

Towards resilient education systems – A new joint study launched by UNESCO and IEA

In recent decades, crisis has disrupted education in individual countries or regions mainly due to natural disasters, armed conflict, or occasionally epidemics. However, the level of **educational disruption** caused by the **COVID-19** pandemic is greater than anything seen before.

In this context, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (**IEA**) and **UNESCO** are launching a study, in partnership with the European Commission (EC), to draw a more **comprehensive picture** of the pandemic's impact on global education, entitled "Responses to Educational Disruption Survey (REDS)".

According to UNESCO, more than **90% of all learners** were affected by school closures caused by COVID-19 at the peak of the disruption. Education systems have **varied in their responses** in this context. Some have introduced home schooling programs and remote learning, offering free online resources, while others are delivering paper-based assignments to students' homes or using public TV and radio broadcasting channels.

While important contributions exist to help capture the impact of COVID-19 on education, there still **lacks first-hand, internationally comparable information** from schools, collected in a systematic and scientific manner, which is needed for evaluating the extent to which teaching and learning have been **challenged, continued, and adjusted** as a result of the current crisis.

REDS offers a **unique opportunity** to bridge this information gap by collecting internationally comparable data from governments, school principals, teachers and students, on how they are prepared for **distance learning** in times of school closures, as well as during a subsequent re-opening phase, and what measures were implemented to provide all students with the opportunity to continue learning. The study seeks to answer the following overarching question:

How were teaching and learning affected by the disruptions and how was this mitigated by the implemented measures, across and within countries?

The study will target all different educational levels and will focus on topics around the preparedness for distance learning, available IT and educational resources, perceptions on the success of strategies, student engagement, as well as around inequalities in educational learning opportunities during the disruptions. Additionally, issues concerned with students' and teachers' wellbeing will be explored.

Commenting on the launch of the study, **IEA Executive Director, Dr Dirk Hastedt** said,

"While education systems are generally slow to change and reforms can often take years, the COVID-19 pandemic has created a **massive pressure** to expand digital learning quickly. Insights yielded from REDS will offer an **opportunity** to rethink the overall purpose, role, content and delivery of **education in the future**. For this reason, the study also aims to identify **sustainable, transformational concepts** that emerged from the crisis and may serve as good practice when schools re-open."

Mr Borhene Chakroun, Director, Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems (UNESCO) added,

“UNESCO is deeply committed to supporting countries during this difficult time and to helping **keep all children learning**. REDS is designed to serve as a **valuable source of information** that will inform the policy and practice for more resilient education systems for the future, also in their pursuit of the **Sustainable Development Goal 4** on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all, in particular targets 4.1 and 4.4.”

REDS is part of the collective effort under the **Global Education Coalition** launched by UNESCO that seeks to facilitate **inclusive learning opportunities** for children and youth in the context of educational disruption and to establish approaches to develop more open and **resilient education systems** for the future.

The joint study focuses on evaluating the varying situations in secondary education (grade 8) and reporting on the respective challenges of providing quality instructions at a time of widespread educational disruption due to the COVID-19 crisis. REDS study results will be summarized in a comprehensive report jointly published by IEA, UNESCO and EC. The report will offer countries new insights into effective practices in education that can help developing evidence-based policies to strengthen education system resilience, especially during educational disruption. All interested countries are invited to participate in REDS.

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Notes to editors:

More information about REDS can be found on the IEA website [here](#), or in a recent UNESCO news article [here](#). Additional, more can be found on UNESCO’s Global Education Coalition [here](#).

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