FORWARD TO SCHOOL

Guidance, Considerations and Resources for and from Education Unions to Inform Decision-Making in Times of Covid-19

Education International (EI)

Education International represents organisations of teachers and other education employees across the globe. It is the world's largest federation of unions and associations, representing thirty million education employees in about four hundred organisations in one hundred and seventy countries and territories, across the globe. Education International unites teachers and education employees.

OVERCOMING A GLOBAL CHALLENGE TOGETHER

As schools gradually reopen across the world, we are all painfully aware this will not be a return to normal. The challenge ahead is daunting. We must strike a balance between the need to minimise health and safety risks and the imperative to return to the only proven way to achieve quality education for all: teaching and learning in schools and education institutions centred around human relationships, providing students with knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and vital support services that democratic communities and societies rely upon to breathe and thrive.

In April, Education International published its Guidance on Reopening Schools and Education Institutions. Informed by insights from educators in a variety of contexts all across the world, we identified five essential areas governments needed to focus on to ensure a safe transition back to onsite education and to mitigate the impact of the prolonged closures on students and educators. The five pillars of the Education International Guidance are:

01 ENGAGE IN SOCIAL AND POLICY DIALOGUE

02 ENSURE THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF EDUCATION COMMUNITIES

03 MAKE EQUITY A TOP PRIORITY

04 SUPPORT PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING AND RECOVERY

05 TRUST THE PROFESSIONALISM OF EDUCATORS

Built around these five pillars, Forward to School provides a wealth of resources to inform the response of education unions in this next stage of the Covid-19

education crisis. It features information, research and, most importantly, examples of union actions in more than 50 countries across all regions.

This is a living document. As this unprecedented and unpredictable situation develops, new editions will be published to support your actions with updated and relevant information. In the meantime, our Information Hub will continue to provide the latest news on the work of Education International and its member organisations to meet the challenge of Covid-19.

What lies ahead will not be easy. But the title *Forward to School* also refers to the opportunity at hand. The transition back to onsite education must not be a transition back to undervalued, underfunded and deeply unequal education systems. This exceptional situation provides an opportunity to improve systems, particularly as the world now more acutely understands the complexity and value of our work. Schools are irreplaceable and absolutely essential. They are the very heart of our communities. Now is the time to push forward and take the lead as the organised and principled profession we are. We must continue to teach, we must continue to learn, to mobilise and organise for our colleagues and for our students.

Together, we can turn this terrible crisis into the foundation of a better world.

In solidarity,
David Edwards
Education International General Secretary

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ENGAGE IN SOCIAL AND POLICY DIALOGUE

Public authorities engage in continuous social and policy dialogue with educators and their representative unions and organisations to assess needs and agree on health and safety measures for students and staff as well as the framework and resources for transitioning back to onsite teaching and learning. Consideration is given to the additional workload arising from the parallel requirement of face-to-face and online teaching during the gradual reopening of schools. The labour rights of teachers and education support personnel are respected and decent working conditions are maintained.

Introduction

Given the unprecedented nature of the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, social and policy dialogue involving governments and employers' and workers' representative organisations is more important than ever. Unfortunately, periods of crisis often tend to reinforce authoritarian and top-down attitudes, including in the field of education. While there have been good examples of cooperation between governments and trade unions during the crisis, in many cases, teachers' associations and trade unions have not been adequately consulted, let alone involved in decision-making.

Social Dialogue

The Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel (CEART) has set out a definition of social dialogue specific to education and teachers:

> *Social dialogue is understood to mean all forms of information sharing, consultation and negotiation between educational authorities, public and private, and teachers and their democratically elected representatives in teachers' organisations.*

The definition encompasses three principal levels of dialogue:

- Information sharing means a wide array of communications between educational authorities and teachers and their organisations at all organisational levels.
- Consultation means education authorities, employers or managers and teachers (education workers generally) or their organisations exchange views on issues without any necessary commitment to agree or to act on those views. Discussions should be "meaningful", i.e., the parties should approach the process open to the possibility of changing policies or procedures based on proposals from other parties engaged in consultation. Sufficient time should also be given to workers' organisations to prepare, read the documents and consult their members.
- Negotiation is considered the highest form of social dialogue, and often takes the form of collective bargaining. This process requires full representation of education workers' organisations and competent management authority, exchanges of positions and a formal statement of the results of bargaining, usually a written agreement.

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Means of settling disputes between education employers and members of the teaching profession is also an essential aspect of social dialogue.

Dispute resolution is the process by which parties in negotiations or collective bargaining resolve disputes when they are unable to reach agreement. Either the parties create a mechanism to resolve disputes, or other formal systems exist, including mediation and arbitration by a designated individual or agency. Courts or other judicial bodies are often the final authority for the resolution of disputes arising from the application of a negotiated agreement or from the employment relationship determined by public or private labour codes. Industrial action is the strongest conflict resolution tool education unions have.

The right to strike is essential for the operations and functions of trade unions. The European Court of Human Rights considers that this right is essential and without it, all other rights of trade unions would be illusory. Governments have attempted to obstruct the right to strike through a variety of other strategies. However international jurisprudence stresses that the right to strike is linked to freedom of association, and that without protecting the right to strike, fundamental workers' rights, as set out by ILO Conventions 87 on freedom of association and 98 on collective bargaining, could not be fully exercised.

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Prerequisites for Effective Social Dialogue

> *Free, independent, strong and representative employers' and workers' organisations are prerequisites for effective social dialogue, as are trust among the various actors and respect on the part of governments for the autonomy of the social partners.*
> *ILO Policy Brief on COVID-19;* Relying on social dialogue for solutions

There are certain prerequisites for successful social dialogue. The ILO has identified good practice in education labour relations:

(1) Respect for the fundamental rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining;
(2) Political will, trust and commitment of all parties to engage in social dialogue on the part of all the parties;
(3) Strong, independent representative organisations with the technical capacity and the access to relevant information to participate in social dialogue; and
(4) Appropriate institutional support.

Role and Importance of Social Dialogue

Article 15 of the Education International Policy Paper on Human and Trade Union Rights, *adopted in 2015 by EI's 7th World Congress, highlights the importance of social dialogue in addressing the major issues of the teaching profession:*

> *Education unions represent education workers in social dialogue with educational authorities (be they public or private). Education unions aim to fulfil several objectives through meaningful social dialogue: the realisation of the human right to education by demanding free quality public education for all; the participation of teachers and education support personnel in education reform processes; the promotion and defence of fundamental democratic rights, and the professional interests of, and fair working conditions for education workers; the achievement of the trade union rights to freedom of association and to collective bargaining by demanding the application of the core ILO labour standards. Collective agreements must be respected by employers.*

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Social dialogue has a crucial role to play in designing policies to promote the rule of law, democracy, social justice and equity. It is crucial for democratic governance and can be a driver for economic and social resilience, stability and inclusive development. Social dialogue promotes the democratic participation in the policy-making process of the people most directly concerned, thereby building ownership and commitment to agreed policies. At times of crisis, when the stakes are so high, such participation is all the more important.

When member organisations are confronted with violations of their rights, Education International's primary objective has always been to build or restore social dialogue between the education authorities and the teachers and their representative organisations.

International Instruments

International labour standards adopted by the ILO set the norms/principles of freedom of association and collective bargaining at international level. They are designed to be applied in all national contexts through relevant legislation and practices.

There are four important International Labour Organisation conventions when examining labour relations and social dialogue:

- Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise sets out the basic principles of freedom of association and independence in organising representative organisations
- Convention 98 on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining provides further guidance on the basic right to form independent organisations and on collective bargaining
- Convention 151 on Labour Relations covers public service sectors and is relevant to the education sector
- Convention 154 on Collective Bargaining defines and calls for the promotion of collective bargaining in all sectors, including public services.

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The 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers and the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel contain numerous recommendations for teachers' participation in educational decisions through consultation and negotiation with educational authorities.

> *"Both salaries and working conditions for teachers should be determined through a process of negotiation between teachers' organisations and the employers of teachers." (VIII.82). Recommendation 1966*

> *"Higher-education teaching personnel should enjoy the right to freedom of association, and this right should be effectively promoted. Collective bargaining or an equivalent procedure should be promoted in accordance with the standards of the International Labour Organisation (ILO)…" (IX.E.52). Recommendation 1997*

International supervisory mechanisms exist to make countries accountable when they fail to respect human rights guaranteed in the international and regional instruments to which they are a signatory. Education International can assist its affiliates in making the best use of these mechanisms. For more information, please consult the Education International Manual on Trade Union Rights.

Policy Dialogue

Policy dialogue is essential for effective policymaking in education.

In its broadest sense, policy dialogue in education refers to consultation and discussion on policy matters between the government and multiple education stakeholders such as teacher representatives, student representatives, and civil society. Policy dialogue democratizes and enhances the legitimacy of the policymaking process.

Policy dialogue between governments and education unions is vital, as teachers' understanding and support for education policies is necessary for successful implementation of policy reforms. Where teachers disagree with certain education policies, the reform is unlikely to be successful, as teachers are key actors for their implementation.

Policy dialogue between governments and education unions is also vital to enhance the quality of the policies themselves, as teachers have the professional expertise necessary to design effective policies to support student learning and the achievement of quality education for all. Teachers are the actors who are best placed to identify policy problems and propose suitable solutions, as they are the ones who 'enact' education policies on the ground, every day, in institutions in all areas of the country. It is teachers who will have the best understanding of what specific policies will work best, where, for whom and under what conditions.

For policy dialogue to be most effective, unions must be involved in every stage of the policy process. This principle is recognised by all governments signing the Incheon Declaration - the Framework for Action for the Sustainable Development Goals underlines that teachers should be engaged in *all* stages of developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating education policy. However, in many countries, teachers report that they are insufficiently involved in policy dialogue. Teachers are too often not included in policy planning or are consulted far too late in the policy development process. Effective policy dialogue requires timely information sharing and an open discussion around different policy alternatives.

Policy dialogue refers to dialogue on a range of professional issues (teacher policy) but also broader policy issues related to education and student learning. In the context of Covid-19, many education unions are engaging in policy dialogue by proactively developing policy and presenting their governments with policy proposals on a range of issues, from how to reopen institutions safely to curriculum; from workload management to student assessments during and post-pandemic.

For policy proposals from unions to be legitimate, they must be supported by the grassroots union membership. During the pandemic, some unions have surveyed their members or held virtual meetings to engage members in developing emergency policy. Others have developed policy proposals informed by research or developed in collaboration with experts (for example education researchers or health practitioners).

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Examples of Good Practices from Education Unions during the Covid-19 Crisis

Education International member organisations are committed to protect their members' jobs and employment rights through social and policy dialogue. In countries where social and policy dialogue is well-established, education unions worked together as soon as the implications of the government response to the health emergency for the education sector became clear. In other countries, Education International member organisations report they are engaging in social dialogue and lobbying to minimise the impact of the closures on educators. As governments have taken action to ensure educational continuity during the Covid-19 emergency, education unions have been quick off the mark to act in the interests of their members and of education workers more generally, and for the common good.

Here are some examples of the strategies and actions of education unions from around the world to address the current crisis.

Africa

- **Zimbabwe**
  The Government of Zimbabwe announced that schools would reopen for examinations in late June and transition back to onsite education in the following weeks despite risks of an increase in Covid-19 infections. Education trade unions challenged the reopenings as unsafe and premature and called for social dialogue in order to ensure a safe return to schools. However, failing to get cooperation from the Government, the two largest education unions, Education International member organisations ZIMTA and PTUZ, joined by several smaller unions, took the government to court. The court decided the case in favour of the unions. The Government says that it will comply with the decision and meet the High Court deadline.

Arab Countries

- **Bahrain**
  During the Covid-19 crisis, the Bahrain Teachers' Association (BTA) has focused on preserving the health and safety of school communities and ensuring that all students receive online education without discrimination. While initially teachers were required to come to schools to teach remotely, through strategic alliances with civil society and Members of Parliament, BTA managed to win the right for all teachers to work from home. The BTA has also put forward detailed proposals regarding the reopening of schools and education institutions for the next academic year.

Asia Pacific

- **Australia**
  After a heated debate between authorities and unions on safely reopening schools and education institutions in New South Wales, the New South Wales Teachers Federation succeeded in mobilising massive public support for teachers as they headed back to schools for the start of the second term. Celebrities and parents took to Twitter to show their appreciation for teachers, with #TeachersRock trending on the social media platform in a matter of hours.

Europe

- **Denmark**
  Denmark has a strong tradition of social and policy dialogue and a high level of trust established between the government and educators and their unions. While the unions were not consulted ahead of the school closures, Education International member organisation DLF had their first discussion with the Ministry to clarify the so-called emergency teaching on the first day of the lockdown. The legislation regulating emergency teaching was developed in dialogue with the union and adopted less than a week after schools closed. Detailed negotiations between the education minister, the health authorities and

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education unions also took place to ensure everyone was comfortable with the safety measures put in place for schools to reopen. This allowed for a smooth transition back to onsite education on the 15 of April.

- **Italy**
In Italy, ETUCE member organisations have mobilised the education workforce online through more than 200 rallies against the lack of negotiations on employment and working conditions during the pandemic and in view of the reopening. The online rallies gathered around 400,000 education workers, in a demonstration of unity, solidarity and cohesion of the education community in times of emergency.

Latin America

- **Argentina**
The Argentinian government and CTERA, a member organisation of Education International, have signed an important collective agreement aimed at restructuring work in education during the lockdown and combating the work overload imposed by teleworking. The agreement sets out the first-ever defined concept of the right to disconnect, recognising the profound impact the move to teleworking has had on working hours, opportunities for rest, and respect for the privacy of education workers. It requires the Ministry of Education to invest in providing technological resources for distance education.

North America and Caribbean

- **Canada**
The Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ) has urged the government of Quebec to engage in full social dialogue and respond to solutions put forward by trade unionists with a view to halting financial austerity measures, improving employees' working conditions and thereby strengthening public services, particularly education. Given the impasse in the negotiation process, several CSQ federations have filed a request for mediation with the Minister of Labour, Employment and Solidarity. At the end of this mediation process, the education unions will obtain the right to use more serious means of pressure, including recourse to strike action.

- **St Lucia**
  The St Lucia Teachers' Union pushed back on the government's request for a decision on the proposed reopening of schools for several grades. Having organised several emergency meetings, the union had agreed that it was impossible to make a decision without sufficient information. Consequently, the union presented the government with 25 specific questions on the arrangements for resuming onsite education. The questions referred to issues such as class size, approaches to exams, and access to protective equipment, among others. In its letter to the government, the union committed to communicating its position on reopening schools once the government had answered the questions.

Concluding Remarks

The Covid-19 crisis has proven the importance of institutionalised social and policy dialogue in order to secure a reliable flow of information, trust and efficient involvement of education personnel in decisions which concern them. In countries which do not have an established social dialogue, it is still important to initiate a dialogue and put forward proposals for how the different stages of the crisis can be dealt with in the education sector. Many Education International member organisations have done just that and will continue to do so also after the pandemic.

In its policy brief on the need for social dialogue in addressing the Covid-19 crisis, the ILO has issued preliminary conclusions on the importance of social dialogue to address the current crisis:

- Although there is no "one-size fits all" type of dialogue, all forms and levels of social dialogue will be crucial in the current and coming periods.
- It is essential to start the social dialogue process as early as possible in order to maximise its impact, and the social partners need to be involved at all stages of crisis responses.
- The engagement of the state authorities at the highest levels in tripartite social dialogue with the social partners enhances the credibility of the process.
- Given social partners' in-depth knowledge of the needs and realities of companies and workers, their effective involvement in decision-making can lead to the adoption of well-targeted and effective preventive measures.
- Social partners' organisations are also fulfilling a crucial role in supporting and advising employers and workers on how best to confront and mitigate the effects of the crisis.
- Social dialogue should address the protection needs of the most vulnerable workers as a matter of priority.
- The crisis provides an opportunity to overcome past obstacles to social dialogue. Social dialogue institutions can be reactivated where they have become dormant.
- Modern technology can be used to facilitate virtual consultations between government and the social partners.
- Care should be taken to avoid any action that may undermine the trust and cohesion that has been built between governments and the social partners in the early stages of the crisis.

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The Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Dr Koumbou Boly Barry, highlighted the crucial role of effective social dialogue in addressing the current crisis. She made the following recommendation to governments and social partners:

Good relationships and mutual trust between governments, teachers, associations and trade unions of teachers and other education workers, as well as parents and communities, should be established, both at the national and local levels. Permanent lines of dialogue should function at all stages of the crisis in order to ensure that measures adopted are adequate, efficient and acceptable to all. Schools reopening should be undertaken in cooperation with teachers and associations and trade unions of teachers.

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Further Reading and Resources

EI Survey on Member Organisations' Responses to Covid-19 Lockdowns

EI Policy Paper on Human and Trade Union Rights

EI Manual on Trade Union Rights (a new edition is currently being developed and will be made available later this year)

ILO Policy Brief on Covid-19. Pillar 4: Relying on Social Dialogue for Solutions

ILO Policy Brief: The Need for Social Dialogue in Addressing the Covid-19 Crisis

ILO NORMLEX (ILO information hub on International Labour Standards)

ILO Handbook of Good Human Resource Practices in the Teaching Profession

Right to Education: Impact of the Covid-19 Crisis on the Right to Education; Concerns, Challenges and Opportunities (Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education)

02 / PILLAR 2

ENSURE THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF EDUCATION COMMUNITIES

There is agreement and clarity on the hygiene measures necessary for keeping children, students and staff safe and healthy as well as preventative measures for containing the spread of the virus. All schools and education institutions are equipped to ensure and sustain enhanced hygiene and cleaning practices and all staff is informed and trained to follow new guidelines. Education workers have guaranteed access to personal protective equipment where necessary, and additional funds and staffing are ensured by public authorities to ensure health and safety requirements. In addition, the situation of vulnerable students, staff and their families is taken into consideration.

Introduction

Ensuring the health and safety of education communities is a pressing concern that is currently front and centre of both government and education unions' work as countries seek to reopen schools in the context of the pandemic.

In order for education institutions to reopen safely it is clear that a whole-school and whole-community approach is necessary. Governments and employers must meet their obligations to guarantee occupational health and safety; the policy approach taken must be developed with education workers and their unions in consultation with other stakeholders such as parents and students; and education communities must be well informed so that they can play their role in minimising health risks as schools reopen. Where governments and employers are failing to meet their responsibilities, unions are stepping in, developing policy proposals and taking action in multiple ways to contribute to ensuring education communities stay safe and healthy.

This living document provides useful evidence, policy and resources to expand upon the brief section in the Education International Guidance on Reopening Schools and Education Institutions. It shares examples of different policy measures taken by governments, as well as examples of union policy proposals and action taken to ensure the health and safety of education communities. Please note that physical and emotional wellbeing is covered in Pillar 4.

Education International Policy on Health and Safety

Resolutions and Policy Papers

Education International's second World Congress in 1998 passed a resolution on Health Promotion and School Health. The resolution is highly relevant in the current context. It expresses profound concern about the rapid expansion of infectious and transmittable diseases and calls for education unions to take action to improve school health policies.

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The Education International Human and Trade Union Rights Policy Paper (2015) underscores that:

> All education workers have a **right to work in a safe and healthy environment.** This includes, but is not limited to, a reasonable number of pupils per classroom, and access to health and safety procedures. (para. 29)

The Policy Paper also recognises that:

> The physical conditions of a learning environment have a direct impact on the quality of education, and on the wellbeing and health of students and staff... The buildings and facilities must also provide a secure environment within which staff and students feel that they are **protected and safe from physical harm**. (para. 35)

Meanwhile, EI's Education Policy Paper (2011) states that:

> Education systems should... become more aware of the contribution they make to students' health. They should promote health awareness and life skills that enable students to be more responsible for their own health as well as the health of others around them... **curricula should include programmes for improving personal hygiene.** (para. 51)

ETUCE Policy on Occupational Health and Safety

Occupational health and safety is a priority of EI's European region, ETUCE. ETUCE takes a holistic approach to occupational health and safety, arguing that teacher and education support workers' safety and wellbeing is a prerequisite for quality education and underscoring the interlinkages between safe and healthy workplaces and decent working conditions, and the negative impact of economic crises and austerity measures.

Education International - Promoting School Health as Part of an Inter-Sectoral Global Partnership

Education International is a member of the FRESH network (schools, agencies and systems for resilience, equity, safety and health), a network comprising UN agencies and global organisations, donors and NGOs concerned with school-based health promotion. The "FRESH framework" calls for policies that support student health and development, including a safe, sanitary, healthy physical environment for learning.

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Education International Policy on Health and Safety during COVID-19

National governments must ensure the protection of education workers through evidence-based public health measures in the transition back to school. In a blog on 16 June 2020, EI General Secretary David Edwards underlined that:

- teachers and education support personnel are critical in the fight against the pandemic and so must be treated as essential frontline workers, with **priority access to health care, including virus testing and vaccinations when they are available;**
- it is imperative that governments **communicate transparently and continuously** about the plans for reopening onsite education and the extent to which the openings are tied to the advice of health experts;
- **continuous social and policy dialogue with educators** and their unions is the cornerstone of any successful education strategy to both assess and agree on health and safety measures for students and staff. There must be **agreement and clarity on the hygiene measures** necessary for keeping children, students and staff safe and healthy, as well as preventative measures for containing the spread of the virus;
- a **support structure must be put in place for all vulnerable students and staff,** including systems to aid the wellbeing and mental health of children, students and education staff.

These four calls echo those of many Education International member organisations across the world.

EI Regions' Covid-19 Response Policy on Health & Safety

The ETUCE calls for "coordinated and rational measures" to protect education staff and students, and demands that preventative action taken by governments is done so transparently and in cooperation with workers' representatives.

The Education International Africa Regional Committee called on governments to ensure clean water is provided in all schools and education workers and students are provided with protective equipment and other emergency precautions.

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Council of Global Unions Covid-19 Health & Safety Policies

The Council of Global Unions (CGU) is advocating to recognise Covid-19 as an occupational risk as laid out in the biological hazards convention (ILO Convention 167) and to have the occupational health and safety convention (ILO Convention 155) recognised as one of the fundamental ILO conventions. A statement from the CGU on 12 March 2020 underscored that "special provision must be made to immediately extend paid sick-leave entitlements to workers who lack them, and to improve sick leave provisions where they exist as well as to ensure working conditions and arrangements that provide protection."

How to Reopen Safely?
Research Gaps and Policy Approaches

In May 2020, John Hopkins University published Filling in the Blanks: National Research Needs to Guide Decisions about Reopening Schools in the United States, a report which underscores the urgent need for governments to invest in research in order to have better evidence to inform decisions about reopening schools.

The Research Gaps

The report argues that there is a need for publicly funded research in the following key areas:

- **Epidemiology and transmissibility studies** – further research is needed to determine the risk of infection in schools and to determine whether children can transmit the virus to others;
- **Empirical data on the consequences of school reopening** – data collection for case studies and cohort studies is needed to determine whether certain school communities are at greater risk than others;
- **Data on decisions made and the consequences for inequality** – data must be collected to determine the impact of keeping schools closed on students' health and safety. Keeping schools closed may have non-infection related negative consequences for health and safety because of the role of schools in:
  - **detection of and haven from child abuse and violence;**
  - **provision of health care;** and

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o **provision of school meals** - the World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that about 369 million children around the world are missing out on school meals because of Covid-19 school closures.

The report recommends that governments set up national advisory groups to regularly review the available data and advise on policy. The advisory groups should be made up of cross-sectoral experts including paediatric medical professionals, public health experts and educational researchers.

Modalities for reopening

Different modalities for reopening schools outlined by the John Hopkins report include:

- **Phased blended learning approaches:** both remote and in-person learning – for example in New South Wales, Australia and the Netherlands.
- **In-person classes for selected groups only:** vulnerable students and/or children of essential workers – for example in Queensland and Victoria in Australia; and for students with special educational needs in Netherlands and Denmark. In the UK, schools remained open for these students even when closed for the wider student population.
- **In-person classes and activities for particular age groups:**
  - **Older children learning first** (exam and graduation requirements) - for example in Germany. In addition, many countries in Africa, such as Ghana, Kenya, Togo, Liberia, Cameroon, Burkina Faso have opted for a phased reopening, starting with examination grade classes.
  - **Younger children learning first** - for example in France, Denmark, Iceland, and the Netherlands.
- **Universal in-person classes with a remote opt-out option** for example, a few States in Australia, Sweden and Uruguay. In many countries, attendance in reopened educational institutions currently remains voluntary.

Mitigation Measures for In-person Interactions

- **Multiple measures for mitigating risk** when schools are reopened are identified by John Hopkins, including:
    - Physical distancing
    - Reducing the number of potential contacts
    - Avoiding mixing between groups
    - Increasing ventilation
    - Enhancing hygiene and cleaning
    - Monitoring the health of staff and students for early identification and isolation
    - Reducing access to high-touch surfaces
    - Using personal protective equipment (PPE)

In addition, many countries have developed:

- **Protocols** for what to do when there is a case or cluster in a school;
- **Special measures for high risk staff and students** – developing policy to accommodate staff and students at high risk or who live with an individual in a high-risk group (for instance by providing them with the option of remote teaching and learning). Definitions of "high risk groups/individuals" vary and can be based on age, having a compromised immune system, or self-identification.

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Policy Examples of Reopening Measures

This section provides some examples of policy approaches taken around the world to ensure safe reopening of education institutions, including mitigation measures, protocols in the case of infection and special measures for high-risk individuals.

Africa

- **Benin**
  Schools reopened in Benin in May after six weeks of closures and following government plans to conduct mass testing of teachers and provide masks to all students. Education unions however said that schools opened whilst testing was still insufficient.

- **Ghana**
  The decision to reopen universities in Ghana on 15 June was taken after consultation with education unions was broadcast on television. Risk mitigation measures implemented included: limited student numbers (about half the normal student population); fumigation and disinfection before reopening; and the provision of reusable face masks for every student, teacher and ESP from the Ministry of Education.

- **South Africa**
  South Africa has opted for a phased reopening of schools. Most schools reopened on 8 June but some schools were to reopen later due to not being in compliance with safety regulations. Measures implemented to enable the schools to reopen safely included: the delivery of emergency water and sanitation including mobile toilets, the provision of personal protective equipment, and extra classes.

Asia-Pacific

- **Australia**
  In Australia, policies on school reopening differ between states as a result of Australia's federal system.
  In New South Wales, all schools have returned to full-time on-campus learning, with both health and safety measures and infection control protocols put in place.

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All students are expected to attend school unless they have a medical condition or feel unwell. Students do not follow strict physical distancing, but follow simple hygiene practices such as:
- regularly washing hands
- avoiding sharing drinks or food
- coughing or sneezing into elbow, or a tissue which should be discarded immediately
- filling water bottles from bubblers rather than using the bubbler directly.

All schools are receiving additional cleaning and cleaning supplies. Adults (teachers, support staff and parents) must maintain 1.5m physical distance from each other. The protocol for Covid-19 cases includes:
- Contact tracing to identify all close contacts to a confirmed case. In some instances, this may require closing the school while the contact tracing process is completed;
- Communication with parents advising them whether their child has been in close contact with a confirmed case;
- Thorough cleaning of the school site to ensure the environment is clean and safe prior to the school resuming onsite learning.

- **New Zealand**
  In New Zealand, a swift government response has meant that Covid-19 is almost entirely eradicated, and schools are now operating without the need for transmission mitigation measures. However, some measures are noteworthy:
  - Before Covid-19, the Ministry of Education already had existing Pandemic Planning Guidelines (developed in 2009 and 2011) for the education sector;
  - Free flu vaccinations have been provided by the Ministry of Education for the education workforce.

  There is a protocol in place in case of a confirmed or probable Covid-19 case in a school

- **Taiwan**
  In Taiwan, schools never officially closed but instead reopened on 25 February after extending the winter holidays by 10 days. Universities reopened on 2 March. Swift action was taken before reopening to set up mitigation measures which included disinfecting classrooms, distributing medical supplies, and creating

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guidelines for schools with confirmed cases. Schools started doing temperature checks, and some sports were temporarily suspended to avoid body contact. Guidelines in the event of confirmed cases:

For K-9:

- If one person in a class – student or teacher - is confirmed to have Covid-19, the class will be suspended for 14 days
- If 2 or more cases are confirmed in a school, it will be closed for 14 days
- If one third of schools in a town/district are shut due to the virus, all others will be closed in that area too.

For K9 and above (high schools, colleges and universities):

- If one person in a class – student or teacher - is confirmed to have Covid-19, the school will be closed for 14 days.

- **South Korea**

  In South Korea, some schools reopened but then closed again whilst others had been on the brink of reopening but then remained closed as there was a second wave of infections. A total of 838 schools reversed the decision to reopen and instead continued remote learning.

  Schools reopened with precautions that included temperature checks, face masks and social distancing as well as plastic barriers between desks.

Europe

- **The Netherlands**

  In the Netherlands, one school in the Hague, De Springbok closed again after one teacher tested positive for Covid-19.

Latin America

- **Uruguay**

  The government opted to start with a partial reopening – schools are open for three hours a day, four days a week, leaving Wednesday for cleaning and disinfecting the school. Attendance is voluntary. The Ministry of Education

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guidelines for protecting civil servants as schools reopen feature 17 key areas, including:

- a protocol for vulnerable individuals (defined as those with health conditions or over the age of 60);
- provision of a flu vaccination for education workers, students under 5 years old and older students with health conditions;
- testing of education staff in cities and areas where the virus has been found;
- the mandatory use of facemasks on the way to and at work, provided for staff;
- hygiene and cleaning requirements; inter alia.

Policy for Safe Re-Openings Developed by Unions

Many unions have developed their own policy guidelines to ensure the safety of staff and students for school reopenings. This section provides a glimpse of some of the work being done by multiple Education International member organisations across the world to take the lead by producing policy proposals, often in collaboration with others - informed by health experts or as joint proposals with other education and non-education unions. The proposals are used in social dialogue with government or made available to union representatives and members to use at the school, local or district level to demand occupational safety.

Africa

- **Uganda**
  The Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU) called for **minimum safety conditions to be met** before school reopened. These included the provision of temperature checks, assured water supplies in all schools, availability of full-time health professionals in all schools, availability of reliable transport to handle emergencies and suspected cases, and the establishment of Covid-19 management committees in schools to address concerns, inter alia.

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Arab Countries

- **Bahrain**
  The Bahrain Teachers' Association (BTA) has proposed 7 measures for the safe reopening of schools and education institutions. They suggested policy measures include, inter alia, enabling social distancing by cancelling unnecessary activities such as morning queues or team sports and restructuring classrooms, teachers' and administrators' rooms; providing and deploying protection measures such as masks, hand washing gels, and sterilisers; and introducing advanced first aid kits and body heat screening services in education institutions.

Asia-Pacific

- **Malaysia**
  The National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) prepared their own policy guidelines for post-Covid schooling informed by **a needs analysis survey, input from an expert group and a usability assessment** including experts and administrators. The survey of NUTP members, teachers, administrators and other education stakeholders showed that 97% felt that special attention should be paid to ensuring safe physical facilities including safe table layout and ventilation, as well as limiting class sizes to 35 students. Eighty-five percent of respondents agreed that breaks should be implemented in rotation to ensure physical distancing at the canteen and other common areas.

Europe

- **France**
  The Fédération syndicale unitaire (FSU) and Syndicat national des enseignements de second degré (SNES-FSU) **acted collectively** in developing protocols for the reopening of schools.

- **Spain**
  Federación de Enseñanza CC.OO. (FECCOO) outlined 10 key measures that should be taken to ensure student and teacher safety during university entrance exams, taken by nearly 300,000 students. Among other things, they call for examination centres to be risk assessed and only used if the site meets the minimum conditions to ensure the health and safety of all involved.

- **The United Kingdom**

  Whilst the government in the UK has said that social distancing in primary schools is not necessary, the National Education Union (NEU) believes that schools should maintain social distancing, as in their view, the science does not yet show that children do *not* transmit the virus. Therefore, the union, in collaboration with multisectoral unions GMB, Unison and Unite, has produced a checklist for safely reopening primary schools. The checklist aims to support school leaders to meet their duties to assess risks and take steps to remove or control them. The checklist covers **12 key areas which are deemed necessary conditions for safe opening**. These include a health and safety check of the building, cleaning and hygiene arrangements, safe movement around the school among other things.

Latin America

- **Chile**

  The Colegio de Profesores de Chile (CPC) is **engaging with medical specialists** - they are in permanent dialogue with the Medical Association, and they have met with the Chilean Paediatric Society, a group of representatives from health unions advising on research of children and adolescents (la "Mesa Covid-19 niños, niñas y adolescentes"), and foreign epidemiologists such as Ernesto Rednik. This has led to the **development of proposed health and safety guidelines**. For instance:
  - Personal hygiene resources must be available, such as masks, gloves and alcohol gel;
  - There must be adequate planning and investment to make institutions safe;
  - Every educational unit must have a fully equipped first aid room staffed with professionals to attend to students, teachers and ESP;
  - All classrooms must be arranged to guarantee social distancing;
  - All educational establishments must have management protocols and risk assessments before reopening.

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North America and the Caribbean

- **The United States**
  The American Federation of Teachers developed a blueprint for safely reopening schools. The guidance includes a demand for physical distancing until the number of new cases declines for at least 14 days and a call for developing infrastructure to test, trace and isolate new cases.
  The National Education Association also issued All Hands on Deck: Initial Guidance Regarding Reopening School Buildings. It is based on four basic principles: health expertise, educator voice, access to protection and leading with equity. Demands include that all students and educators have continuously funded access to PPE and other disinfecting supplies.

Union Action to Support Safe Reopenings

This section provides a snapshot of some of the actions taken directly by Education International member organisations from different regions to enhance the health and safety of education communities. Multiple unions are going beyond making demands of the government and are taking action to protect both their members and students where government policy is falling short.

Africa

- **Liberia**
  The National Teachers' Association of Liberia (NTAL) has donated over $2000 worth of personal protective equipment to education workers, including faucet buckets, cleaning products, sanitisers and soaps. The donation aims to create awareness about the virus and encourage members to take hand washing and hygiene practices seriously.

- **Ghana**
  The University Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG) held a virtual seminar for members prior to universities reopening on 15 June. The union's President urged

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lecturers to support management to implement health and safety measures – for example ensuring that no students or staff enter lecture halls without face masks.

Asia-Pacific

- **Indonesia**
  The Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia (PGRI) has set up crisis centres to assist teachers in marginalised areas to respond to Covid-19. It has also raised donations and **distributed sanitary and hygienic kits** to communities in need.

- **Nepal**
  The Nepal Teachers' Association has organised workshops to provide teachers with information on Covid-19. At the first workshop in early March, members were informed about the virus by a medical expert and discussed the role that teachers and union activists should play to keep their communities safe.

- **Philippines**
  The Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) has introduced **a union hotline** to "expose the grave perils" to the lives of teachers and education employees who have returned to work. The "Bantay Balik-Trabaho" hotline enables education workers who have returned to work to tell ACT and get support from the union if they have been forced back to work and had their health endangered.
  In addition, ACT Teachers partylist representative France Castro has **filed a bill mandating health professionals in all schools**.

Europe

- **Finland**
  Opetusalan Ammattijärjestö (OAJ) have argued that the Ministry of Education and Culture's instructions for reopening early childhood institutions were in many respects, confusing, open to interpretation and difficult to implement. The union have therefore outlined guidelines to support union safety representatives to defend education worker' safety by ensuring employers implement 9 key measures.

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- **Malta**
  The Malta Union of Teachers (MUT) has been providing informative webinars for its members, supporting those involved in disputes or affected by directives in relation to the reopening of schools.

- **The United Kingdom**
  The NEU has also produced guidance for NEU members who are vulnerable or live with vulnerable people. The guidance provides advice for members who want to ensure that their employers have fulfilled their legal obligations to conduct a risk assessment relating to every individual member of staff and their personal health circumstances.
  As part of its guidance and support to members, NASUWT has issued a Self-Audit Checklist to enable members to consider their own position in relation to their employers' plans for wider opening members as well as a Health and Safety Checklist to be used when considering reopening schools.

Latin America

- **Uruguay**
  FUM-TEP members have taken action to support vulnerable students' health by distributing food trays. To date, they have distributed over 70 thousand food packages.

North America and Caribbean

- **Mexico**
  The Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (SNTE) launched a media campaign to educate teachers and school communities about coronavirus and provide advice on how to stay safe. Concerned about the safety of its female members during lockdown, it has also provided information for members to access victim support services in the case of gender-based violence.

Impact on Teachers and Students after Schools Reopened

There is currently only emerging evidence of the impact of health and safety measures on staff and students. However, many unions have already expressed concern that teacher and ESP working conditions are likely to be negatively affected by the health and safety measures put in place.

- **The Netherlands**
  AOb conducted a survey of secondary school teachers. Since schools were partially reopened on 2 June, two thirds of teachers surveyed said that they were teaching both onsite and online and 55% noted that they their workload had increased. Meanwhile, 62% of teachers surveyed thought that students were not adhering to the 1.5 metre social distancing rule at school.

- **Chile**
  In Chile, teachers are performing essential tasks to support vulnerable students such as the distribution of food. However, it has come to the union's attention that some employers are also **forcing education workers to ask staff to go carry out additional non-essential tasks**, in violation of article 84 of the National Labour Law. In response, the CPC called for a "Huelga Sanitaria" (health strike), advising teachers to refuse to carry out tasks which put their safety at risk.

- **Argentina**
  CTERA reported that teachers' workload has increased due to teleworking and teachers' work on the frontline at school canteens.

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Concluding Remarks

This living document shows the scope of different policy approaches taken by governments and unions in efforts to enable education institutions to reopen safely. Without further research it is not yet possible to say which approaches are most effective or appropriate in which contexts. However, as there is not yet adequate evidence to show that children do not spread the virus, it is clear that robust measures must be taken to mitigate risks of transmission as education institutions reopen. The health and safety of school communities must be a priority.

In many low-income contexts, social distancing and hygienic practices are challenging due to large class sizes, limited classroom space and limited access to water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. However, the health and safety of education communities should not be compromised. Education financing must be increased to facilitate the implementation of mitigation measures. However, where mitigation measures are impossible to implement, reopening must only be considered when the virus is contained enough to ensure that reopening would not put the health and safety of education communities at risk. In addition, more research is necessary to understand the impact of school closures on student health and safety, and further mitigation measures (such as distribution of food and support services) must be implemented to protect students whilst not in school.

Further Reading and Resources

- The International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, UNESCO & ILO, Supporting Teachers in Back-to-school Efforts: A Toolkit for School Leaders
- UNESCO, UNCF, World Bank, World Food Program, Framework for Reopening Schools
- International Labour Organisation, 2020, A 10 Step Tool for a Safe and Healthy Return to Work in Times of Covid-19
- Learning Policy Institute, Reopening Schools in the Context of COVID-1: Health and Safety Guidelines from Other Countries, (policy examples from China, Denmark, Norway, Singapore, Taiwan)
- UNICEF, WHO & IFRC, IASC Guidance on Covid-19 Prevention and Control in Schools
- World Health Organization, WASH and Covid-19

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MAKE EQUITY A TOP PRIORITY

Equity is front and centre of all transition plans, recognising that the impact of the pandemic is not equal and that already vulnerable students and education workers have been and may continue to be the most affected. A support structure is put in place for all vulnerable students and staff, for those who are enduring increased hardship and for students who have not been able to participate in online or home-based learning. A strategy is developed for addressing possible increases in drop-out rates, paying particular attention to girls and women, and those at risk of child labour, early child-marriages and sexual abuse or trafficking.

Introduction

The return to school will not be an immediate return to normal. Because of the need to respect social distancing measures, the transition to onsite education is likely to be gradual and involve a blend of onsite and remote teaching and learning, which will prolong and deepen structures of inequity. In this context, the third pillar of the Education International Guidance on Reopening Schools and Education Institutions stresses the need for equity to be 'front and centre of all transition plans' in dialogues between Governments, educators and their unions.

The pandemic has not *caused* inequities in education, but rather **it has greatly deepened existing inequities and has made them more visible.** The UNESCO global interactive map on school closures shows that up to 194 countries introduced country-wide or localised school closures affecting approximately 1.6 billion learners (over 90% of the global student population). The closure of schools and other educational institutions in response to the pandemic has shone a spotlight on what UNESCO has referred to as a global crisis for teaching and learning at a time when countries have been forced to rely on distance teaching and learning:

- 43 % (706 million learners) have no household internet access;
- Half of the total number of learners kept out of school by the closures – some 826 million students – do not have access to a household computer;
- 56 million learners live in locations that are not served by mobile networks, so cannot use mobile phones to access information or to connect with their teachers or with peers;
- At least 63 million primary and secondary teachers have been affected by school closures.
- The poorest households have no access to TV and radio (UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and Education).

When surveyed about the impact of Covid-19-related lockdown measures and educational closures in their countries, EI member organisations raised concerns about equity, including: the difficulties faced by students with special needs, who are normally supported by inclusive education specialists onsite, but are not receiving the same support with distance learning; the inequitable support that students of different socio-economic backgrounds receive at home; and the catastrophic impact on students who are usually entitled to school meals, but are unable to access this service during school closures. Educators are also concerned about reports of

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increasing domestic and sexual violence, the much higher risk of child labour, growing rates of early child marriage, no 'safe space' outside the family for young people who are 'different' in any way (LGBTI, with special needs, depression/psychological trauma, or AIDS). Covid-19 risks causing a 'lost generation' of mainly girls from the bottom of the economic pyramid who will not return to any form of education, and may starve, be trafficked or lose their future.

Teachers themselves are also falling sick through Covid-19 and face multiple tasks of supporting their families and communities and keeping track of their pupils.

Policy makers must work to *ensure equity* in and through education, and not just aim to achieve equality in their responses to the Covid-19 pandemic. Equity speaks to process – the *how* – or the actions taken that will lead to equality. Equality cannot be achieved without a clear focus on equity, which demands that the 'lost generation' of Covid-19 children must be found and rehabilitated into forms of education and a vocational future. By conducting so-called equity audits, public authorities can take a systematic approach to assessing the impact of both policy and practice and identify those most affected by the pandemic.

The following sections address each of the equity concerns raised by Education International member organisations and other education stakeholders, briefly setting out the main issues and highlighting education unions' responses in different countries and regions.

The Digital Divide

The access to electricity, internet, television or even radio is vastly inadequate for a significant percentage of lower-income populations in many countries. In the pandemic, this is also true for the necessity to keep social distance, for water and sanitation and for buying and wearing masks. Healthcare is often insufficient when family members get infected.

In the Covid-19 pandemic, this affects children of day-labourers, domestic workers and women led-households most. Distance-learning, home schooling and even access to computers, mobiles and, for some, to TV or radio are impossible for significant numbers of children in both low- and high-income countries.

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Africa

- **Gambia**
  The Gambia Teachers' Union has worked to support students unable to access a radio to participate in distance learning. In partnership with international organisations, the union distributed books and 510 solar radios to students.

Asia-Pacific

- **India**
  To overcome the lack of access to online education in their region, members of the Assam State Primary Teachers' Association (affiliated to EI member organisation All India Primary Teachers Federation) have prepared and recorded audio lessons. The lessons are sent to parents via messaging platforms or other available means. Teachers are also contacting parents by phone to inform them about the pandemic and containment measures.

- **Nepal**
  The Nepal Teachers' Association set up a toll-free phone line for students who are sitting exams, which is especially important for students who do not have internet access in their homes. The union has mobilised its membership for the implementation of its Every Home a School campaign. Union members from more than 750 local committees reach out to students to share lessons and raise awareness about Covid-19.

Europe

- **Austria, Germany and Switzerland**
  Education International members in the three countries have issued a joint statement to raise concerns over the digital deficit exposed by Covid-19, as part of their advocacy efforts for a better digital infrastructure in their respective education systems.

- **Italy**

  Italian education union Federazione Lavoratori della Conoscenza-CGIL published a Manifesto for Inclusive Education during the Covid-19 school closures, calling for immediate measures to address the issue of unequal access to distance education.

- **Poland**

  In March, ZNP launched an online campaign calling for equal access to education. The union appealed to the government to urgently provide free internet for students and teachers working remotely.

North America and the Caribbean

- **The United States**

  To ensure that students in communities with high poverty rates had access to education during the lockdowns, members of the American Federation of Teachers have set up programmes to distribute books and provide wireless access points.

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Social Divisions

Implicit in the promise of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all', is the recognition that structural inequalities still prevent millions of children from enjoying their human right to education. Social characteristics including disability, economic or class status, ethnicity, gender, nationality, race, religion, sexual identity, sexuality can and do form the basis of structural inequalities and forms of discrimination.

The most affected children are those whose social location, by virtue of their gender, race and class – or any intersection of their social characteristics – makes them especially vulnerable to disadvantage, exclusion, violence or discrimination. Lack of equity within education has deepened in the crisis triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic, requiring urgent action by all stakeholders.

Disabilities and Students with Special Needs

While many students struggle to cope with distance learning during the Covid-19 school closures, students with special needs have been particularly affected. Lockdowns have meant that educators and support staff have struggled to work with these students, some of whom cannot cope with online education or study independently.

According to the 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report, several solutions have been piloted in some countries, for instance small classes with specialised teachers wearing protective equipment or video-conferencing to teach Braille translation. However, in some countries, inclusive education and the commitment to special needs students have been scaled back during the pandemic, with serious consequences for their future.

During the impending economic crisis, there is a high risk of governments overlooking students with disabilities and special needs and not prioritising investments in the specialised teachers and education support personnel they require.

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Europe

- **Norway**
Norway was one of the countries where schools were kept open upon request for some vulnerable students, including students with disabilities and special educational needs. Students who were not admitted, received adapted online education. Utdanningsforbundet expressed great concern for these students and advocated for a "corona package" with additional resources for vulnerable children. They also issued a podcast "Corona and the Vulnerable Children" and actively promoted the services of the National Centre for Special Needs Education (Statped) which established a corona chat room where advisors were available, in addition to a resource bank for special needs online education.

- **The United Kingdom**
Recognising the barriers and challenges faced by members with disabilities, the University and College Union issued specific advice on Corona Virus and Disability.

North America and the Caribbean

- **The United States**
With guidance and support from the Houston Federation of Teachers (affiliated to EI member organisation the American Federation of Teachers - AFT) and the local school district, special education professionals in the Houston Independent School District have initiated an outreach action to help train parents on supporting their children at home while schools are closed. In addition, the AFT website for sharing resources, Share my Lesson, has a dedicated section on supporting students with disabilities during the pandemic.

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Indigeneity

Indigenous communities were impacted by significant inequities before Covid-19, facing the consequences of climate change and various forms of encroachment on their rights to land, culture and language. The pandemic has made a difficult situation worse, with a lack of mother-tongue information, sanitation and healthcare exposing indigenous communities to a high risk of infection.

In terms of education, indigenous communities have had to deal with a lack of opportunities, limited access to schools, to mother-tongue education, culturally experienced teachers and education materials that are relevant to and connected with the lives of students.

North America and the Caribbean

- **Mexico**
  As part of its information campaign around the Covid-19 health crisis, the Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación has produced videos in indigenous languages (Maya, Rarámuri, Náhuatl) to help provide indigenous communities with the information they need to protect themselves against the virus.

Gender

Although widely acknowledged and discussed over the last three months in relation to the Covid-19 crisis – by the World Health Organisation, the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the European Union - the gendered impacts of a health emergency are not new, and have been highlighted by academics and civil society organisations for some time.

Unpaid care work undertaken by women and girls has been described as a *'shock absorber'* during times of crisis, when they face an increase in the already disproportionate care burden they shoulder. This naturally has an impact on the ability to learn, teach or conduct research.

As a female dominated profession, education has been disproportionately affected by the gendered impact of the pandemic. Female educators at all levels report being overloaded with work during the crisis. For instance, during a meeting of gender, equity and equality officers of Education International members in Latin America

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participants discussed the increased workload women educators face. In addition to remote teaching, which requires a greater number of working hours, women educators must also deal with the domestic and care burdens exacerbated by the lockdowns. In higher education, new data shows that submissions to peer-reviewed journals by female academics have fallen sharply during the lockdown.

Crises and disasters worsen pre-existing gender inequality and power imbalances between men and women, boys, and girls. Tensions within a household increase with prolonged lockdowns and the consequent economic difficulties faced by millions of families. Emerging data shows that violence against women and girls – especially domestic violence – has increased exponentially in all regions of the world, prompting the UN Secretary General – Antonio Guterres to call on policymakers to pay close attention to 'the horrifying global surge in domestic violence'. Women and girls find themselves isolated from people and resources they might otherwise turn to for help, including schools, and with few opportunities to get away from their abusers.

According to the United Nations Development Programme, experiences in Sierra Leone during and after the 2014 Ebola crisis show that girls face an especially high risk, since they are disproportionately burdened with domestic care work in the context of lockdowns, and vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse. Recent reports from Kenya are of abnormally high numbers of teenage pregnancies in one district during the Covid-19 lockdown. Observers expect thousands of girls to never return to school in the post-Covid-19 'new normal'.

Africa

- **Gambia**
  The Gambia Teachers' Union has mounted a campaign to raise awareness of the importance of keeping girls in education and preventing gender-based violence. The union has undertaken media outreach via radio to encourage parents to neither marry girls off nor send them out to engage in income-generating activities. The union has encouraged parents to ensure that girls participate in distance learning. In addition, union representatives and staff recorded radio messages calling on parents and communities to be "vigilant, observant and believe any children who reports sexual violence or abuse". They further informed communities about a telephone hotline to report cases of sexual violence or abuse.

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Europe

- **The United Kingdom**

  The University and College Union supported members through a briefing on equality issues during Covid-19, aimed to provide members with information about their rights and responsibilities in an exceptional time. The union also made a submission to a parliamentary inquiry into the unequal impact of Covid-19, underlining the disproportionate impact of caring duties on the ability to conduct research as well as live teaching, participate in meetings, and cover other duties.

Latin America

- **Chile**

  Colegio de Profesores issued a statement **-** Emergency Education Plan to Address the Health Crisis - Proposals of the Chilean College of Teachers, National Directory - with specific requests on women and teaching:

  Teaching is undeniably a female-dominated profession. Today, during the quarantine, there is a high number of women teachers facing double burdens in their homes. In view of this, we demand:
  - a) *To make visible the domestic, reproductive and/or care work of female teachers in their homes. This factor should be taken into account when assigning work responsibilities.*
  - b) *To promote feminist education, with a focus on the imperative to share childcare responsibilities and domestic work, through an education plan that is distributed to schools and families together with hygiene protocols.*
  - c) *That employers avoid prejudice, warnings, or threats in the event that a teacher is unable to fulfil her professional work because of her reproductive and care responsibilities.*

- **Uruguay**

  Education unions FUM-TEP and FeNaPes joined the action of the Secretariat for Gender, Equity and Sexual Diversity of PIT-CNT. Together they collected and distributed solidarity baskets to three cooperatives consisting almost entirely of women heads of household with dependent children and sex workers.

Poverty

Children from disadvantaged families faced reduced access to food during the closures in countries where they are entitled to at least one meal per day at school (such as South Africa and England).

Children from poor households – especially those with no income - are also especially vulnerable to child labour and permanent school dropout in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. On the World Day Against Child Labour (12 June 2020), Education International launched a report documenting best practice examples identified through its projects against child labour. Implemented over several years in communities in 13 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America, the projects provide lessons that are essential to future efforts to ensure all children are in school, not in work.

Union actions in support of students

Many unions have mobilised to help vulnerable students during school closures by preparing and delivering meals. For example, meal distribution programmes have been set up by union members of FeNaPes in Honduras and the American Federation of Teachers in the United States.

Union actions in support of the wider community

During the crisis, educators have not limited themselves to supporting colleagues and students but have shown great solidarity with their communities at large. Many unions have set up solidarity funds, donating wages in order to provide underprivileged families with food packages, hygiene products and personal protective equipment. SINTERO in Brazil, the Federación Colombiana de Trabajadores de la Educación, the Iraqi Teachers Union and the All India Primary Teachers Federation are just a few of the unions that have mobilised to help the most vulnerable.

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Refugees

The pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on refugees. Crowded refugee camps or small living spaces in cities often do not allow for the implementation of the recommended preventative measures to limit the risk of infection. In terms of education, even before the pandemic refugees had limited opportunities. Covid-19 has made the situation worse, widening existing inequalities.

Arab Countries

- **Lebanon**
  As schools in Lebanon closed due to the pandemic, the Ministry of Education introduced distance learning without making special provisions for the thousands of refugee students present in the country. To fill this void, education unions have stepped up their efforts to ensure that the digital gap is not keeping refugee students from learning. Thus, union members volunteered to prepare televised classes, support parents over the phone, and worked to provide assignments, guidance, and feedback to Syrian refugee children.

LGBTI

LGBTI people may be particularly vulnerable during the pandemic. As lockdowns were put in place in many countries, many LGBTI youth became confined in hostile environments and exposed to physical and emotional violence and abuse. With schools closing, many have been deprived of safe spaces and the opportunity to receive support from sympathetic teachers and peers. This difficult situation can lead to some leaving home, which might result in educational drop-out and a precarious life.

North America and the Caribbean

- **The United States**
  The National Education Association has teamed up with civil society partners to develop a checklist and resources to help teachers support LGBTI students during the school closures.

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Concluding Remarks

All of the data gathered and analysed so far make it abundantly clear that responses that only or mainly rely on technology to provide teaching and learning in times of crisis are inadequate to provide learning continuity for the most marginalised and vulnerable children.

In their dialogues with Governments, education unions can highlight the following key actions that can be taken to ensure policies address the needs and vulnerabilities of the most marginalised and disadvantaged teachers and learners:

- **Conduct equity audits and provide tailored support**
  As schools reopen, it is essential to identify those students who were not able to access distance education during the school closures and help their transition back to education. Governments should conduct equity audits in order to map the impact of the school closures on students, particularly in marginalised groups, and ensure tailored support measures for those affected.

- **Ensure policies are designed to achieve equitable results**
  Proposed policies must be tested for implicit bias:
  1) Does the policy consider the differing roles and experiences of men, women, and other social groups viewed through an intersectional lens?
  2) Once implemented, will the policy maintain the status quo or promote a transformation of current inequities?

- **Apply the lessons learned from past experiences and the use of low-tech solutions**
  Explore additional solutions for more inclusive forms of distance education, taking into account lessons from previous prolonged school closures, such as the Ebola crisis of 2014, when a school programme in a district of Sierra Leone was re-designed for child-friendly radio.

Further Reading and Resources

World Inequality Database in Education, hosted by the Global Education Monitoring Report

Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and Education: All Means All

Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Gender Report: Building Bridges for Gender Equality

Global Education Monitoring Report 2018: Gender Report: Meeting our Commitments to Gender Equality in Education

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SUPPORT PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING AND RECOVERY

Systems are in place to support the wellbeing and mental health of children, students and education staff, including through dedicated psychosocial support and counselling. In addition to the pandemic causing ongoing stress and anxiety, many children, students and education staff will also find it difficult to return to school and adapt to new routines as well as restrictions to social interaction. Dedicated support is available to those who may have suffered bereavement, abuse, violence, or other emotional trauma.

Introduction

In general, this crisis has further highlighted pre-existing problems. The issue of the wellbeing of education staff and students was given relatively little attention before the crisis, both by the authorities and the unions, for several reasons:

- Wellbeing is a complex, qualitative and subjective issue;
- Teachers, who are adults with the task of supervising children, may be seen as people with little vulnerability to psychosocial risks;
- Unions tend to focus on working conditions and the physical aspects of health and safety;
- Wellbeing and psychological issues are very individual issues, whereas unions are used to focusing on issues that affect all workers the same way;
- The mechanisms to be put in place to ensure the wellbeing of education personnel and students require many well-trained staff, which is costly.

Not surprisingly, in the context of the pandemic, few countries paid attention to the psychological consequences of the crisis and attempted to address them. Sanitary measures, organisational and social aspects often came first. It should be noted that in a majority of countries in Africa, psychological support has never been mentioned as a priority during the crisis, neither by the authorities nor by the unions.

Wellbeing in Education International Policy

Education International's World Congress in 2019 passed a resolution on *Teacher and Education Support Personnel's Mental Health* Asserting the centrality of health and wellbeing of educators, the resolution argues that it is being negatively impacted by a number of factors, including increasingly precarious terms of employment, poor working conditions, excessive workload demands and other adverse management practices, cuts in funding and the introduction of austerity policies.

The resolution further asserts that "*all teachers, education support personnel and students should be entitled to support for their mental health and wellbeing, and encouraged to access such support without criticism, penalty or stigma*", making it highly relevant in the context of Covid-19.

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Educator Wellbeing

Few studies have analysed how education personnel and/or students have been psychologically affected by the pandemic, in part due to the sudden and recent onset of the crisis. The school closures have also contributed to blurring the line between professional and private life, which may make it difficult to identify and isolate job-related stress.

Education unions have reported that teachers and education support personnel have experienced stress relating to the risk of illness, lack of information on the disease, and the impact of the crisis on family members and their communities. While working from home, many educators have also had to support the home-based learning of their own children and manage domestic and care work, particularly female educators.

In addition to this, the school closures and the sudden shift to distance education have all generated great levels of job-related stress for educators:

- Stress brought on by the economic and social uncertainty relating to job loss or unpaid salaries (especially for teachers in the private sector, contract teachers, and refugees)
- Stress relating to delivering online education, including:
  - Lack of training, skills, and support
  - Inadequate equipment and internet access
  - Difficulties in reaching some students
  - Difficulties in establishing the same interaction as in the classroom
- Stress relating to going back to school
  - Lack of clarity on conditions for reopening schools
  - Insufficient health and safety measures, including shortages of necessary supplies
  - Concerns about new conditions not allowing for normal classes
- Stress relating to workload and pressure from headmasters/ministers
  - Additional workload related to the creation of online content
  - Additional workload related to new directives and expectations.

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Asia-Pacific

- **New-Zealand**
  TEU has carried out a survey on educators' wellbeing. The survey concludes:
  High workloads and stress impact on our daily lives, our wellbeing, on our whānau, and they have health and safety implications. Let's stand together and put an end to excessive workloads.
  The full report of the June survey is available here.

Europe

- **The Netherlands**
  AOb carried out a survey on the impact of Covid-19 on members which highlighted high workloads.

- **Norway**
  Utdanningsforbundet Norway carried out a survey among its membership to understand the impact of the exceptional arrangements on school leaders. A great majority of respondents reported an increase in workload: 39% had had a significant increase, while another 40% reported having had somewhat more work due to the closures and the reopening of schools. Resources emerged as a principal area of concern: 6 in 10 school leaders reported not having had any extra resources to support them in the reopening and most of the reported additional resources were dedicated to the enhanced cleaning practices required.

Latin America

- **Argentina**
  CTERA highlighted the issue of workload in an agreement with authorities signed on June 4th 2020:
  Teachers will carry out their activities under the organising criterion of respecting a working time equivalent to the hourly load that determines the position and/or the hourly load for which they have been appointed, without having to overload it by virtue of the exceptionality of the pedagogical work format imposed by the current circumstances.

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- **Chile**

  Colegio de Profesores published a document entitled Emergency Education Plan to Face the Health Crisis: Proposals of the Colegio de Profesores Chile, National Directory which describes the working conditions for teachers at home during lockdown:

  Establish as a central criterion of the teaching work in the period of the pandemic, the provision of pedagogical/emotional support to our students and do not prioritise curricular coverage or qualifications. Homes have become multi-functional during the confinement: they are the space where one lives, eats, works, cohabitates and also collapses, not to mention the diverse and complex degrees of conflict within Chilean homes (unemployment, violence, alcoholism, illnesses, etc). Virtual platforms do not address the real problems of students and their families at this time and do not consider real situations that are experienced in many homes: job uncertainty, overcrowding, domestic violence, depression, different learning abilities, addictions, to name just a few. In short, there are no material or psychological conditions to develop curricular coverage and qualifications.

- **Costa Rica**

  ANDE published a statement entitled "*Ministry Does not Respect Working Hours during the Distance Education Process*".

North America and the Caribbean

- **Canada**

  CTF is currently analysing nearly 18,000 responses from a pan-Canadian teacher survey that seeks to better understand the impact of Covid-19 on educators and students, while school buildings in each province and territory have been closed. One of the areas covered is wellbeing and equity. The union has stated that student mental health needs to be a priority when schools reopen.

  The Alberta Teachers' Association, a member of CTF Canada, reports *compassion fatigue* among their members. More than 8,000 members responded to their survey on the impact of the pandemic, of whom 70% reported feeling exhausted, 35% reported having taken on some of the trauma of their students, and 75% said they didn't have the same connection with their students as before the pandemic. Wellbeing is one of three principal concerns of teachers in Alberta.

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Student Wellbeing

The wellbeing of educators is closely connected to that of students and the past months have been hard on many. As is the case for educators, boundaries between home and school are blurred and remote learning has proven difficult for many. In addition to obstacles related to access to technology and internet, students may struggle to adapt to the new working methods and expectations, including a greater level of autonomy. Many home environments are far from conducive to studying and too many students lack supportive adults in their lives.

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Europe

- **Ireland**
  INTO published on its website an article entitled "Covid-related Support for Vulnerable Pupils". The article mentions a recent study produced by the National Educational Psychological Service (May 2020) called The Wellbeing and Mental Health of Young People in Ireland: Factors for Consideration for the Leaving Certificate Examination in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Asia-Pacific

- **New-Zealand**
  NZEI published a series of blogs on the AKO website (*The Journal for Education Professionals*) to voice both educators' and pupils' experiences during the Covid-19 crisis. One article called Counting the Friendly Frogs: Welcoming Children back to Early Learning Centres mentions that:
  Alongside the increased handwashing and cleaning, both kindergartens have focused on the wellbeing of children and staff.

North America and the Caribbean

- **Canada**
  The Alberta Teachers' Association survey shows that a majority of teachers are concerned about the long-term effects on student motivation and wellbeing: 79% reported a decline in the overall readiness to learn, 77% reported a decline in ability to focus, and 67% reported a decline in the number of students checking in daily.

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Union Action to Provide Psychological Support

Europe

- **Ireland**
  INTO published an article entitled Self-Care Tips for Your Body, Mind and Spirit which lists simple and practical ways for educators to begin practicing self-care.

- **Romania**
  FLSI is supporting members by facilitating their access to free professional counselling, offered by an association and its network of qualified psychologists and psychotherapists.

- **Sweden**
  Lärarförbundet expanded the opening hours of their membership service, enabling them to answer nearly double the number of calls from union members. In the first few months, most calls concerned pandemic-related counselling, ranging from specific questions about Covid-19 to the need to talk about concerns. Many were supported to establish a good dialogue with employers. If needed, callers were put in touch with workplace representatives and local union branches for additional support.

  Through a dedicated Covid-19 webpage, Lärarförbundet provided information on the right to access free counselling, a service available to members who have joined the insurance scheme of the union. Members can call anonymously and the people who answer their calls are social workers, psychologists and family counsellors.

  Another main feature of the union's response has been promoting constant risk assessment and risk management at each workplace for which the employer is responsible according to existing legislation. Lärarförbundet has demanded that these risk assessments address the anxiety experienced by educators and students.

- **The United Kingdom**
  NEU produced a document called 10 Points on how to Protect Staff Mental Health during the Covid-19 Crisis which features concrete ways of finding support.

  NASUWT published Mental Health Advice for Teachers Working from Home.

Latin America

- **Colombia**
  FECODE launched a campaign called Care Economy, Gender and Domestic Violence and published a leaflet.

- **Costa Rica**
  ANDE published a series of documents on a dedicated section on their website - Emotional Health COVID-19. They also took several concrete initiatives to provide psychological support to education staff:
  - Webinars on mental health, such as one focusing on burnout syndrome
  - A phone number to call "if you wish to receive psychological and social support, for situations generated by Covid-19".

North America and the Caribbean

- **The United States**
  AFT United States, together with the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, published a document entitled Helpful Information and Tips for Dealing with Covid-19 featuring many video, blog and podcast resources.

  NEA has developed a website to support members through the Covid-19 crisis. The website features a section with guidelines on mental health and wellbeing.

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Unions Advocating for Psychological Support

Africa

- **Gabon**
  SENA included the following item in the list of requests to authorities for school reopening:
  Provision of psychologists to take care of students and teachers who are victims at various levels of the effects of Covid-19.

- **South Africa**
  SADTU, NAPTOSA and NATU issued a Joint Media Statement by Education Teachers Union and National Governing Body Associations on the Readiness of Schools to Reopen on June 7th 2020, including the following request:
  A coherent employee and learner wellness plan that includes but not limited to Psychosocial Support Plan services.

  The majority of teachers are not provided psychological support; such services are oftentimes only available in wealthy schools. With South Africa experiencing a surge in the number of infections, social workers are focusing on providing psychosocial support to communities in the most affected areas.
  SADTU issued a Media Statement in Anticipation of the Reopening of Schools and Colleges in the Context of Alert4 Level of the Virus on 24 April 2020, highlighting the following:

  The availability of psychosocial services is of paramount importance to help learning institutions to build resilience to defeat the fear brought by the virus. Anxiety can be a learning barrier and the psychosocial services must help our institutions to focus on staying alive and developing a culture of compassion, empathy, and kindness. This is over and above what will be taught by the teachers/lecturers.

  SADTU has a psychosocial wellness programme that provides assistance to union members.

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Asia Pacific

- **India**
  AIPTF issued An Appeal by AIPTF to the Government of India to Protect the Rights of Children and Teachers during the Covid-19 Pandemic on 9 June 2020, requesting trainings for teachers on psychological support:

  Capacities of teachers need to be built not only to enable them to deliver education in these difficult times, but also to ensure the physical and mental wellbeing of children.

Europe

- **France**
  UNSA-Education mentioned psychological support as a priority at the very beginning of the crisis:

  UNSA Education requested the full mobilisation of the MGEN Prevention, Assistance, Monitoring (PAS) network to help colleagues during this period of containment. In complete confidentiality, the PAS networks offer interviews with a psychologist.

- **Portugal**
  FENPROF mentioned the need for psychological support in an article published on 16 April 2020 - The Current Public Health Situation Aggravates Pupils and Can Trigger Inequalities:

  FENPROF is also concerned about the psychological problems of parents/guardians of these students. These adults also need answers and permanent monitoring. They should be provided with psychological support, even at a distance.

  In a videoconference between FENPROF and the Ministry of Education, FENPROF made proposals on the organisation of the school year 2020/2021:

  In view of the negative situations experienced by many children during their confinement, it is necessary to provide them with psychosocial support.

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- **Sweden**
Lärarförbundet have focused their demands on lowering stress and the risk of burnout for teachers in grades 1-9 who have carried out a double workload, combining in-class teaching with distance education. Through written demands to the government and articles in national/local media and its own communication channels, Lärarförbundet has called for lower expectations on schools. Teaching during the crisis cannot be expected to deliver the same level of results and unreasonable expectations have been a major stress factor for teachers. Another demand concerns teachers in risk groups. The anxiety, including economic anxiety, connected to staying at home out of fear of falling ill at work is a psycho-social stress directly affecting wellbeing. As part of the advocacy effort, an online mobilisation was organised. In preparation, over 4,000 teachers voted for the most pressing issue on which the Minister of Education should act. The top three issues were:
  1. A more reasonable workload and an end to the double duty of teaching in school and remotely.
  2. Let teachers be teachers and provide the necessary support functions.
  3. Give teachers in risk groups the possibility to work from home or stay home with sick leave remuneration.

  During the online event, their questions were posed to the Minister and members brought signs with demands to hold up in the video call. The video recording of the call is available here (in Swedish).

Latin America

- **Brazil**
CNTE made a list of recommendations on psychological support - "Diretrizes para a educação escolar durante e pós-pandemia - Contribuições da CNTE"
(15 June 2020) - including:
The provision of psychosocial support to students, families, and workers in education, ensuring the physical and emotional wellbeing of the school community.

- **Honduras**
COLPROSUMAH released a "Strategic Plan for the Safe Return to the Country's Educational Centres" with a specific focus on psychological support:
Hire nursing and psychology staff to support and guide education workers in fulfilling their responsibilities.

- **Uruguay**
FUM-TEP signed a document with the Administración Nacional De Educación Pública on 19 May 2020 called Protocol for the Protection of National Public Education Officers due to the Spread of Covid-19. The document comprises the following measure:
Psycho-emotional support for civil servants - the administration's services with professionals in these areas will design a plan aimed at teaching and non-teaching civil servants, developing actions that will make it possible to support those who are reinstated, as well as those who are currently performing functions through the virtual world.

North America and Caribbean

- **Canada**
ETFO-CTF published ETFO Submission to the Ministry of Education on Ontario's Plan to Reopen Schools including recommendations on long-term psychological measures:
That funding be increased for educational assistants, psychologists, behavioural therapists, school support counsellors and speech-language pathologists.

- **The United States**
AFT published A Plan to Safely Reopen America's Schools and Communities with a specific paragraph on mental health support for students:
Our collective response to COVID-19 requires much more than limiting the spread of the virus. Prolonged physical distancing, death and illness in our families and communities, and economic dislocations, will leave many students and faculty with ongoing trauma and mental health issues, and it is incumbent on us to meet their needs now more than ever. We know from brain science that lack of psychological safety and the impact of adverse childhood experiences impede and even prevent learning. These impacts will be widespread. This will require additional staff with expertise in mental health, to provide

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trauma and sensitivity training for all staff, students, and parents. All staff should be trained on how to identify students struggling with trauma and refer them to mental health professionals for additional support.

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Government Measures to Support Student and Educator Wellbeing

Asia-Pacific

- **The Philippines**
  The Director of the Department of Education said:
  The first week of school will be spent on psychosocial interventions, mental health interventions (...) Given the limited number of psychologists to handle all schools in the region, teachers and resident nurses and medical doctors were given training modules in handling psychosocial intervention.

Europe

- **Sweden**
  The Swedish School Agency, together with the Public Employer's Association, Swedish Research Institute, Swedish EdTech and Save the Children have established a website - www.skolahemma.se (school at home). The website features a broad set of tools, seminars and advice. The National Public Health Agency has published materials geared towards children and young people, which are also useful for parents, teachers and adults in general.

Concluding Remarks

As the toll of the pandemic on students, teachers and education support personnel is becoming clearer, wellbeing is emerging as a priority for both education systems and education unions. Few education systems have national-level policies or support structures to promote and support wellbeing in the profession, leaving it to unions and/or individual educators to address.

Issues related to stress and excessive workload were high on many unions' agenda even before the pandemic. Now they will have to be addressed as a matter of urgency. Unions should include issues of wellbeing and mental health as an integral part of their demands, alongside other professional issues such as working conditions and wages.

At the same time, most education systems lack specialised staff, such as school nurses, counsellors, and other support roles, in part due to cuts in funding over the past decades. This means that there is little to minimal preparedness to support students who struggle. As schools and education institutions are returning to onsite teaching and learning, it is imperative to put in place structures for student support and wellbeing.

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TRUST THE PROFESSIONALISM OF EDUCATORS

Education authorities engage with educators and their unions to determine and assess the impact of the school closures on teaching, learning and student wellbeing. Any framework for transitioning back to onsite education is built on trust in the professionalism and pedagogical practice of the education workforce. Clarity on any assessment requirements is reached in dialogue with educators and their unions to ensure fair and equal treatment of all students and the continued professional autonomy of educators.

Introduction:
When Schools Close,
We Don't Stop Being Teachers

One of the main takeaways from all policy discussions centring on what has worked and been learned during the Covid-19 crisis is the fact that jurisdictions and systems that invested the tools, time and trust into educators before and during the crisis saw the greatest returns when it came to effectively transitioning into emergency distance education practices. In fact, survey after survey showed that the ability to navigate the "new normal" was not determined by any algorithmic or technological product but by the ability of teachers, who had the professional space and trust to make decisions about modalities, pacing, content and assessment that were done with the best interests of the student in mind. Conversely, those jurisdictions that attempted to use the crisis to centralise control and employ high-stakes assessment approaches of accountability saw massive push back from parents, students and educators alike. Of course, there will always be those that confuse testing for learning and thermometers for cures. Whether they are edu-businesses with commercial interests or rent-seeking politicians who are intent on imposing greater austerity, the crisis shines a light on real intentions in ways that expose opportunism in all its forms.

Teachers in this moment, in addition to taking care of their own families and communities, are focusing on the socioemotional wellbeing of their students and communities despite the trauma and emotional burnout that they themselves may experience. Trust and appreciation for teachers and education support professionals is at an all-time high. It is for this reason that teachers' unions are not only pressing the case that outmoded, punitive and narrow models of accountability and testing are ill-suited to meet the needs of the current moment, they are winning.

Educators have expressed great concerns throughout the crisis that the closure of schools meant that there were students who would not have access to distance education, educational resources at home or parents with the resources and capacity to find additional supports. Our members told us that many educators were particularly concerned about the most vulnerable groups and those who were already at a disadvantage in terms of learning. For this reason, we have borrowed the medical professions oath of "do no harm" as a guiding principle for our own professional ethics. That means assessments and testing regimes that educators deem to be harmful or unfair, whether that is because the material was not taught or for other reasons should be either postponed or redesigned in light of the current reality. Formative and

authentic assessments that are not high stakes but rather focused on helping students stay connected, successful and healthy during this crisis should be prioritised.

Education International Policy on Professionalism and Pedagogical Practice

Resolutions and Policy Papers

Both the EI Human and Trade Union Rights Policy Paper (2015) and EI's Education Policy Paper (2011) offer important policy guidance to inform discussions and plans on reopening schools. These documents were the result of long and comprehensive consultations among all EI member organisations to lay out our policies on a variety of issues and topics.

Paragraph IV.30 of the Education Policy Paper is directly relevant to Pillar 5: "The professional commitment of teachers and academics to the education and welfare of their students should be recognised and respected. Enhancing the professional autonomy and self-confidence of teachers in their professional and pedagogic judgements and through the assertion of their right to academic freedom and to undertake research should be given the highest priority by governments and employers as this is essential to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning."

Likewise, Paragraph 30 of the Rights Policy Paper reinforces this point: "All education workers have a right to professional autonomy and academic freedom. Education workers should be given a role in the selection and adaptation of teaching materials, the selection of textbooks and the development and application of teaching methods."

Unquestionably, Education International members understand that there are responsibilities that correspond to rights. This commitment underpins the adoption of both the Declaration on Professional Ethics and the Global Framework for Professional Teaching Standards.

EI's Declaration on Professional Ethics *represents an individual and collective commitment by teachers and other education personnel that is complementary to the laws, statutes, rules and programmes that define the practice of the profession. It is also a tool that aims at helping teachers and education personnel respond to questions related to professional conduct and at the same time to the problems arising from relations with the different participants in education. Quality public education, a cornerstone of a democratic*

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society, has the task of providing equality of educational opportunity for all children and youth and is fundamental to the wellbeing of society through its contribution to economic, social, and cultural development. Teachers and education personnel have a responsibility to foster confidence among the general public in the standards of service that can be expected from all engaged in this important task. **The exercise of responsible judgement is at the heart of professional activity,** *and the actions of caring, competent and committed teachers and education personnel to help every student reach his or her potential is a critical factor in the provision of quality education. Yet, the expertise and commitment of teachers and education personnel must be combined with good working conditions, a supportive community and enabling policies to allow quality education to take place.*

The EI-UNESCO Global Framework for Establishing Professional Teaching Standards (2019) recognises that educators should own and establish their standards of professional practice. A teaching standards framework should promote and enhance what teaching is. It should support teachers' professional judgment and discretion and enhance professional standing. As such, this Framework is an important tool for protecting and building the reputation of the teaching profession.

The following 12 principles underpin the Professional Teaching Standards Framework:

1. Quality education is a universal right of all children, young people, and adults, in the interests of individuals, communities and societies.
2. Quality education is predicated on high-quality teaching, for all students, in all circumstances.
3. Teachers' work is organised around maximising student learning, future life chances and wellbeing, in close collaboration with education support personnel and other professionals.
4. Teachers are defined as individuals holding formally recognised teaching qualifications and who meet standards of practice that are defined, judged, and recognised through the teaching profession.
5. All teachers should be trained at university or equivalent institutions and have the requisite knowledge, skills, and competences to meet the diverse needs of students.
6. The teaching profession is constituted by teachers so defined, and in alignment with teacher representative organisations.
7. It is in the interests of the community generally, and children particularly, that only trained and qualified members of the teaching profession be engaged to undertake teachers' work.

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8. Effective and ethical school organisational practice is built on teachers' professional judgment and standards of practice defined by the teaching profession.
9. Members of the teaching profession with leadership and administrative responsibilities in schools and other education institutions support teachers at all levels to achieve, maintain, and defend professional standards.
10. Professional teaching standards address and actively support universal access to and opportunities for quality education for all.
11. The teaching profession as a whole, and its individual members, are ethically and actively committed to supporting the principles, precepts, and standards of teachers' professional practice and to promoting equitable inclusive quality education for all in the interests of all students, teachers, and the community.
12. Governments and education authorities have an obligation to ensure that teachers receive the necessary support, training, professional development, opportunity to engage in and access research, including action research in order to enable all students to develop to their full potential.

Education International also adopted a number of relevant resolutions at its 8th World Congress in 2019, including on the relationship between information and communications technology, teacher policy and student learning and on strengthening equitable access to teaching, learning and research materials.

Relevant Policy on Professionalism and Pedagogical Practice

Useful External Resources

- The ILO/UNESCO 1966 Recommendation on the Status of the Teaching Profession and 1997 Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel offer specific guidelines about requirements ranging from professional autonomy to curricular decisions.

  Paragraph 61 of the 1966 Recommendation states the following:

  The teaching profession should enjoy academic freedom in the discharge of professional duties. Since teachers are particularly qualified to judge the teaching aids and methods most suitable for their pupils, they should be given the essential role in the choice and the adaptation of teaching material, the selection of textbooks

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and the application of teaching methods, within the framework of approved programmes, and with the assistance of the educational authorities.

- The OECD's TALIS survey also offers useful insights. Linda Darling-Hammond did an analysis for Education International and found that "perhaps the strongest set of findings in TALIS are those associated with teacher collaboration, which appeared as an important element of learning, influence on practice, and influence on job satisfaction and self-efficacy, which are in turn related to teacher learning among teachers appear to hold promise for improving the quality of teaching and the long-term commitment of teachers." Darling Hammond wrote an insightful blog for the Learning Policy Institute on A New Deal for Education Post-Covid.

- Andy Hargreaves' seminal work on **collaborative professionalism** is particularly important and useful to think about during the pandemic. The term refers to how teachers and other educators transform teaching and learning together to work with all students to develop fulfilling lives of meaning, purpose and success. It is evidence informed, but not data-driven, and involves deep and sometimes demanding dialogue, candid but constructive feedback, and continuous collaborative inquiry. Hargreaves shared Five Big Issues for Schools after Covid in Worlds of Education that offer useful insights as well.

- Another useful resource was curated by Armand Doucet and jointly presented to Education International and UNESCO within the first weeks of the worldwide lockdowns. Called Thinking about Pedagogy during an Unfolding Pandemic, this report lays out issues and considerations for providing emergency remote learning but also stresses the importance of Maslow (safety and health) before Bloom (formal education).

Policy Considerations around Assessment and Instruction

This section seeks to shed some light on the different policy approaches taken around the world to adapt core aspects of education systems with regards to assessment and instruction. Both governments and teachers' unions are rethinking past models for measuring and validating learning as current disruptions are placing increased attention on enabling individual and collective professional discretion of educators to take precedence.

Reviewing Assessment Policy during Covid-19

A recent World Education Blog asks could coronavirus shape the way assessments work forever?

"The UK has cancelled its GCSE and A-Level exams. The CBSE board in India has cancelled exams for classes 10 and 12, national open school exam and the joint entrance exam, Madhya Pradesh is postponing secondary education exams until further notice. NAPLAN exams in Australia have been cancelled for the year. Pennsylvania is cancelling its PSSA testing and Keystone exams. The list goes on."

Research by UNESCO suggests that "countries are adopting different strategies - in many cases a mix of them - to cope with the situation, including organising exams with special arrangements, cancellation, postponement/rescheduling, going on-line (on-line assessment), and introducing alternative approaches to exams and validation of learning. This paper provides a snapshot of decisions taken by countries with regard to high-stakes exams and timetabled assessments in this particular context.

The 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report, having looked at the impact of high stakes exams on inclusion, looks at assessments from the viewpoint of inclusion and *calls for the focus to shift away from high-stakes assessments and instead to focus on students' tasks*: how they tackle them, which ones prove difficult and how some aspects can be adapted to enable success. Low-stakes formative assessments carried out over the education trajectory are far more fit for the purpose of inclusive education. **They would also mean that sudden interruptions in education – such as school closures in the context of Covid-19 - would be less of an issue for ensuring qualifications were not affected.**

For a list of policies that have been enacted in the wake Covid-19 this background document from UNESCO's Education Sector on Organising and Conducting Exams and Assessments during School & University Closures – Resources & References offers a country by country look at approaches and innovations underway.

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Union Policy and Action to Support Professionalism and Professional Rights

Many unions have developed their own policy guidelines, provided professional support and carried out advocacy actions to defend and uplift teacher professionalism. This section provides a glimpse of some of the work being done by Education International member organisations across the world.

Africa

- **Cameroon**
  The *Syndicat National Autonome de l'Enseignement Secondaire* (SNAES) and *Fédération des Syndicats de l'Enseignement et de la Recherche* are concerned about the limited capacity of teachers to shift their teaching online. The use of ICT in education has generally not been a priority in terms of areas in which teachers have requested professional development, in part because of the absence of devices and infrastructure in schools and homes in Cameroon. Many teachers lack experience as well as confidence in their ability to design online classes and the union has, in cooperation with three inspectorates, supported teachers by making more than twenty model lesson plans available. SNAES regrets that the broadcast and video-based classes provided by the Ministry of Basic Education were prepared without any consultation or involvement of teachers or education unions.

Arab Countries

- **Bahrain**
  The Bahrain Teachers' Association has put forward proposals for the reopening of schools and education institutions in the 2020-2021 academic year. The union recommends modifying and condensing curricula, focussing on the most important topics. Curricula and education materials should also be aligned with remote education teaching methods. In terms of assessments, the union recommends a combination of methods, including traditional exams, in order to minimise the need for physical proximity, while ensuring fairness and full transparency in the evaluation criteria.

- **Palestine**
  The General Union of Palestinian Teachers (GUPT) is working with the Ministry of Education and has proposed to offer students remedial courses over the summer. To enable this work and support the professionalism of educators, GUPT is providing online training for teachers on the use of ICT for teaching and learning. The union has also reached out to other unions in the Arab region to share knowledge and experience.

Asia-Pacific

- **Indonesia**
  As part of its work to ensure the continuity of education and support the professional practice throughout the pandemic, Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia (PGRI) has offered its members a range of training activities. The PGRI Smart Learning Centre conducts digital trainings via YouTube streaming and there is a Covid-19 teachers' programme with online training for teachers all over Indonesia. PGRI has also mandated its board committees at all levels to set up professional crisis centres, coordinating with regional governments to develop and provide learning content and models for distance learning. The union has also called on the government to distribute a Distance Teaching and Learning Guide for teachers, students, and parents to support the education process.

Europe

- **Greece**
  The Greek Parliament adopted a regulation which makes livestreaming lessons obligatory, without prior warning or consultation with unions in the country. Education International member organizations in Greece – DOE and OLME – have expressed their concerns regarding the new law. Their objections relate to the protection of copyrighted content; personal data, online safety and privacy; and educators' professional agency.

- **Italy**
  In response to the decision to shift all education online, the Federazione Lavoratori della Conoscenza-CGIL (FLC-CGIL) published a Manifesto for an Inclusive Education, underlining that distance learning is an emergency tool and

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cannot replace the relationships that characterise processes of teaching and learning. Addressing the values and purpose of education, the student-teacher relationship, the role of technology, and student evaluation, the Manifesto calls for a renewed focus on teaching, pedagogical practice and needs of students through investments in the workforce, school buildings and school safety. The union states that "as teachers, we undertook the responsibility to keep on teaching, in whatever situation, whether present or at a distance. In these times of crisis, we want to build an opportunity for teachers' professionalism to become a value of freedom and democracy" and calls on teachers and other professions to sign the Manifesto.

- **Portugal**
FENPROF reacted strongly against an attempt to involve parents in the evaluation of the quality of education provided during the school closures. Highlighting that this is neither legal nor appropriate, the union stressed that the suggested scope of the evaluation would require a pedagogical understanding and expertise that goes well beyond that of parents or the community at large. The union also cautioned against the possible impact and long-term effect of such an exercise for both teachers and schools and called on the Ministry of Education to clarify to all schools that the involvement of parents in the evaluation of teaching and teacher performance is inappropriate.

- **Sweden**
Lärarförbundet commissioned a survey on the impact of Covid-19 on teachers' working conditions and practice. The workload had increased for a majority of teachers, including because of the need to cover for colleagues and taking over additional tasks. For example, a quarter of respondents have to do the additional cleaning required because of the pandemic. Three in five teachers perceived it to be more difficult to teach their students. Questions were also posed about the future of the profession in the context of distance education and an accelerated digitalisation. More than half of the respondents expect digitalisation to make teaching less rewarding as a profession, while a third believe that the status of the profession will decline as a direct result of it. Many also fear a negative impact on learning, with 63% expecting it will be harder to meet learning objectives and almost 90% expecting it will be more difficult to meet the social objectives of education.

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Latin America

- **Argentina**
  Following the closure of schools as a result of Covid-19, joint efforts from education unions and the Argentinian government have led to the creation of the online platform "Seguimos Educando" (Let's Keep Teaching). Education trade unions are an active part of the advisory committee for the platform that provides a series of digital educational resources and materials to help teachers. The resources are categorised by academic level and subject area. In addition, the platform includes recommendations for teachers on how to structure distance education, what resources to use, and how to foster learning under these new circumstances.

- **Peru**
  To help educators overcome the serious lack of training in online education, SUTEP provided a free online course on the use of ICT for teaching and learning. The certified course was attended by over 7,000 educators from across the country. The union is planning to organise a full series of courses to help the profession meet new challenges.

North America and the Caribbean

- **United States**
  With the sudden shift to distance education, many teachers feel unprepared to teach in an online environment. To meet their needs, the National Education Association is offering a series of virtual courses on the basic components of remote learning and successful instruction outside traditional classrooms. The six-course series focuses on: best practices and strategies for remote learning; equity challenges and opportunities; collaboration tools and strategies; accommodation for remote learners; and trauma-informed pedagogy for remote learning.

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Union Policy and Action in Relation to Assessment and Exams

This section provides a snapshot of some of the actions taken directly by Education International member organisations in relation to assessment and national exams.

Africa

- **Kenya**
  The Kenya National Union of Teachers and the Universities Academic Staff Union have joined forces with civil society organisations to present the government with a set of recommendations on safely reopening schools and education institutions. The joint report recommends the postponement of national examinations until the first quarter of 2021. As an immediate step, the organisations advise that teachers and lecturers receive training on Covid-19-adapted pedagogies that incorporate a gender perspective, disability issues, and ways to support Covid-19 survivors.

Arab Countries

- **Morocco**
  In a meeting with the Ministry of Education, unions affiliated to Education International in Morocco recommended adjustments to the curriculum and assessment modalities to account for the effects of the prolonged school closures. Educators and their unions will work with the government on revising the curriculum. Regarding exams, the unions requested that formative assessment grades for all classes be included, not only exam grades. The unions are in favour of using multiple-choice questionnaires for exams, reducing the duration and content of exams, and the inclusion in exams of only subjects studied between September 2019 and February 2020. To address equity issues, the unions underlined the need to provide remedial courses and support disadvantaged students to overcome the negative impact of the pandemic.

Asia-Pacific

- **New Zealand**
  The New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA) established a Covid-19 Professional Issues taskforce to respond to proposals by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, the Ministry and the tertiary qualification boards in relation to teaching, learning and, in particular, assessment. This taskforce also has a strong focus on wellbeing. The Minister of Education made use of the Professional Advisory Group established in 2017 as part of the review of the national qualification to provide advice around changes in assessment as a result of Covid-19. This group is comprised of 10 teachers and principals, three of whom were nominated by PPTA.

Europe

- **Germany**
  Education International member organisation GEW and its national confederation – DGB – have argued for an exemption of final exams, including A-levels, given the inequalities in access to online learning resources, internet connection and available study space. Union leaders have called on the government to trust teachers in their evaluation and allow students to be graded according to the exams they passed before the school closures.

- **Malta**
  Examinations in Malta have been postponed to the beginning of the next academic year, a decision supported by the Maltese Union of Teachers. The decision was informed by discussions within the task force set up by the Ministry of Education and Employment on the request of the Maltese Union of Teachers. The task force, which includes union representatives, representatives from the state sector, the church sector and the independent sector, worked in parallel and in collaboration with the MATSEC Examinations Board, the University of Malta and the Curriculum Directorate within the Ministry of Education and Employment.

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- **The United Kingdom**
  The National Education Union has published a 10-step National Education Recovery Plan. Point 6 of the plan focusses on ensuring fair assessment after months of school closures and distance education marred by inequities:
  GCSE and A levels must be changed to provide a fair assessment of young people's attainment. Exams cannot be expected to cover all the current syllabus because of the reduced teaching time. Proposals could involve a combination of teacher assessment and slimmed-down exams, with more choice of questions. Whatever the decisions made, teachers, pupils and their parents need to know that the emergency measures adopted for GCSE and A level exams in 2020 will not be repeated in 2021. Government needs to reassure all those involved that this will be a fair process that will not disadvantage young people and their futures. Primary SATs should not take place – they are mainly a school accountability measure and will not be comparable to previous or subsequent years.

North America and the Caribbean

- **The Caribbean**
  The Caribbean Union of Teachers took a strong position in relation to the regional exams held at the end of the school year. They initially proposed postponing the exam, referring to the limited infrastructure and internet access in many schools, the health risks and need for psychosocial support, and the general uncertainty of the pandemic. Following the decision of the Council of Human and Social Development to proceed with regional exams as planned despite the weeks of school closures, the union wrote a letter expressing its disagreement and calling for the involvement of teachers in designing/determining the pedagogies, digital tools and platforms to be used to continue education, as well as in assessing the impact of the closures on teaching, learning and wellbeing.

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Concluding Remarks

Educators have worked tirelessly to support their students and communities during the crisis. Unfortunately, in many jurisdictions they found themselves without the tools, time and trust necessary to carry out their professional duties as they would have liked. Teachers unions in Liberia, Honduras and the Philippines handed out hand sanitiser and masks. Teachers in Nepal and Bolivia walked and biked to distant rural areas to provide socially distanced but fundamentally critical instruction. In some countries, school librarians delivered books and bus drivers delivered free school meals. In other countries teachers drove where they could get WiFi and taught for hours from their car or through glass doors. In still other countries teachers gave instruction over radio or via TV channels.

The dedication of educators and their unions has been on full display since the beginning of the crisis. As jurisdictions floundered and argued about what platform or modalities to offer instruction on, educators collaborated, designed and shared open source tools and spent incalculable hours, days and weeks supporting their students and communities. Hotlines for parents, WhatsApp chat groups for students, SMS check-ins on the absent and vulnerable... these are just some of the ways that educators' professionalism and commitment was on display.

Granted, we are yet to see equal attention paid to each of the Five Pillars of EI's Guidance on Reopening Schools and Education Institutions. In interviews with Education International leaders and webinars we learned that many education unions and their members found out about school reopening plans by watching the news or reading the newspaper. In other countries education unions were in daily consultations with Ministries of Education looking at how to do so in the safest possible way. The latter was expressed as the preference by the twenty national delegations of Education Ministers and union leaders at the Virtual International Summit of the Teaching Profession in May 2020.

Yet, in almost all countries EI member organisations proactively surveyed their members and then contacted ministries and asked, "What is your plan? What evidence informs your decision-making? What are the risks and how can we work with you so that it is done in the safest and most effective way?" That will be no surprise to anyone who knows educators. It is simply who we are and why the public trusts us.

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A few years ago, EI member organisation OAJ-Finland developed an oath for Finnish teachers. It is called the Comenius' Oath for teachers and is named after John Amos Comenius who was a 16th Century Czech educational reformer remembered for his innovations and teaching methods. The oath states:

> *"As a teacher, I am committed to educating the next generation, which is one of the most important human tasks. My aim in this will be to renew and pass on existing human knowledge, culture and skills.*

> *"I shall act with justice and fairness in everything that I do, and promote my students' development, so that each individual may grow up as a whole human being according to his or her own aptitudes and talents. I shall also strive to assist parents, guardians and other responsible people working with children and young people in their educational functions.*

> *"I shall not reveal information that is communicated to me confidentially, and shall respect the privacy of children and young people. I shall also protect their physical and psychological integrity.*

> *"I shall endeavour to shield the children and young people under my care from political and economic exploitation, and defend the rights of every individual to develop his or her own religious and political beliefs.*

> *"I shall make continuous efforts to maintain and develop my professional skills, committing myself to my profession's common goals and support my colleagues in their work. I shall act in the best interests of the community at large and strive to strengthen the respect in which the teaching profession is held."*

This oath is both a reflection and determinant of the trust that Finnish society has in the professionalism of its teachers. Yet it is hardly unique as these core professional values and principles are embedded in the constitutions, mission statements, and most importantly actions of Education International member organisations across the world. The actions of educators during this pandemic clearly show their commitment to the next generation and to democracy itself.

The current context adds additional importance to the lessons we compiled over the past decades in On Education and Democracy: 25 Lessons from the Teaching Profession, a book that we launched at the 8th World Congress in Bangkok last year. These lessons are made even more prescient at a time when authoritarian regimes seek to use the pandemic to seek emergency powers and people again take to the streets to demand justice.

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Educators have learned for centuries that our commitment to society will not always be reciprocated or remunerated at a commensurate level. However, pandemic crises have a way of focusing the world's attention on those things which matter most and clarifying what is essential as a public service, a human right and value. As we contemplate what and how to build back better and *look forward to school* we hope these resources, insights and experiences from education unions around the world will serve a useful tool for informing decision-making as well as shine a light forwards as we navigate the uncertainty and unpredictability that has become the new normal.

Further reading and resources

For additional insights and information about the tensions and choices facing educators and societies at this moment we recommend the following studies, reports and briefs that were commissioned and curated by Education International to inform current thinking.

- John McBeath's The Future of the Teaching Profession is a comprehensive overview of the issues facing the teaching profession now and in the future. It is an important and thoughtful analysis that was commissioned by Education International and reissued in 2019.
- Philippa Cordingley and colleagues' Constructing Teachers Professional Identities is a timely research on teachers' professional identities which is ground-breaking in its focus on teachers' professional standing and what really matters. It is clear from the study that *teachers put the wellbeing of students and their learning at the centre of their practice and above all else*, including their own careers. They also see their ongoing self-development and professional learning as the single most important influence on their professional identity. From the study it becomes apparent that teachers are most interested in student progress, not in a narrow way focusing only on student success in formal exams, but in a holistic way attending to the overall quality of students' learning experiences. They do this in the face of many challenges.
- Tore Bernt Sørensen's Discussion Paper on Value Added Modelling and Measurement in Teacher Appraisal demonstrates what systems and jurisdictions that do not trust the professionalism of teachers often resort to in efforts to avoid responsibility and investing in the profession's development.

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Education International
Internationale de l'Education
Internacional de la Educación
Bildungsinternationale

Head office

5 bd du Roi Albert II
1210 Brussels, Belgium
Tel +32-2 224 0611
headoffice@ei-ie.org

www.ei-ie.org
#unite4ed

Education International represents organisations of teachers and other education employees across the globe. It is the world's largest federation of unions and associations, representing thirty million education employees in about four hundred organisations in one hundred and seventy countries and territories, across the globe. Education International unites teachers and education employees.