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OPINION

INNOVATING IN FLORIDA: EDUCATION www.elcolombiano.com

It is normal that when we want to observe experiences of innovation ecosystems we refer, almost automatically, to San Francisco, Boston, Tel Aviv, Singapore, London. All, very powerful, advanced, dense, in terms of actors and support institutions, and multi-million dollar investments. But, while these ecosystems, each with their dynamics, are inspiring, they are a bit far from our needs and realities. When we analyze them in detail they become difficult to replicate and, replicating them does not guarantee that we will achieve greater competitiveness and differentiation.

Last week I had the opportunity to meet the innovation ecosystem of Florida, USA. UU A State with 19 million inhabitants and a GDP that is located at number 19 in the world, and with more than 95 million visitors per year. I was struck by the advanced nature of this ecosystem that in a very short time will be news in the world. Florida is a state ecosystem, associated with different cities and regions, that is unleashed from education and universities. And in some cases they are working in more than interesting educational systems. Let's see what I'm talking about. **Flagler Schools is a network of public educational institutions that, in primary and secondary schools, are innovating and thinking about community and economic development. In this network, students learn mathematics through real explanations and associated with professions. In other words, they land the conceptual to cases of daily life. That is, if the student is learning geometry, this is explained with examples of architecture, civil engineering, etc. In high school, starting in the ninth grade, you must choose an elective where real life productive processes are taught. If the student wants, he can be, for example, a firefighter for 4 years, they teach him the basics to understand how is the daily performance in that job, has practices with real firefighters and each year reaches a more sophisticated level in training towards that profession . This type of education ultimately gives you the possibility of having a better vocational orientation. These electives, more than thirty in total, offer different possibilities ranging from agricultural sciences and green technologies, marine sciences,**

To date, several companies have joined the program and donated laboratories with the necessary technologies for students to explore and learn frontier issues and real application. More than 180 businessmen and professionals donate their time to train children who, under a specific methodology, pose challenges to be solved together. Thus, the teacher works in partnership with the student, is a relationship of cooperation and joint work.

Today, more than 13,000 students work in the program in 9 public schools. **Flagler is the combination of educational relevance, economic development, innovation and community work. The community has understood that the joint work of entrepreneurs, universities, public sector and schools is vital to train young people with a spirit of research, entrepreneurship and innovation. Which will always be reflected in the construction of a better State. An example worth knowing and emulating.**