

# Distance Learning Strategies

What do we know about effectiveness?

**When:** Friday 17 April 2020 - 13h00-14h30 GMT+2 (Paris time)

**Weblink:** <http://www.unesco.org/covid19EDwebinar>

## Introduction

Education systems around the world are facing an unprecedented challenge in the wake of massive school closures mandated as part of public health efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19. Governmental agencies are working with international organizations, private sector partners and civil society to deliver education remotely through a mix of technologies in order to ensure continuity of curriculum-based study and learning for all. However, very little is known, at present, about how these strategies are ensuring effective and equitable access to quality learning opportunities for all. Indeed, the effectiveness of strategies is conditioned by levels of preparedness from various perspectives:

1. **Technological preparedness:** This includes limitations in both the technical capacities of national platforms or TV and radio broadcasting systems to provide learning remotely for all learners, as well as limitations in household access to electricity, TV, radio, digital devices, and internet connectivity.
2. **Content preparedness:** This includes accessibility to teaching and learning materials aligned with national curricula that can be delivered through online platforms, TV or radio programmes, or used for print-based home learning.
3. **Pedagogical preparedness:** This includes (1) Preparedness of teachers to design and facilitate online learning, TV or radio based distance learning, or print materials based home learning; and (2) Availability and ability of parents or caregivers to facilitate effective home-based distance learning.
4. **Monitoring and evaluation preparedness:** This includes capacities to monitor access to distance learning, to track learning process and interruptions, and to evaluate learning achievements. This also includes mitigation strategies such as measures put in place to provide support to learners, teachers, parents or caregivers.

Emerging anecdotal evidence suggests that, while delivering educational programme remotely ensures some degree of continuity of learning for many students, absenteeism of students from online learning or disengagement from courses despite logging-in are not uncommon. This is more serious in communities with low technological preparedness and insufficient incomes to afford the cost of accessibility. Even in a European country heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with a better ICT readiness, the Ministry of Education has reported that the absenteeism rate from online learning is 5-8%

nationwide. Online absenteeism could also have an effect on student dropout rates when schools reopen after the COVID-19 crisis. Furthermore, the extent to which students, teachers, and parents or caregivers are engaged with distance learning through TV or radio programmes, which are one-way knowledge transmission systems, remains unknown. Due to the necessity for speed of transition to distance learning, the process should allow for some failures at the start, but it should be iteratively improved. Above all, the effectiveness of distance learning strategies in terms of the reach to all students and the quality of learning should be paramount to all countries. Relatedly, measures to monitor distance learning processes and assess learning outcomes should be a critical component of distance learning strategies.

## Focus and Objectives

Building on past [UNESCO webinars on COVID-19 education response](#), this fifth edition focuses on the effectiveness of distance learning strategies. While national distance learning strategies consider the complementarity of formal and non-formal education and the range of education and training levels for lifelong learning pathways, this webinar focuses on school education. The objectives are to:

1. Identify barriers regarding technological and content preparedness and strategies adopted to overcome these barriers.
2. Examine measures taken or planned to increase coverage and improve the effectiveness of distance learning programmes.
3. Share experiences to monitor the effectiveness of distance learning programmes.

## Guiding Questions

- What is the reach of distance learning programmes for different age groups? Who is not being reached, or is disengaging from distance learning programmes? Why?
- What measures are being taken or planned to support teachers, learners, and parents or caregivers to engage continuously to ensure the quality of learning in varied delivery systems including online models, TV or radio programmes, or print-based home learning?
- What mechanisms are in place to monitor and assess the effectiveness of distance learning programmes in terms of coverage, engagement, and the quality of learning?

## Audience

Ministry of Education officials responsible for national distance learning platforms and programs, curriculum development, teacher development and management as well as ICT in education leaders, teachers, and teacher educators.

## Technical specifications

The webinar uses Microsoft Teams Live as a technical platform.

## Agenda

Time	Item
13:00-13:10	<p><b>Welcoming remarks and introduction of the themes</b>            Mr Borhene Chakroun            Director, Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems Division, UNESCO</p>
13:10-13:20	<p><b>What we learn from national distance learning strategies in response to COVID-19 school closures</b>            Mr Fengchun Miao            Chief, Unit for ICT in Education, UNESCO</p> <p><b>Testimony from a parent</b>            Ms Seoyong Kim, a mother of a secondary school student, the Republic of Korea</p>
13:20-14:00	<p><b>Sharing of experiences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Who are learning and what they are learning: Distance learning solutions of Armenia</b>            Mrs Zhanna Andreasyan            Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the Republic of Armenia</li> <li>• <b>Overcoming absenteeism or disengagement from TV based distance learning</b>            Mr Ladislav Dowbor            Professor, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUCSP), Brazil</li> <li>• <b>Ensuring the quality of distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic</b>            Ms Yael Ginsler            Assistant Deputy Minister, Student Achievement Division, Ontario Ministry of Education, Canada</li> <li>• <b>Evidence-based assessment of distance learning</b>            Mr Mike Sharples            Emeritus Professor, Institute of Educational Technology, The Open University, the United Kingdom</li> </ul>
14:00-14:20	<p><b>Questions and answers</b></p>
14:20-14:30	<p><b>Closing remarks</b>            Mr Tao Zhan, Director, Institute for Information Technologies in Education, UNESCO</p>

## Speakers' bios

**Mr Borhene Chakroun:** Borhene is the Director of the Division of Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems at UNESCO. His work focuses on global trends in reforming education and training systems for skills development in the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. He has conducted a range of policy reviews and skills systems diagnosis and authored various articles and books on skills development and lifelong learning. Previously he worked as a consultant for the EU, the World Bank and other international organizations and the European Training Foundation (ETF).

**Dr. Fengchun Miao:** Dr. Fengchun Miao is the Chief of the Unit for ICT in Education at UNESCO, Education Sector, Headquarters in Paris. He is leading UNESCO Education Sector's programmes in areas of ICT in education policy planning and development, digital and AI skills development for teachers and students, Open Educational Resources (OER), mobile learning, AI and education planning, and e-school framework development. He is also in charge of UNESCO Prize for the Use of ICTs in Education. Before joining UNESCO, Dr. Miao was the Director-General of the National Research Centre for Computer Education, Ministry of Education, China. In that capacity, he was responsible for the development of ICT in education policy and ICT curriculum standards for students and managing the National Association for the Use of ICT in K-12 Schools of China.

**Ms Seoyong Kim:** A foreign language instructor/mom whose educational background is in SLA (Second Language Acquisition) and education. She has approximately over 15 years of experience in the field teaching English to Korean learners. As an instructor who has performed distance learning since 2017, she now realizes that more and more people need this non-conventional type of service. Having public school teachers as parents and many relatives offered her a chance to observe the Korean education system from a different perspective than people with non-teacher family background. But sending a son to a public middle school has let her learn how it feels like to be a parent in the system.

**Mrs Zhanna Andreyan:** Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia, responsible for general and vocational education. Mrs Andreyan has joined the Ministry in March, 2020 just before the announcement of the state of emergency in the country due to the situation with COVID-19. In her previous position Mrs Andreyan works as Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, dealing with child protection issues among others. She is a Doctor of Sociology and has been a lecturer at the Yerevan State University for the last decade. She was engaged in the education reforms during the last fifteen years dealing with the integration of information technologies in education sector, implementation of innovative projects at universities, etc.

**Professor Ladislav Dowbor:** Ladislav Dowbor, economist, professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo. PhD by the Central School of Planning and Statistics, Warsaw. Consultant to various international agencies, and different countries in Africa (7 years), Asia and Latin America. Author of

many books and technical reports on social and economic development. With the Paulo Freire Institute in São Paulo he heads the online economics teaching platform *Pedagogia da Economia*, directly and through social organizations, printed, online, in video and discussion platforms. Main publications *The Age of Unproductive Capital*, *Economic Democracy*, *A Reprodução Social*, *O Pão Nosso de Cada dia*.

**Ms Yael Ginsler:** Yael Ginsler is currently the Acting Assistant Deputy Minister of the Student Achievement Division in the Ontario Ministry of Education. She was previously the Director of Curriculum, Assessment and Student Success Policy. The Ministry of Education is responsible for administering the system of publicly funded elementary and secondary school education for over 2 million students (Kindergarten to Grade 12) in almost 5,000 schools in Ontario. Yael holds a Bachelor of Education degree from McGill University and a Master of Education degree in Technology, Innovation and Education from Harvard Graduate School of Education.

**Mr Mike Sharples:** Mike Sharples is Emeritus Professor of Educational Technology in the Institute of Educational Technology at The Open University, UK and Honorary Visiting Professor at the Centre for Innovation in Higher Education, Anglia Ruskin University. His research involves human-centred design of new technologies and environments for learning. He inaugurated the mLearn conference series and was Founding President of the International Association for Mobile Learning. As Academic Lead for the FutureLearn company, he informed the design of its social learning approach. He is Academic Lead for the nQuire project with the BBC to develop a new platform for inquiry-led learning at scale. He founded the *Innovating Pedagogy* report series and is author of over 300 papers in the areas of educational technology, learning sciences, science education, human-centred design of personal technologies, artificial intelligence and cognitive science. His recent book is *Practical Pedagogy: 40 New Ways to Teach and Learn*, published by Routledge.

**Mr Tao Zhan:** Dr Tao ZHAN is the Director of UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (IITE) located in Moscow. He received his Ph.D from Shandong University in China in 1987, majoring in number theory and later became a Research Fellow of Humboldt Foundation at University of Freiburg in Germany, and Professor of Mathematics at Shandong University. Before joining UNESCO IITE in February 2017 he had served as the President of Shandong University and Jilin University, Director-General of Educational Management Information Center of Ministry of Education in China. Dr Zhan was also a member of the Drafting Group for Incheon Declaration 2015 and the UNESCO Framework for Action Education 2030. His vision for IITE is working together with Member States and international education community for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal for Education (SDG 4) with the unique power of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). In the current situation IITE is working together with partners from different regions of the world to support teachers and students, parents and children in keeping learning during COVID-19.