **four major trends in the panel *Learning in Evolution: Pedagogical Trends for 2026***.

These are:

1. The integration of **artificial intelligence**
2. **Hyper-personalized learning**
3. **Immersive educational experiences**
4. **Hybrid models**



They each present not only opportunities to enhance learning but also **ethical and practical challenges** that teachers need to navigate carefully.

[CONECTA](#) presents these **four pedagogical trends** below:

1. Artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence is a powerful tool that is more **democratized and open** than ever before, yet at the same time it is **more undefined and volatile**, said Laura Zepeda, Head of Pedagogical Model Innovation at the Tec.

Zepeda explained that the challenge is to **teach in a logical and structured way** with all these elements, such as AI tools, digital platforms, and open data.

On top of these challenges, the current situation raises concerns among teachers that have not been resolved.

Zepeda defines them as the impact on **learning, cognitive abilities**, and **academic integrity**, as well as what she called the "*collapse of truth*."

“Students can rely on artificial intelligence tools, but if you take those away, will they be able to do the work?” said the specialist. *“That’s something we need to be concerned about”*.

In this context and with these concerns in mind, education systems are moving toward a **focus on learning processes**.

The priority is no longer to arrive at the correct answer but to develop students’ ability to solve problems in other settings, she said.

As Zepeda explained, this requires a shift toward soft skills such as **communication, collaboration, and critical thinking**, which are often not priorities in many degree programs.

There is also a rethinking of assessment methods, as reaching a final result has become easier with the support of these technological tools.

“Students can rely on artificial intelligence tools, but if you take those away, they’ll still be able to do it”. – Laura Zepeda, Head of Pedagogical Model Innovation at the Tec



2. Personalized learning

Learning can no longer be the same for all students, said Elia Mendoza, Head of Instructional Design for Learning Experience at the Tec.

*“In a digital, diverse, and changing world, **education needs to be flexible, personalized, and learner-centered**”,* Mendoza said.

These changes require adjustments to **objectives, content, methodologies, and assessments** so that they are aligned with the needs of each student.

With the use of technology, there is now a concept that Mendoza called “**hyper-personalization**,” an evolution of adaptive learning.

Using AI, real-time data analysis, and predictive algorithms, teachers can generate content for their classes that reflects **the needs of their students, the specialist noted**.

The trend outlined by the experts for this year is the integration of these personalization tools into **learning management systems** such as Canvas and Blackboard.

These central platforms for institutions will have an “**artificial intelligence brain**” that brings all data and tools together in one place.

There are challenges and ethical issues within these changes. One is the **digital divide** between students and institutions with different resources. There are also issues surrounding the **privacy of data** collected from students.

Any technology or tool they implement requires a research process to ensure that it complies with privacy requirements, the expert noted.

Furthermore, there is a risk of creating a **learning bubble** where students cannot adapt to other forms of learning or lose **flexibility and resilience** when faced with difficult topics that they may encounter throughout their careers.

The final challenge presented by Mendoza concerns the **role of teachers** in today’s classrooms.

“It’s not only important that we manage the technology,” Mendoza said, “but also that we continue to be present with the human factor, which is motivation, ethics, and socio-emotional support”.

The human aspect of learning should not be lost, but it does need to change to fit into this more flexible and streamlined process.

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3. Experiential learning

This trend relates to educational environments that enable students to learn by doing, with **hands-on experience** that guides them throughout their careers.

“It’s one of the most efficient ways to address the issue of development and skills training”, said Villarreal.

Currently, the Tec is using **virtual reality, immersive reality, and extended reality** to allow students to practice the specific skills they will need to use in professional environments.

AI also plays a crucial role in the use of these technologies, creating **safe environments** where students can **collaborate** and **solve complex problems in real time**.

The impact that experts see within this trend is **adaptive learning** that aligns with the evolution of hyper-personalization, the advantage of obtaining **immediate feedback**, and continuous reinforcement through **active, holistic, and participatory repetition**.

The challenge for teachers is similar to what was mentioned in other trends: it requires a redefinition of their role in the classroom.

Teachers must be **creators or curators of content, personalized mentors, and ethical guides** through these experiential technologies.

“Many of these technologies can provide feedback to students, but it’s the teacher who is ultimately responsible for evaluating students’ learning progress”, she said.

To implement these technologies in their institutions, Villarreal shared three recommendations:

- *Comprehensive teacher training that connects the use of these tools with the pedagogical goals of the course.*
- *Ethical and responsible governance that not only protects student privacy but also responds to their relevant needs.*
- *Preserving the human connection between students, teachers, and peers.*

“Many of these technologies can provide feedback to students, but it’s the teacher who’s responsible (...) for student learning”. – Myriam Villarreal, Director of Pedagogical Innovation and Design at the Tec.



4. Hybrid learning

Since the pandemic, institutions and teachers have adapted to a new reality in which students **learn in complex and changing contexts**.

Now it is no longer just a solution, as it was in 2020, but a **formal learning model** that combines technology, pedagogy, and support.

“In the workplace, contexts are becoming more complex and volatile”, said Mónica Duarte, Head of Pedagogical Support in Innovation and Experiences at the Tec.

“It’s important that our students develop the skills to be able to function naturally”, she added.

In this new model, it is an intentional pedagogical approach that integrates **personal and digital experiences** to develop **cognitive and social-emotional skills**.

This means that there has been an evolution in the model towards something more strategic, with a greater focus on students and their **collaboration and communication skills in digital contexts**.

Duarte shared her recommendations for integrating this hybrid model into classrooms. The first is to be **intentional** about what teachers teach online or digitally and what they reserve for the classroom.

Activities such as **guided discussions, art projects, or teacher-led instruction** work best as in-person activities. For online, it is best to use activities such as **assessments, instructional videos, or discussion forums**.

What a teacher can reserve for a **hybrid model**, in which classes are held **online but the teacher is present to support students**, are exercises such as individual tutoring, small group instruction, or pair work.

The second recommendation is how hybrid learning can **facilitate personalization**.

“We need to think about student diversity, about providing them with multiple formats, and how to prioritize the student experience over content coverage”, said Duarte.

In her third recommendation, Duarte highlighted the key skills for 2026 that can be fostered with the hybrid model.

These are **critical thinking and problem solving, autonomy** in learning, **synchronous or asynchronous collaboration and communication**, and **creativity**.

“We have to evolve teaching practices for new technologies”, Villarreal said at the end of the discussion, *“but always in line with teaching strategies and the needs of the students”*.



About the IFE Conference

This is the twelfth edition of the **IFE Conference**, organized by the **Institute for the Future of Education** at Tec de Monterrey, which took place from January 27 to 29 on the Monterrey campus.

It is considered one of the **most important events in educational innovation in the Spanish-speaking world**, featuring keynote speeches, panels, hybrid events, special events, awards ceremonies, presentations, networking opportunities, and more.

*“The **IFE Conference** is a platform for energizing people to bring about the change in education that Latin America, the Caribbean, and the rest of the world need”,* said José Escamilla, Associate Director of IFE.

“It’s a space where the main stakeholders (in education) come together. This is the moment when we can make these connections and find ways to work together to achieve this transformation”, he added.

This year, there were more than **4,600 in-person attendees** and over 1,450 online participants from 46 countries, with more than 500 activities and 860 speakers.

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