



Chair Report

[World Health Organization]

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The primary role of the World Health Organization is to improve equity in health, reduce health risks, promote healthy lifestyles and settings, and respond to the underlying determinants of health.

<https://www.who.int/>

REPORT: Addressing the educational technology gap in the face of pandemic

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and all continents. Closures of schools and other learning spaces have impacted 94% of the world's student population, up to 99% in low and lower-middle income countries. The crisis is exacerbating pre-existing education disparities by reducing the opportunities for many of the most vulnerable children, youth, and adults – those living in poor or rural areas, girls, refugees, persons with disabilities and forcibly displaced persons – to continue their learning. Learning losses also threaten to extend beyond this generation and erase decades of progress, not least in support of girls and young women's educational access and retention. Some 23.8 million additional children and youth (from pre-primary to tertiary) may drop out or not have access to school next year due to the pandemic's economic impact alone.

The shutdown of schools, compounded by the associated public health and economic crises, poses major challenges to our students and their teachers. Our public education system was not built, nor prepared, to cope with a situation like this—we lack the structures to sustain effective teaching and learning during the shutdown and provide the safety net supports that many children receive in school. While we do not know the exact impacts, we do know that children's academic performance is deteriorating during the pandemic, along with their progress on other developmental skills. We also know that, given the various ways in which the crisis has widened existing socioeconomic disparities and how these disparities affect learning and educational outcomes, educational inequities are growing. As a consequence, many of the children who struggle



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the hardest to learn effectively and thrive in school under normal circumstances are now finding it difficult, even impossible in some cases, to receive effective instruction.

Definitions

Coronavirus- a type of RNA virus that causes mild to lethal respiratory tract infections

Educational Equity- measure of achievement in education determined by fairness and inclusion

Fairness- factors specific to personal conditions should not interfere with the potential of academic success

Inclusion- a comprehensive standard that applies to all genders in a certain education system

Inequality- unequal distribution of education resources, leading to disadvantaged communities

General Overview

More than 1 billion children are at risk of falling behind due to school closures aimed at containing the spread of COVID-19. To keep the world's children learning, countries have been implementing remote education programmes. Yet many of the world's children – particularly those in poorer households – do not have internet access, personal computers, TVs or even radio at home, amplifying the effects of existing learning inequalities. Students lacking access to the technologies needed for home-based learning have limited means to continue their education. As a result, many face the risk of never returning to school, undoing years of progress made in education around the world.

With school closures across 188 countries (as of April 2020), many countries are exploring alternative ways to provide continuous education using technologies such as Internet, TV, and radio. However, access to these technologies is limited in many low- and middle-income countries, especially among poor households.

- While more than 90 percent of the countries adopted digital and/or broadcast remote learning policies, only 60 percent did so for pre-primary education.



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- Policy measures taken by the governments to ensure learning continuity through broadcast or digital media allowed for potentially reaching 69 percent of schoolchildren (at maximum) in pre-primary to secondary education globally.
- 31 percent of schoolchildren worldwide (463 million) cannot be reached by the broadcast- and Internet-based remote learning policies either due to the lack of necessary technological assets at home, or because they were not targeted by the adopted policies.
- Online platforms were the most used means by the governments to deliver education while schools remain closed, with 83 percent of countries using this method. However, this allowed for potentially reaching only about a quarter of schoolchildren worldwide.
- Television had the potential to reach the most students (62 percent) globally.
- Only 16 percent of schoolchildren could be reached by radio-based learning worldwide.
- Globally, 3 out of 4 students who cannot be reached by the remote learning policies come from rural areas and/or belong to the poorest households.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports some sobering figures in this regard. On average across OECD countries,

- 9% of 15-year-old students do not have a quiet place to study in their homes, and this is disproportionately the case among disadvantaged students,
- Only about half of 15-year-olds are enrolled in schools where an online learning support platform is available,
- 35% of 15-year-olds are enrolled in schools where teachers do not have the necessary pedagogical and technical skills to integrate digital technology in education, according to school principals.
- Students kept out of the classroom by COVID-19 (close to 800 million students) do not have access to a household computer. 43% (some 700 million students) even have no internet access at home. Furthermore, about 56 million students live in locations that are not served by mobile networks.

Major Parties Involved

Crisis Area: International; mainly locations with low funding to public education and developing countries with high rates of illiteracy in the female population



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Strongly Involved Agencies: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, US Department of Education, UN Global Education Coalition

1) *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases*

CDC is actively working to learn more about the whole range of short- and long-term health effects associated with COVID-19. NIAID responds rapidly to threats of emerging infectious diseases, by accelerating fundamental basic research efforts, engaging a domestic and international basic and clinical research infrastructure that can be quickly mobilized, and leveraging collaborative and highly productive partnerships with industry.

2) US Dep. Education/Council of Europe

The U.S. Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access. The aim of the Council of Europe's Education programme is to support member States in developing their policies, legislation and practice in view of promoting quality, inclusive and corruption-free education systems.

Timeline of Key Events

Jan 19 2020: WHO Announces Coronavirus-Related Pneumonia in Wuhan, China

Jan 21: CDC Confirms First US Coronavirus Case

Jan 31: WHO Issues Global Health Emergency

March 11 — WHO Declares COVID-19 a Pandemic

March 17 — University of Minnesota Begins Testing Hydroxychloroquine

March 30 — FDA Authorizes Use of Hydroxychloroquine

May 9 — Saliva-Based Diagnostic Test Allowed for At-Home Use

May 21 — United States and AstraZeneca Form Vaccine Deal

June 10 — US COVID-19 Cases Reach 2 Million

July 7 — US Surpasses 3 Million Infections, Begins WHO Withdrawal

July 22 — HHS, DOD Announce Vaccine Distribution Agreement With Pfizer and BioNTech



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July 27 — Moderna Vaccine Begins Phase 3 Trial, Receives \$472M From Trump Administration

July 29 — FDA Grants Truvian EUA for Rapid Antibody Test

August 23 — Convalescent Plasma Is Cleared for Use by FDA

August 28 — First Known Case of COVID-19 Reinfection Reported in the US

September 23 — A New, More Contagious Strain of COVID-19 Is Discovered

September 28 — Global COVID-19 Deaths Surpass 1 Million

September 29 — Regeneron Announces Positive Results for Monoclonal Antibody Treatment

October 19 — Global Cases Top 40 Million

October 22 — FDA Approves Remdesivir as First COVID-19 Drug

November 18 — Pfizer, BioNTech Vaccine Is 95% Effective

November 23 — AstraZeneca Reports Vaccine Is 90% Effective; FDA Grants EUA for Second Antibody Treatment

Past Attempts at Resolving This Issue

March 19 2020— Egypt developed a national online resource center in English and Arabic and provided free communication to students in major cities

March 21— India released over 300 government-funded apps to increase access to education

March 26— US Senate Passes CARES Act, allotting \$14 billion to the Office of Postsecondary Education

March 27— Bhutan partnered with national companies to develop educational plans using existing social media and increase data access at an affordable price

April 1— Argentina developed “Seguimos Educando” as their education response to Covid, including funding for more access to technology and sponsorships to promote educational TV shows

April 3- Jamaica created a national committee to investigate abuses in the online learning education system

April 10— Fiji created 6 radio programs to increase access to education

July 27— US Senate Introduces HEALS Act, increasing funding to school and learning institutions



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Suggested Websites

- <https://www.ajmc.com/view/a-timeline-of-covid19-developments-in-2020>
- <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/edutech/brief/how-countries-are-using-edtech-to-support-remote-learning-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>
- <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-digital-divide-internet-data-broadband-mobile/>
- <https://www.epi.org/publication/the-consequences-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-for-education-performance-and-equity-in-the-united-states-what-can-we-learn-from-pre-pandemic-research-to-inform-relief-recovery-and-rebuilding/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cdcresponse/index.html>
- <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/congressional-testimony/covid-19-update-federal-response-09232020#:~:text=Congress%20passed%20the%20Coronavirus%20Preparedness,and%20Health%20Care%20Enhancement%20Act.>
- <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-europe-education-f/back-to-school-how-european-classrooms-are-coping-with-covid-idUSKBN25S4L4>