

Webinar for schools

“School education during the pandemic outbreak: digital technology potentials”

(20 April 2020, Moscow, Russia)

Report

As COVID-19 continues spreading throughout the world, how to keep learning in disruption has become a major challenge to the global education community. The number of children, youth and adults missing classes due to the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak, is rapidly increasing. In their attempt to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, most national governments around the world have taken a unanimous decision to temporarily close educational institutions. According to UNESCO data, these nationwide closures are impacting over 91% of the world’s student population. Several other countries have implemented localized closures impacting millions of additional learners.¹

As a result of the mainstream school closure, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, learners in the majority of countries of the world, including Russia, are currently compelled to practice home schooling through the use of online resources and digital technology.

Russian teachers, learners and parents have been provided with access to various online learning platforms, namely: [Russian Electronic School](#), [Yandex.Textbook](#), [Uchi.ru](#), [YaClass](#) and [Dnevnik.ru](#).

The Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation has elaborated unified guidelines for implementing educational programmes through e-learning and distance learning technology.² Meanwhile, Russian teachers and students today are fraught with problems, caused by the novel requirements and adjustments of the online educational setting.

At this critical time, UNESCO IITE in cooperation with the UNESCO Associated schools’ network in the Russian Federation and in partnership with the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO arranged a webinar, entitled “School education during the pandemic outbreak: digital technology potentials”, for school teachers. The webinar was aimed to present best practices of the use of advanced technologies’ potential for supporting school education during the COVID-19 outbreak. The webinar was held and broadcast live by UNESCO IITE via Zoom on 20 April 2020. All the UNESCO ASPnet schools in the Russian Federation were invited to join the webinar. It was also open for participation by specialists from other educational institutions in Russia and the CIS region. Over 150 participants from 6 countries (Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, China and the United Arab Emirates) in total attended the webinar. Experts from different countries shared their practices and expertise on ICT-school readiness for e-learning, assessment of educational outcomes in the online mode, professional development and advanced training for pedagogues in the e-learning environment and psychological support for parents and learners.

The webinar was moderated by Ms Natalia Amelina, Senior National Project Officer in Education, Chief of the Unit of Teacher Professional Development and Networking of UNESCO IITE.

The participants heard welcome addresses and the presentations of the following invited speakers:

1. Mr Tao Zhan, Director of UNESCO IITE;

¹Further information available at <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>

² For Guidelines visit the official website of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation: <https://docs.edu.gov.ru/document/26aa857e0152bd199507ffaa15f77c58/>

2. Ms Julie Saito, International Coordinator, Chief of the Unit for UNESCO's Associated Schools Network (ASPnet), UNESCO;
3. Ms Elena Aleksandrova, Executive Director of the UNESCO-UNEVOC Center, Head of Professional Educational Technology Department and Head of Pilot Implementation of Digital and 3D Technologies at the University of Management "TISBI", Kazan, Russia;
4. Dr Zhao Yong, Principal of Affiliated School of Shandong University, China;
5. Professor LI Jiangang, professor and deputy dean of the School of Foreign Languages and Literature, Shandong University, China;
6. Ms Rahila Aliyazadeh, Deputy Director on ICT, Baku European Lyceum, Azerbaijan;
7. Ms Natalia Amelina, Senior National Project Officer in Education, Chief of the Unit of Teacher Professional Development and Networking, UNESCO IITE;
8. Ms Svetlana Knyazeva, Senior National Project Officer in Education, Chief of the Unit of Digital Pedagogy and Learning Materials, UNESCO IITE;
9. Mr Tigran Yepoyan, Senior Project Officer for HIV, Chief of the Unit of ICT in Health Education, UNESCO IITE;
10. Ms Svetlana Knor, Teacher, School № 56 n.a. academician V.A. Legasov, Moscow, Russia;
11. Ms Alena Fistal, Teacher, School № 10, Nizhny Tagil, Russia;
12. Ms Zvetana Bagautdinova, Teacher, Gymnazium № 3, Zelenodolsk, Russia;
13. Ms Yulia Varlamova, Teacher, School "Harmony", Izhevsk, Russia;
14. Ms Elena Kuznetsova, Managing Director, Foreign language school "Interlingua", Voronezh, Russia.

The webinar was opened by Mr Tao Zhan, Director of UNESCO IITE, and Ms Julie Saito, International Coordinator, Chief of the Unit for UNESCO's Associated Schools Network (ASPnet), UNESCO.

In his welcome address, Mr Tao Zhan thanked the UNESCO ASPnet and the the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO for their support and cooperation in the organization of the webinar and highlighted the importance of working together for all educators to maintain uninterrupted learning in the time of the COVID-19 spread. "Working together, shoulder to shoulder, we get stronger!", he said.

Ms. Julie Saito delivered to participants her welcome address and presentation on the ways how schools can unite to help each other during this challenging time. She informed the participants, that the ASPnet team launched a solidarity newsletter to keep all the members connected, published links to distance learning solutions with the #LearningNeverStops, and initiated series of webinars on Global Citizenship Education Project (GCED) as well as the "Webinar on COVID-19: Reflections by the ASP community", which is going to take place on 7 May.

Professor of Shandong University (China) Mr LI Jiangang and Principal of Affiliated School of Shandong University Dr Zhao Yong shared the Chinese experience on e-learning process management that included online resources, multilateral assessment, blended learning, and special guidance on independent learning for students. The experts also displayed real subject wise examples of how a specific subject can be taught online, for example: Chinese language, literature, and physics.

On behalf of the National Coordinator of UNESCO ASPnet in the Russian Federation, Executive Director of the UNESCO-UNEVOC Center, Head of Professional Educational Technology Department and Head of Pilot Implementation of Digital and 3D Technologies at the University of Management "TISBI" (Kazan, Russia) Ms Elena Aleksandrova emphasized the challenges all teachers faced due to pandemic, such as legal regulation of education process, unpreparedness

of some institutions to provide online lessons, unequal access to Internet, difficulty with organizing learning at home for children with disabilities - these all led to the conclusion that nowadays teacher needed to create new scenarios for keeping the education process going.

Ms Rahilya Aliyazadeh, Deputy Director on ICT from Baku European Lyceum (Azerbaijan), highlighted essential digital and universal metacognitive skills a pedagogue must teach every student for knowledge acquisition especially during the pandemic time. Ms Aliyazadeh also mentioned that online learning caused a threat to cyber safety of students and shared solutions provided by the Lyceum.

Senior National Project Officer in Education and Chief of the Unit of Digital Pedagogy and Learning Materials of UNESCO IITE Ms Svetlana Knyazeva presented the new crash course “Be an online tutor in 24 hours” launched by Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University (HBMSU) in collaboration with UNESCO IITE. This free course is available in 5 languages and has already attracted teachers from 81 countries.

Chief of the UNESCO IITE Unit of ICT in Health Education Mr Tigran Yepoyan outlined the worries and psychological problems that youth and parents had due to COVID-19 crisis. Mr Yepoyan presented guidance and websites, which provided psychological support to children and teenagers, and specifically highlighted the importance of social emotional development of a child that included proper communication between children and parents on topics of health, integrity and better understanding of oneself, and building relationships with people.

In the second part of the webinar, teachers from Russian ASPnet schools, located in the cities of Moscow, Voronezh, Niizny Tagil, Zelenodolsk and Izhevsk, shared the experience of how teachers, students and parents interact for ensuring smooth and effective online learning, as well as demonstrated resources, students’ videos, assessment tools and Learning Management Systems (LMS) used by their schools to make learning trouble-free for teachers and more engaging for students.

The other issues, also considered at the webinar, included:

- ICT-school readiness for e-learning: infrastructure, Internet access, instructional support services, electronic textbooks and online resources, teaching staff competence, students’ ICT skills;
- Difficulties in the organization by schools of distance learning and online group lessons;
- High workload of teachers and optimization of their work;
- Professional development and advanced training for pedagogues in the e-learning environment.

At the conclusion, Senior National Project Officer in Education and the Chief of the Unit of Teacher Professional Development and Networking of UNESCO IITE and moderator of the webinar Ms Natalia Amelina summarized the results of the webinar. She emphasized that the event allowed to discuss jointly with UNESCO experts effective approaches on overcoming the challenges faced by educational systems in different countries. Ms Amelina noted that due to the fact the participants had many questions related to the high workload of teachers and the importance of optimizing their work for more flexible online learning, it is necessary to pay attention to more detailed consideration of those issues in the nearest future. Optimization of teachers’ online work is connected with the tools for online learning, which they use, and also with their digital competencies. Therefore, UNESCO IITE proposes to continue conducting webinars to familiarize teachers with available resources and tools for online learning, such as the Teach From Home platform - a temporary hub of information and tools, which was recently launched by Google company in partnership with UNESCO IITE to help teachers during the COVID-

19 pandemic, and the tools developed by Russia's biggest technology company Yandex. Other important topics that require more detailed consideration at future webinars are related to the intermediate and final online certification of students and psychological support for parents and teachers. Such webinars will also serve as platforms for demonstrating and sharing good practices.

The webinar showed a great interest of all the participants in the topics and best distance learning approaches discussed.