



TEMPORARILY
CLOSED
DUE TO COVID-19
(**CORONAVIRUS**)

EDUCATION FOR ALL IN **TIMES OF CRISIS**

Lessons from Covid-19

MARILYN LEASK
and SARAH YOUNIE



best they could. In others, governments stepped into a leadership role working with teachers to harness the power of the traditional media of radio and TV as these were accessible to more families than any other media. Radio (including solar-powered radio) was harnessed, reportedly to good effect, in reaching learners in Mexico and Pakistan. Educators from New Zealand, Mexico and Portugal reported a positive lead from government in the use of television. At the UNESCO's Mobile Learning week (online, 12–15th October 2020) the Ghanaian and German online initiatives were showcased. The existing international European SchoolNet as well as Dutch, South Korean, Australian, Scottish and Chinese national initiatives provided useful online support for teachers. Teachers where internet is missing or unreliable also reported the usefulness of tools which download web resources for offline use for distribution via memory sticks. Chapter 9 provides more detail.

Teachers reported models of remote teaching which fall roughly into three types:

- Type 1: individual or small group remote-learning provision
- Type 2: school-supported whole class synchronous or asynchronous online provision
- Type 3: commercial/NGO/charity/professional association providers, offering synchronous or asynchronous learning. These were a mix of free and private providers, for example, national media providers, BBC or paid-for-services, subscription channels.

Teachers reported a wide range of ways were used to engage with parents and that there was a dramatic shift in relationships between parents and schools and parents' roles in teaching. For those who were normally reluctant to come to school, there were examples from low-, medium- and high-income countries where teachers met parents and children within their world, meeting near to their home, in their community, delivering prepared learning materials and food, and being in touch by telephone (see Table 8.1 for a case study from India written at the height of the pandemic in 2020).

Table 8.1 Case Study of an intervention to support learning in rural India: stories-on-the-phone (with thanks to Jwalin Patel)

This case study examines a non-internet based intervention in rural India.

In India, online synchronous learning is impeded due to limited access to internet communication technologies (ranging from absence of smart phones, limited data packs to a single digital device shared between multiple children). Several interventions have been developed to counter these, including those that leverage SMSs, telephonic calls, radio and TV channels.

The Indian government has rolled out academic content over multiple TV channels, all India radio and an app-based platform named Diksha. Pratham, a large-scale NGO, has developed an interactive voice response storytelling system, a series of SMS and WhatsApp based activities, radio broadcast programmes and community-based educational activities that engage parents and students in the educational process. These materials are available in 20 languages. The Muktagan Education trust and Prabhat Foundation which work with students with special needs have designed flashcards and educational materials which are shared over WhatsApp and/or short video calls with parents.

Meanwhile, several interventions have tried to adapt approaches that aren't as technologically intensive; for example, the NGO TIDE (Together in Development and Education) Foundation has developed graphical/visual, self-directed learning materials. Additionally, several villages play educational programmes on temple loudspeakers. Notably, a group of teachers have set up *vali-shalas* (parent-run mini-schools), whereby the teachers support parents to run mini-classes with students who maintain social distance.

With schools shut and limited technology accessibility (no smart phones and no internet), Balaji Jadhav from ZP School Vijayanagar, Maharashtra, set-up a conference calling system for small groups of grade 1, 2, 3 and 4 students. Since March, he has been calling students in the mornings and evenings (before and after parents come back from work).

The intervention is divided into six phases which include ice-breaking activities, story-listening, story-telling, story-writing and story-recording sessions. He also converts academic content such as language, science, mathematics and social science into short stories, which is an excellent example of a teacher acting as a facilitator of learning by reaching out to students in a way that makes their learning more accessible and equitable.

Additionally, he prompted students to narrate the stories to their parents leading to a stronger buy-in from parents. To support and track student learning, he conducts weekly home visits and drops off postcards at every child's home and asks them to write him a letter a week summarising concepts they learnt. For more details visit his website www.shikshanbhakti.in

The detail of the intervention is as follows:

- Icebreaking (10 days) – he discussed topics across a wide range of interest areas to engage students
- Story listening (10 days) – he narrated short stories with pauses where he asked questions and paused for comments
- Story telling (10 days) – evening sessions were dedicated for students to narrate stories from the previous sessions or one they made

- Story writing (10 days) – he asked students to write a short summary which he reviewed during his weekly home visits
- Story recording (10 days) – he supported students as they recorded stories on their phones (and collected them via Bluetooth transfer)
- Academic content as stories – he converted language, science, mathematics and social science content into short stories.

We also had reports that none of these strategies worked in some cases so that some children just dropped out of learning altogether.

No single pattern has emerged as suiting all situations. Localised responses were the norm. The challenges teachers and schools faced depend on their localised context and their pupil intake – was it rural/urban, affluent/deprived, large ethnic minority and/or additional language needs, or high percentages of SEN? The learning needs of each particular school intake required nuanced responses to meet their learning needs. Online teaching was reported in as universal in private schools in high- and low-income countries as learners tended to come from families affluent enough to pay for devices and internet connection.

At the time of writing, December 2020, some students in a number of low- and high-income countries had lost nearly a year or more of face-to-face teaching because of the natural disasters in 2019 and 2020 of flood, fire and earthquake and war as well as the Covid-19 pandemic. Successive waves of the virus caused opening and closing, then reopening and closing of schools in many countries. Notable exceptions in the latter part of 2020 were Taiwan, New Zealand, Australia and many islands in different parts of the world.

Specific challenge 8.3 Homeschooling/home education and marginalised learners

Many parents took on the challenge of 'homeschooling'. The terms homeschooling and home education are often used quite interchangeably as there is no agreed upon or definitive distinction between the two terms. However, Devitt (2018), writing on the website www.howdoihomeschool.com, offers the following observation about the terms.

What is homeschooling? Is it simply school at home or is there more to it than that? If you are asking these questions, you are not alone as the definition is murky due to the variety of methods with which a child can be educated at home. While many parents employ the traditional method that mimics