

Schools recognize student and teacher well-being as a priority, reveals new study on the impact of COVID-19 on education by IEA and UNESCO

Global school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic call attention to schools as important communities for more than teaching and learning. Newly released data from the Responses to Educational Disruption Survey (REDS) show that 50% or more of school principals in most participating countries recognized student and teacher well-being as a priority during school closures and into the future.

Fresh findings from REDS highlight principals' views on challenges to teacher and student well-being during the educational disruption, with over 50% of students feeling overwhelmed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and teachers experiencing increased workload and changing job requirements. Positively, most teachers and students felt supported by their school community during these challenging times.

Evidence for recovery

IEA and UNESCO, in partnership with the European Commission's Joint Research Center, launched REDS in 2020 to draw a more comprehensive picture of the pandemic's impact on lower secondary education, and to investigate how countries approached the challenge of ensuring continuity in teaching and learning during the educational disruption.

Today, on the United Nations' **International Day of Education** celebrated at Expo 2020 Dubai and around the world, UNESCO and IEA jointly release the **open access REDS International Report and International Database**. The REDS International Report provides valuable, **cross-nationally, and internationally comparable new data**, covering an extensive range of topics associated with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, as perceived by **school principals, teachers, and students** who were directly affected. Insights from REDS data can better orient and tailor policy responses to strengthen education system resilience, especially during disruptions to schooling.

Declines in learning progress

While student achievement was not directly measured in REDS, principals, teachers, and students were asked about their perceptions of students' academic progress during the disruption. Both principals and teachers perceived declines in student learning, with **more than 50% of teachers** in all countries stating that students have not progressed to the extent they would have normally expected at that time of year.

Students reported more variable perceptions. **More than half of students in most countries** reported learning about as much during the disruption as they did before, with **about half of students** across participating countries also agreeing that it was more difficult to know how they were progressing during this period.

More effort needed to support vulnerable students

These reported decreases in students' academic outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic applied especially to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable students. In all countries, **socioeconomically disadvantaged students were more likely** than socioeconomically advantaged students **to express fear of falling behind and less confidence in completing schoolwork** independently.

Most teachers across countries agreed that it was **difficult to provide necessary support for vulnerable students** and students struggling with their academic workload. This important finding underlines the need for further understanding on identifying those students and developing tailored measures to better aid them in future, especially during disruptions.

Schools play an important role in student and teacher well-being

Both students and teachers reported challenges to their well-being during the disruption. Next to feeling overwhelmed by the COVID-19 pandemic, **over 50% of students agreed that they were anxious** about the changes to their schooling. In countries where teaching and learning continued, teaching was generally more demanding, and **teachers worked harder and longer** than before the pandemic to teach and support students and parents.

Schools responded to these demanding circumstances by putting additional effort into supporting the well-being of their staff and students, with **50% or more of school principals** in most countries **increasing priorities for promoting student and teacher well-being** during school closures. Despite challenges to overall well-being, data from REDS show that teachers felt **supported by the school leadership and their colleagues**, and most students reported feeling supported by their school during the disruption.

Throughout the pandemic, there exists the opinion that schools have played a central role in the well-being of local communities, ensuring support for teachers, students, and their families. Data from REDS highlight the **multifaceted role of schools that extends beyond just academic development** and underline the need to additionally prioritize teacher and student well-being looking to the future.

IEA Executive Director, Dr Dirk Hastedt, commented on the REDS data:

“The broad participation from eleven countries across Asia, the Arab region, Africa, South America, and Europe makes the REDS International Report and International Database **a wealth of data for researchers to use in further analyses**, especially in identifying **sustainable long-term approaches** that emerged from the crisis and may serve as **good practices in the future**.”

REDS has paved the way for participation in international large-scale studies in several countries that have never participated in these studies before. This would not have been possible without the support of our partners **UNESCO, the European Commission, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation**.

Results from the REDS International Report will be indispensable for countries in assessing education systems before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, and a valuable source in evaluating

countries' progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 4 that aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all.”

UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education, Stefania Giannini, welcomed the important findings of REDS:

“Recovery, building resilience and reimagining education require evidence-based assessments of lessons learned from this historic disruption. The findings from REDS, that UNESCO and IEA launched under the umbrella of the Global Education Coalition, offer an opportunity to understand the impact of school closures in terms of both teaching and learning experience and the well-being of teachers and learners in 11 countries across the world.

The release of the REDS International Report and International Database cannot be more timely as we are witnessing the unfolding of the Omicron variant in many countries that further steps up the urgency to support the socio-emotional well-being of students and teachers, and strengthen the resilience of education systems.

Moving forward, successful educational recovery and transformation will require investing more and better in what is required to build more inclusive, resilient and enabling education systems to ensure that every child does not only learn, but also feels safe, happy and supported to reach their full potential.”

ENDS

For more information about this release, early access to the REDS International Report, or to arrange interviews, please contact:

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Notes to Editors:

Please use **#EvidenceForRecovery** on social media.

For a summary of the REDS findings, please download the **REDS Key Findings presentation here**.

The REDS International Report, *The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education: International evidence from the Responses to Educational Disruption Survey (REDS)*, is released on 24 January 2022. For access to the **full report visit the IEA website here**.

Internationally comparable data from four continents

REDS yields internationally comparable data collected in a scientific manner on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on lower secondary education (**eighth grade**). The REDS data collection took place between December 2020 to July 2021 in **Burkina Faso, Denmark, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, the Russian Federation, Rwanda, Slovenia, the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, and Uzbekistan**. REDS collected data through questionnaires from a total of 21,063 students, 15,004 teachers, and 1,581 principals.

Continuity of teaching and learning varied greatly across countries

All countries participating in REDS had at least one period of school closure in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The periods of closure varied within and across countries, mostly starting in the Northern Hemisphere Spring of 2020, and lasting from one to two months in the Russian Federation and Denmark, to almost a year in the United Arab Emirates. There were also differences in the participation of students in schooling, and the modes, media, and teaching methods used to ensure continuity of teaching and learning. In Burkina Faso, Rwanda, Kenya, Ethiopia, and India, varying proportions of school leaders reported that their schools did not offer any teaching and learning provisions during the disruption. In the remaining six REDS countries - all with higher Human Development Index measures - all schools reported continued teaching and learning provisions during the disruption.

About the International Association of Educational Achievement (IEA)

IEA is an independent, international cooperative of national research institutions, governmental research agencies, scholars, and analysts working to research, understand, and improve education worldwide. It conducts high-quality, large-scale comparative studies of educational achievement and other educational aspects, across the globe to provide educators, policymakers, and parents with insights into how students perform.