CALL FOR ABSTRACTS FOR SPECIAL ISSUE
Education in the age of COVID-19

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The COVID-19 crisis raises significant concerns for the entire education community: policy-makers, educators, parents and, of course, learners. School and university closures around the world have disrupted the learning and lives of a generation of students. Community learning centres have had to close their doors, disrupting access for some of the most disadvantaged learners. For the moment, we know very little about the full impact of this crisis on education and on societies at large. Evidence on the effects of policy responses and coping strategies is equally meagre.

This unprecedented ‘institutional’ deschooling is likely to have severe effects on learning, in spite of efforts to maintain education provision through distance and online teaching. Such a sudden and unplanned shift to the distance mode of teaching, while a large proportion of teachers, including at university, have no knowledge of the pedagogy of online teaching and in contexts where significant numbers of learners are from deprived areas or homes, out of reach of technology and internet, is likely to create new gaps between learners. How to prevent this risk and mitigate its impact on inequalities in learning and on lifelong learning trajectories has emerged as major policy issue.

Educators and psychologists are concerned about the psycho-social consequences of individuals being confined at home and the stark absence of interaction with others. For school students, the loss of contact with peers and teachers, not having a place to go to every morning to learn, and sometimes to receive the only meals of the day, may constitute serious physical and mental threats to the health of the most vulnerable children. In addition to its learning and psycho-social impacts, the COVID-19 pandemic is already generating a world economic crisis which will certainly have severe repercussions on education through possible funding cuts to government budgets, while the income of the many households deprived of jobs will also be dropping. Already overlooked in government spending patterns, adult and continuing education will be particularly vulnerable. The economics of lifelong learning in the post COVID-19 era are likely to reinforce existing inequalities in terms not only of access but also retention, success and employment prospects.

Finally, COVID-19 could also lead to even greater inequalities between the Global North and Global South. Donor countries being severely affected by the pandemic, there is a great risk that part of the funding allocated to aid, including in education, could be redirected to domestic budgets. This would not only deepen the gap between developed and developing economies but also weaken the capacity of the international community to win the battle against the virus.

In an effort to generate new knowledge on this new global challenge, its impact on and implications for lifelong learning, the International Review of Education (IRE) invites papers for a special issue on ‘Education in the age of COVID-19’, covering the following themes:

- Effects of formal and non-formal education institution closures; and the generalization of online and distance teaching and learning.
- Rediscovering family/intergenerational learning in times of confinement.
- Psycho-social support in times of crisis.
- Inequalities resulting from the crisis (in terms of access to education, quality, learning outcomes, differential impacts in public and private institutions, geographical disparities, etc.).
- Lifelong learning and citizenship: Learning to live together again.
- Preparing tomorrow: Lessons learned from this crisis and implications for lifelong learning.
- International solidarity during and after the crisis: The transformation of education aid patterns and flows.

Abstracts for the special issue should be approximately 300 words and include the names and affiliations of the authors and a provisional title. Please submit abstracts by 15 April 2020 to the Executive Editor of IRE, Paul Stanistreet: p.stanistreet@unesco.org. Authors will receive notification whether their abstracts have been accepted by 22 April 2020. Manuscripts are due by 20 June 2020. This special issue will be fast-tracked and published by late 2020.

IRE is the longest-running international and comparative education journal in the world. A hybrid journal, it aims to publish the best scholarship from around the world, while also influencing the development of policy and practice in the field of lifelong learning through evidence-based research. The journal is published by Springer. The editorial team of IRE is located in the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.