



Summary of the UNESCO Report:
The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Education: International
Evidence from the Responses to Educational Disruption Survey
(REDS)

Information Brief
May 2022

Introduction

In accordance with the DISES mission to promote international communication, cooperation, and progress in the education of students with disabilities, this information brief serves to further disseminate the recent findings of the UNESCO Responses to Educational Disruption Survey (REDS).

The COVID-19 pandemic imposed immediate and drastic changes to educational systems across the world. The purpose of the REDS survey was to systematically collect information regarding the education of students during the pandemic school disruptions. The REDS report provides internationally comparable data to facilitate learning and collaboration on meeting the needs of diverse school systems during periods of school closure.

Survey Method

The central question of the REDS survey was, “How were teaching and learning affected by the disruptions, and how was this mitigated by the implemented measures, across and within countries?” (Meinck, et al., 2022, p. 8). The survey was implemented in 11 countries between the months of December 2020 and July 2021. Two-stage stratified random sampling design was used with the first sampling occurring at the school level and the second sampling including students and teachers. Countries from Africa, Asia, Europe, the Gulf area, and South America are represented in the data: Burkina Faso, Denmark, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, the Russian Federation, Rwanda, Slovenia, the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, and Uzbekistan. Participants across all countries included 21,063 8th grade students, 15,004 teachers, and 1,581 school administrators.

Key Findings:

- A period of school closure was reported by all 11 countries, ranging from two months to one year. Five out of the 11 schools reported varying lengths of time in which no teacher or learning occurred during this disruption, while the remaining six countries reported as having some provisions for teaching and learning during this disruption.
- Across all 11 countries, over 50% of educators reported that students did not progress at the rate they would have expected in a typical school year. From the students’ perspective, the majority of students in most countries reported their learning progress as comparable to a typical, uninterrupted school year though many students also reported difficulty knowing how they were progressing.
- Across all countries, educators felt it was challenging providing students the level of support they required, particularly for students with persistent learning needs. Furthermore, many students reported at times there was no one available to assist them with their schoolwork.
- Remote teaching, either online or offline, occurred in nine participating countries. In the remaining two countries, Burkina Faso and Ethiopia, the majority of educator participants reported that remote teaching did not occur. Across all countries, school administrators reported challenges providing remote teaching due to limited student access to technology and a lack of experience among teachers in remote teaching pedagogies.
- Educators reported feeling supported by school leadership, though educators and students reported an overall decline in their emotional well-being and feeling overwhelmed.

- Across all countries, large percentages of students reported not feeling prepared for another significant disruption to education in the future. Students from a low socio-economic status reported higher levels of concerns regarding falling behind in their learning.

Implications for the Global Education Community

This foundational study highlights the need for further research on developing and validating protocols and approaches to providing education services during a significant disruption such as the pandemic. Study participants represented countries with a range of cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic disparities and yet results reveal similarities in how education was affected by school closures. This report provides policymakers, educational leaders, and researchers with specific areas to focus future efforts to support educators, schools, and students during periods of interruption. Some of these areas for future research and innovation include meeting the emotional well-being of educators and students and providing equitable services to all students during periods of school interruption, especially students of low socioeconomic status or with persistent learning needs.

It is important to note some limitations due to the nature of conducting research in a fluid situation such as the global pandemic. Due to the time sensitive nature of this research study, independent verification of survey translations was not conducted, and a survey field test did not occur prior to full implementation. Furthermore, because school closures occurred at different times for different countries and sometimes occurred repeatedly, the referenced time period within the survey questions may have occurred further in the past for some participants than for others. Nevertheless, internal verification of survey translations occurred and researchers offered countries with assistance in survey implementation, including regular phone calls, to ensure a high level of fidelity.

Conclusion

The REDS survey reveals important findings regarding how teaching and learning were impacted across multiple countries during the COVID-19 school closures. Different countries employed a variety of alternative learning modalities with varying degrees of success. Further research is needed to better understand factors leading to successful outcomes for students, educators, and whole school systems.

Related Resources

[Launch of the REDS Report](#)

This recorded webinar event was hosted on January 24, 2022 by UNESCO to commemorate of the International Day of Education.

[International Association of the Evaluation of Educational Achievement \(IEA\) REDS Overview](#)

This page provides an overview of the REDS report and links with further information.

[REDS Data Repository](#)

This data repository is a free resource for scholars and researchers to utilize for further analysis of the REDS data.

[REDS Infographics](#)

This PDF document contains various infographics summarizing the data represented in the REDS report.

[UNESCO REDS Full Report](#)

This link provides the full 200+ page report by UNESCO.

Reference

Meinck, S., Fraillon, J., & Strietholt, R. (2022). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education: International evidence from the Responses to Educational Disruption Survey (ISBN 978–92-3-100502–2). United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), & International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). <https://www.iea.nl/sites/default/files/2022-05/UNESCO%20IEA%20REDS%20International%20Report%20Revised%20Edition%2004.05.2022.pdf>

Author: Sacha Cartagena, PhD
DISES Information Brief Chair