



E-LEARNING IN RESPONSE TO COVID CRISIS

**GUIDE TO USING DIGITAL RESOURCES IN TIMES
OF SCHOOL CLOSURE GROWING POSSIBILITY
AND SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES**

“School closures in 13 countries linked to the COVID-19 virus epidemic have disrupted the education of more than 290 million students, a record number”

- UNESCO [5 March 2020]

Schools are not only about learning and gaining information. They are also social opportunities, in which learners and teachers interact within the school premises for more than 6 hours every day. Due to the current health crisis, COVID-19 outbreak this year 2020, some departments of education around the globe were obligated to announce school closures, and few others are studying and assessing their situations in case of uncontrollable spread of the disease.

It cannot be ignored that most schools around the world do not still have the necessary digital infrastructure, which can automatically support stakeholders at such an unpredictable occurrence. Many schools are using the tools currently available to conquer the upcoming challenge of learning from home. Many others have started seriously to search and implement new methodologies to make learning possible.

“This is not a drill. This is not the time to give up. This is not a time for excuses. This is a time for pulling out all the stops”. - World Health Organization

PILOTING YOUR E-LEARNING PREP PLAN

If your country has not announced closure, you still need to consider sketching a digital preparation plan in case the outbreak intensifies in your country of residence. We, as leaders and educators, are responsible for curriculum standards and ensuring that the level of readiness is attained at the end of every school year for every learner. When a statement is issued by the ministry or department of education in your country that schools must close for a certain period of time, a back-up plan should be made effective immediately.

However, when this occurs, there will be no time to study factors and effects. Sketching a plan now and piloting one, especially in countries that are more prone to high rates of COVID cases, would be very helpful and could prevent risks of failure.

Call for board and subject department meetings, create committees for study and execution, and another for evaluation. Be ready !

In case your schools have already closed, then assessing your plan is very important. Be observant !

SCHEME OF ACTION

Curriculum

Instruction

Assessment



- Check readiness of staff (idea might not be easily welcomed considering the responsibility and challenges of the enforced condition)
- Check readiness of school (what suits a school may not suit the other, considering school capacity, access to internet, parents' cooperation, backgrounds, etc)
- Ensure that the staff receives ample training and professional development
- Explain the conditions behind such interventions so that the objectives remain acknowledged for sustainable involvement



CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

- Check your curriculum components, and particularly your standards and scope and sequence. Aligning your virtual curriculum resources with the standards of each subject is necessary because it mitigates gaps.
- Identify areas of focus. Starting with all the material virtually will not be easy, especially for teachers. So stepping gradually but systematically makes the process smooth. Whilst some serious conditions around the world might necessitate drastic intervention procedures, others might not. However, specifying areas of focus will help orient the entire process, if matters get complicated.
- Explore your current textbooks, resources, kits, and packages to ensure you are utilizing all digital resources available. Some schools do not activate all the digital opportunities provided by publishers. These digital resources can go perfectly parallel to other assignments shared by the teacher.



INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE

- Specify the road maps needed for your own school to deliver the content properly. Instruction will mainly be delivered through iPads and laptops.
- Platforms and methods to be selected should be user-friendly and provided with good technical support. [Check page 9 for tools]
- Consider a critical factor - time. Delivering a specific content at a specific time needs to be well-planned and coordinated. Since the only medium is the internet, direct access and live streaming may not always be easy depending on the country's digital infrastructure.



ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

- No paper/pencil, no testing and supervising classes in this case. Therefore, new plans must be designed to assess learning outcomes. This is critical, simply because monitoring is not physically conducted. It will be an advantage when learners do some types of tests, which require independent, evidence-based questions, such as open book assessments.
- Monitoring and collecting data to check understanding and make decisions from a far distance is not easy. Plans must be designed to observe certain areas and collect information related to learning, then analyzing this data on a daily basis to keep track of the progress.
- Carefully monitoring the alignment of assessment tools with learning goals since some may go unnoticed during the *new* process of distance learning.
- Giving feedback to learners regularly makes learning well-connected and profitable.
- Carefully collaborating with colleagues regarding low performance and slow growth for certain learners. Doing intervention plans to fill in learning gaps, expected or unexpected, is fundamental.

(1) **Ample Engagement** : The absence of teachers and classmates is a true challenge for complete learner engagement- this is what is referred to as interrupted learning. Children not going to school simply feel they are on-vacation mode. Although videos and chats are helpful in keeping learners engaged as they target to their learning styles, these videos remain *temporarily* in effect. Furthermore, some learners will not find it easy or comfortable interacting online as they do in class when teachers, physically available, can help with a smile or a welcoming gesture. Parents should ensure the right study area and environment, even more challenging in case of siblings, and deliberately assist in following-up that their children are carrying on their assignments. Parents and teachers can communicate through a mutually-convenient way to ensure children's learning. Needless to say, not all parents can support due to lack of language education and/or long hours at work.

(2) **Ample Resources** : Using iPads, smart phones, and laptops is a two-edged sword. Learners do find screens exciting, and at times of urgency, when they are asked to use them fully for the first time, most of the learners will even be more excited. However, the absence of classrooms and their displays will need to be compensated through instruction. Live streaming may not always be easily-conducted due to internet connections in some places and simultaneous virtual classes. Technology skill lessons and drills can be started and reinforced in unison with the regular lessons or as part of this preparatory stage. Costs can also hinder some high-quality, personalized online resources that schools can easily adapt to.

(3) **Ample Fidelity** : Also known as integrity. This is critical as the learning and assessment are done home-to-home, with less supervision. This concerns the quality of commitment shown by all stakeholders, specifically school leadership and teachers. Teachers are generally accountable, but very few may take this as an opportunity to diminish number of assignments due to lack of commitment or underestimation of the situation. Lack of flexibility, variety, and general operational attributes may also be noticed.

(4) **Ample Security** : This has two forms – one is related to digital security, which adults should monitor for problem prevention. Staying for a long time on screens without being monitored by parents may not only be dedicated to learning. Children may be distracted from their assigned lessons, out of the school-sent apps, into inappropriate content, 3rd party apps or any other sneaking portal. That's why security tools must be implemented and evaluated. The other form is health security, particularly in this case, eye strain due to long hours of screen engagement. This has always been a main disadvantage of using technology.

CHALLENGES

Ample
Engagement

Ample
Resources

Ample
Security

Ample
Fidelity

- Padlet <https://padlet.com/>
- Google Classroom https://edu.google.com/products/classroom/?modal_active=none
- Class Dojo <https://www.classdojo.com/>
- One Billion <https://onebillion.org/>
- Seesaw <https://web.seesaw.me/>
- Screencast-o-matic <https://screencast-o-matic.com/>
- Kahoot <https://kahoot.com/>
- Brainpop <https://www.brainpop.com/>
- Edmentum international <https://www.edmentuminternational.com/>
- Edpuzzle <https://edpuzzle.com/>
- Seppo www.seppo.io
- Century tech <https://www.century.tech/>
- Dingtalk <https://www.dingtalk.com/en>
- Tabbiemath <https://www.tabbiemath.com/>
- Edrak <https://www.edraak.org/> (Arabic)
- Vschoolsa (Saudi Arabia)
- Madrasa www.madrasa.org (UAE)

SOME E-LEARNING PLATFORMS

TESTING YOUR PILOT E-LEARNING PROGRAM

- During the pilot phase, there is a monitoring parallel process to assess the program and its efficacy. It is important to note all the factors that can influence the desired outcome.
- It is also helpful that monitoring all dimensions and areas and exchanging findings are shared as part of another evaluation with other educational bodies so that schools are studying the process, not only executing it.
- Schools, that can exert more efforts studying further for improvement, can extend two more phases for these e-learning plans, effectiveness and efficacy trials. Effectiveness trials test the plans within the frames of everyday incidents and emerging daily situations, whereas efficacy trials test the plans in perfectly-founded conditions or the ideal states. These two types of trials need to be conducted coherently and continuously.

CONCLUSION

As long as the digital infrastructure is not fully set in all countries, e-learning in such a crisis has to start from a certain point and expand as much as possible and feasible for schools respectively.

Introducing online platforms, virtual and interactive classrooms, e-diaries, digital assignment banks, and many other platforms can help nations conquer this crisis educationally.

However, schools need to opt for options that are truly helpful, flexible, affordable, safe, and effective in delivering the content to the right target group despite the challenges.

"suspending classes without suspending learning"

"assure the continuity of learning for all"

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