

30 June 2021 – 2:00-5:00pm CET



Background

Since its outbreak late December 2019, COVID-19 has profoundly impacted people's life and health around the world. As of the beginning of April 2021, 135 million cases of COVID-19 and 2.9 million deaths were reported globally. The two most affected regions are Americas and Europe, with 58 million and 48 million cases respectively. The United States has been most affected, recording 31 million cases. Brazil and India have seen over 13 million cases and in France, Russia and the United Kingdom, more than 4 million people are affected¹. Not only a global health problem, but the pandemic has also transformed the landscape of education in almost every country.

Higher education was no exception. After the unprecedented growth in the last few decades, the education of more than 220 million tertiary students was suddenly disrupted in 2020 due to COVID-driven university closures. Currently, most of the universities around the world are preparing for safe and effective class offerings by altering their normal schedules and organization at the institutional or national levels. However, due to the uncertainty and the rapidly changing situation in relation to the pandemic, limited data on the current situation at the global level are available.

UNESCO'S Higher Education section conducted a survey to have a better understanding of how COVID-19 affected higher education systems. The survey was distributed to 193 UNESCO Member States and 11 Associate Members in 3 languages (English, French and Spanish) and was available online between December 15, 2020, and February 12, 2021. The UNESCO National Commissions for UNESCO designated the relevant national authority to complete the questionnaire. Some additional responses after the closure of the online survey were also included.

¹ <https://covid19.who.int/> Accessed April 12, 2021

Introduction

In the wake of the worldwide pandemic caused by the COVID-19, UNESCO conducted a survey from December 15, 2020, to February 12, 2021, entitled: *COVID-19: Reopening and Reimagining Universities*. This survey was addressed to the 193 UNESCO Member States and its 11 Associates Members and aimed at providing an evidence-based overview of the current situation of the higher education system at national and global levels. Sixty-five countries submitted responses, 57 of which were found valid and used for the following analysis. It is to be noted that almost half of the responses received came from high income countries and the Europe and North American region.

The survey attempts to assess the varying impact the pandemic had on higher education systems in terms of access, equity and quality of teaching and learning, university operation, national challenges, emerging issues, and strategic responses. The key findings for each of these dimensions can be found below.

In summary, the results of this worldwide survey show how some countries were able to transform challenges, brought by the rapid digitalization of education, into opportunities through strong government support and international cooperation.

The event following the survey aims at disseminating the results of the survey allowing by the same to spark a global conversation on the state of higher education worldwide and the impact COVID-19 has had, from different stakeholders' point of view.

Key findings and points of discussion

The survey has revealed the following key findings that will be used as a basis for the discussions taking place during the event. Each country representative will be asked to focus on one of these key areas that is most relevant for their country and the impact COVID-19 has had on their higher education system.

- 1. mode of teaching and learning:** The major impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning is the increase in online education. The hybrid mode of teaching has become the most popular form.
- 2. access:** The impact of COVID-19 on enrollment varies by regional and income levels. High income and Europe and North American countries are better able to cope with the disruption due to government funding support and increase in domestic enrollment.
- 3. international mobility:** Mobility took a major hit, affecting international students significantly, but virtual mobility could compensate or even replace physical mobility.
- 4. university staff:** Despite the closure of many universities, the impact of COVID-19 on university staff compared to the previous academic year is limited.
- 5. disruption of research and extension activities:** COVID-19 caused suspension and cancellation of teaching and research activities globally.
- 6. widening inequality:** The mixed impact of the pandemic on university finance shed a light on the exacerbation of inequality in higher education. Financial support from the government and external sources are crucial to the survival of HEIs.
- 7. university operations:** The strong impact of the pandemic on HEIs operations caused reduced maintenance and services on campus and campuses closures worldwide.
- 8. national challenges:** Health and adaptation to new modes and models of teaching are the top concerns for students and institutions.
- 9. transition from higher education to work:** The significant reduction of job opportunities makes the transition from higher education to the labor market more difficult. Employers are also seeking applicants with higher technology skills.
- 10. national priority:** Strategic options for country-specific response are to improve infrastructure and availability of digital devices for online or distance learning as well as support for teachers and more international collaboration in research and policy dialogues.

Objective and Expected Outcomes

Objective

The webinar will present the survey results regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the higher education system at the national and global levels in terms of access to education, equity and quality of teaching and learning, university operations, national challenges, emerging issues and strategic responses and provide a venue for stakeholders working in higher education to share practices, ideas and resources about country responses to the global health crisis.

Expected Outcomes

- The participants will be exposed to the key issues that the survey revealed, including some of the UNESCO Member States' responses to the COVID-19 and the impact it had on the respective higher education systems, as well as some disparities between the different countries.
- The participants will be provided with feedback from Higher Education institutions and students themselves on how they lived the pandemic.
- The survey results and the feedback from this event will then be used to set the foundation for a future survey to compare the evolution of higher education systems through the pandemic and into a post-Covid-19 world, as well as for policy recommendation for respective countries.

Target audience

The target audience for this event is:

- UNESCO Member States
- Higher Education policymakers
- Higher Education institutions
- Higher Education Students
- International Organizations and NGOs

Format

The webinar will be held in English and French via Zoom Platform. All participants should be registered prior to the webinar via the following link:

- https://unesco-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_mWlvoH7QRWGKCrJKUBRRKQ

Live Transmission available here:

- English (*TBC*)
- French (*TBC*)

Please note that this event will be recorded. The recording of the webinar will be made available at a later date on the webinar webpage: <https://events.unesco.org/event/?id=4044954551&lang=1033>

Panelists

This dissemination event will take place virtually to allow for a worldwide representation of each stakeholder concerned. The event will have panelists from the following countries and institutions:

Event panelists	
Member State representatives	<p>Africa:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Ahmed Jinapor, Deputy Director General, Ghana Tertiary Education Commission, Ghana • Dr. Frank Sawanga Ndakala Ph.D, Assistant Director of Research, Ministry of Education, Kenya <p>Arab States:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Mohamed Lotayef, Secretary-General, Supreme Council of Universities, Egypt • Dr. Nouh Alhindawi, Director of Information Technology & E-Transformation Directorate, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Jordan <p>Asia and the Pacific:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Barai Mobarez, Director, Planning, Policy and legislation, Ministry of Higher Education, Afghanistan • Prof Dr. KAMILA Ghazali (Ms), Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International), University of Malaya, Malaysia <p>Europe and North America:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Marie-Anne Persoons, Advisor International Policy, Flemish Department of Education and Training, Belgium • Mr. Etienne Gilliard, General Director, Wallonie-Bruxelles Federation, Belgium • Ms. Candice Ennis Williams, Assistant Deputy Minister for Post-Secondary Education, Department of Education of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada <p>Latin America and the Caribbean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Dameon Black, Commissioner/Executive Director, Jamaica Tertiary education Commission, Ministry of Education, Youth and Information, Jamaica • Ms. Vargas Marinella, Vice Minister for the Qualitative Transformation of University Education, Ministry of Popular Power for University Education, Venezuela
Universities representative	<p>M. Jérôme Glachant, Vice-President of Training and Student Experience, Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne University, France</p> <p>SIDS Universities (Video):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Toby Wilkinson, Vice chancellor, Fiji National University, Fiji • Prof. Alec Ekeroma, Vice Chancellor, National University of Samoa, Samoa • Dr. Jack Maebuta, acting Vice Chancellor, Solomon Islands National University, Solomon Islands • Vanuatu, (Mr. Jean- Pierre Nirua, Vice Chancellor, Vanu National University-tbc)
Student representative	<p>Mr. Christian Jambo, Student, Rwanda Polytechnic, Rwanda</p> <p>Ms Hanwen Zhou, former intern, Higher Education Section, UNESCO / Student, Teachers College Colombia University, United States</p>
UNRWA representative	TBC
Teacher representative	TBC

Provisional Agenda

Dissemination Survey: COVID-19. Reopening and Reimagining Universities	
14h00 - 14h15	<p>Intro Video: COVID-19 impact on Education</p> <p>Opening remarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General, Education, UNESCO
14h15 – 14h30	<p>Icebreaker activity (<i>menti.com</i>)</p> <p>Presentation of the survey results: Ms Akemi Yonemura, Program Specialist, Higher Education Section, UNESCO</p>
14h30 – 15h40	<p>Member States presentation (2 Countries per Region: 7 minutes each):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Africa (14 minutes) • Arab States (14 minutes) • Asia and the Pacific (14 minutes) • Europe and North America (14 minutes) • Latin America and the Caribbean (14 minutes) <p>Moderator: Ms Maki Katsuno-Hayashikawa, Director, Division for Education 2030, UNESCO</p>
15h40 – 15h55	<p>Universities presentation: (7 minutes each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne University, France • SIDS Universities (<i>Video</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fiji National University, Fiji ○ National University of Samoa, Samoa ○ National University of Samoa, Solomon Islands ○ Vanu National University, Vanuatu (tbc)
15h55 – 16h05	<p>Student presentation: (5 minutes each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Christian Jambo, Student, Rwanda Polytechnic, Rwanda <p>Ms Hanwen Zhou, former intern, Higher Education Section, UNESCO / Student, Teachers College Columbia University, United States</p>
16h05 – 16h10	UNRWA presentation
16h10 – 16h15	Teacher presentation
16h15 – 16h35	<p>Q&A</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Peter J Wells, Chief, Higher Education Section, UNESCO</p>
16h35 – 16h45	<p>Moving forward and closing remarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Maki Katsuno-Hayashikawa, Director, Division for Education 2030, UNESCO