COVID-19 Education Response Webinar 2:
Supporting Teachers to Maintain Continuity of Learning During School Closures

Friday 27 March 2020 - 13h00-14h30 GMT+1
Weblink: https://frama.link/webinar2_teachers

Introduction

As a result of school closures to slow the spread of COVID-19, governments have had the unprecedented task to identify solutions to rapidly ensure that quality education has continuity as much as is feasible based on available resources and the existing school calendar. In many countries, this includes an increasing shift to online learning using both synchronized and non-synchronized methods to maintain the same basic curriculum and learning objectives, while in contexts with low or no technology it may focus on alternative learning arrangements supported by different technologies, print, and innovative teacher-parent-community arrangements.

While the sudden crisis has opened up opportunities for school systems to maximise the use of educational technologies for enhancing access to learning, it also carries the risk of increasing existing inequalities for marginalized and vulnerable students and those living in low-income contexts when countries do not deploy devices universally and where the infrastructure for connectivity is not ubiquitous. Structural inequalities are further exacerbated in low-income contexts where many in-service teachers are under- or unqualified to teach. In sub-Saharan Africa and south and west Asia, for example, only 64% and 72% of teachers, respectively, have received the minimum mandated pedagogical training. Many teachers in several countries also work with large, multi-lingual, multi-grade classes. For example, pupil-teacher ratios in primary education in Malawi and Chad are 59:1 and 57:1, respectively. Moreover, in rural and remote areas, schools may lack the basic infrastructure for online connectivity. In most low-income countries, the minority of schools have internet connectivity.

In this second UNESCO webinar, we focus the discussion on education’s frontline workers – teachers and other education personnel. The discussion is framed around the theme of teacher support and well-being for continuing to deliver quality education during times of crisis.

Supporting technological and other forms of distance education

In most countries, the sudden move to online learning happened very suddenly with little time for teachers to prepare and acquire any skills they might lack. Almost overnight, a great number of teachers and students have been propelled into a new and unknown online digital world, where learning and instruction no longer take place face-to-face within a familiar school classroom and well-structured environment. The question arises: How have governments responded to support teachers to continue the delivery of quality education in this new learning environment where face-to-face traditional pedagogy is no longer possible?
In the classroom, teachers are the first responders who address children’s social and emotional needs. However, in such unprecedented and uncertain times, it is normal for all people to experience higher levels of stress and anxiety, teachers included. In some cases, teachers who may already be exposed to the virus themselves are trying to manage the anxiety of being told to work in situations where the COVID-19 risk is growing, while others are dealing with the stress of having to deliver quality learning with tools for which they have received little or no training. Teachers need socio-emotional support to face the extra pressure being put on them to deliver learning in a time of crisis. They also need the tools to adequately communicate health risks and preventive measures to children, without burdening them with anxiety. How are governments responding to ensure teachers’ continued well-being?

Member States are invited to share experiences to address the following questions:

- How have governments prepared to support teachers to continue delivering quality instruction in an online learning environment? What types of capacity-building are being provided to teachers lacking skills for teaching in digital learning platforms?
- How are teacher educators and teacher education institutions being deployed to deliver capacity-building for teachers lacking ICT skills and the skills to enhance pedagogy through digital tools?
- How are teachers working in remote or rural contexts being supported? How are governments enabling teachers to continue to deliver education in contexts without access to the internet or digital technologies? What other innovative models of support are being delivered to teachers to ensure education can continue?
- What support mechanisms have been put in place to ensure teachers’ well-being in times of crisis requiring social distancing? What resources have governments provided to teachers working from home?

**Objective**

To share information about how governments are supporting teachers and educators to continue to provide quality education to overcome COVID-19 related school closures, now impacting nearly 1.5 billion of the world’s student population in over 160 countries. The webinar will facilitate knowledge exchange across national borders.

**Audience**

The target audiences for the webinar are Ministry of Education officials responsible for teacher development and management, teachers, and teacher educators.

**Technical specifications**

The webinars will use Microsoft Teams as a technical platform.

**Agenda**

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<td>13:00-13:10</td>
<td>Welcoming remarks and introduction of the themes</td>
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<td>Ms Yumiko YOKOZEKI, Director, UNESCO Institute for Capacity-Building in Africa</td>
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<td>Time</td>
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<td>13:10-13:20</td>
<td>Keynote Speaker</td>
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<td>13:20-14:00</td>
<td>Sharing of Country Experiences</td>
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<td>14:00-14:20</td>
<td>Questions and answers followed by a short discussion</td>
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<td>14:20-14:30</td>
<td>Closing remarks</td>
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*Agenda subject to change.*