



The Challenges for the Revitalization of Education

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Abstract

*"When you reach the end of your rope, tie a knot in it and hang on!"
Franklin D. Roosevelt*

The dynamics of the events that have taken place during the last period, have placed the world education in general, but also the school in particular in the face of insignificant challenges. Trying to understand how and how much they cope with the change that this system had to face, especially Pre-University Schools and Universities brought concern to all actors in the field of education, but not only. This, in fact, has put the education system in the face of very complex problems. It had to undergo a series of changes and this had to happen at a rapid pace. The necessity for capacity building both in technological means for all actors involved in this new way of education, as well as in the preparation of teachers and pedagogues in the use of technology and online platforms was an indisputable challenge, where a very big role played even themselves. Given the challenges and dynamics of recent years, especially the "disease" faced not only by humanity, but also the world education system, the hypothesis raised in this study is: Will we be able to bridge the gap created by knowledge acquisition in this period? Will the education system be restored to its former efficiency, or should the entire system be reformed?

Keywords: education, teaching-learning, distance learning (online), challenges

1. Introduction

We are all aware that education around the world will no longer be the same after the crisis caused by the pandemic. Of course, the effects that this situation has caused will have to be studied for a relatively long time. Thanks to the use of technology an immediate solution to this problem was given. But how prepared were teachers, students, but also parents to adapt to this new way of teaching and learning? This is a question, which is asked not only for the reality of our country, but also for the countries of the Western Balkans, and even goes beyond the borders of Europe and around the world. Following the closure of the school in March 2020, closures from more than 190 countries are affecting over 94% of the world's students, leaving almost 1.6 billion of them out of school¹.

Developed countries found it easier to move from classrooms and auditoriums, as for years they had legitimized distance education, while if we compare it with the situation in our country, this new approach faced several obstacles:

First, as I mentioned above human capacities were untrained for such a situation;

Secondly, the technological infrastructure leaves much to be desired, where we include here the availability of each person with a suitable device for the development of learning, but also the internet service. So, obviously this way of education cannot be unaffected by the economic situation of society by perhaps inadvertently differentiating a significant part of pupils and students in economic impoverishment.

But what are the dilemmas that arise about how the education system will proceed?

The school is the institution where everyone takes the first steps in the directions they take in life. It, of course,

¹ <https://en.unesco.org/news/secretary-general-warns-education-catastrophe-pointing-unesco-estimate-24-million-learners-0>

influences the cultures of the people it serves. Similarly, cultures influence and shape the school and its curriculum. Through itself, the school can change society, while society can shape the school. Examining school development without elaborating on the relationship between school and society would make no sense. Society today is facing challenges that perhaps none of us have perceived before, but even schools today, operate in a situation where the auditorium transferred beyond the physical walls is expanding and this has brought difficulties with what it means to be social beings. This is because as such beings we need inertia to learn and live.

2. Ideas for Rebuilding Education

Already, the use of technology in the acquisition and construction of knowledge has become an integral part of us. It is true that even through technology people dialogue, exchange views, explore different values and get to know each other's practices and habits but would this replace the classical methods of teaching and learning just as effectively?

One of the basic challenges of the school is that of transforming into an organization that reflects in society the democratic values, is closely related to the needs regardless of the situation in which we are. They represent what is thought to be fundamental, which the school, together with individuals, must have, learn or understand in order for something of value to happen. In fact, needs represent shortcomings that people find unacceptable and we need to work on that, precisely in meeting those needs.

As long as society is dynamic and composed of diversity of cultural and social groups, the debate over changing schools in these conditions will provoke controversy and change. Perhaps that is what makes society practical and capable of withstanding dissolution. The school is as changeable as the changing social and political conditions of the groups of people who formulate it.

If schools do not adapt to changing conditions and social forces, how can such people be expected to come out of their banks?

Annette Dixon, (Vice President of the World Bank for Development), states that: "Without swift, decisive and coordinated action, the crisis threatens to pose a major obstacle to the difficult gains of human capital, irreversibly damaging the livelihood opportunities for millions of children." Faced with a crisis situation from the pandemic, education will face even stronger challenges, as it is still difficult to predict what the continuity of education in schools and universities will be like. Consequently, in order to meet the challenges of the future, there must be a harmonization of policies around the world in order for education reform to create another vision of the school of the future.

In countries with the same economic level and educational approach as ours, there must first be an accountability for what went wrong and what the causes were. This, as every mistake of the past directly affected the knowledge not gained by the students in this period. It is these students who will probably face further in further cycles of study in other parts of the world and of course this knowledge gap will affect them continuously.

Identifying the needs of both academic staff, but also concepts not mastered by pupils and students is a starting point towards an expected improvement of the situation.

Finally, governments in countries like ours need to design strong policies and find alternative ways to make education policy more resilient for the future. Also, to break down technological barriers it must qualify teaching staff and ensure continued investment in technology and improved internet access.

A study conducted in the Western Balkans² notes that current school closures are expected to lead to significant learning losses. Not attending school has two effects:

First, students do not learn anything new;

Second, they forget what they have learned before.

In this study, another aspect is noticed, where the achievement gap between the poorest and richest students, which is currently from 1.5 years of schooling in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo (66 PISA points) to over 2 years in Northern Macedonia (90 PISA points), is likely to increase further, as students in poverty circumstances are less likely to benefit from distance learning methods.

Let's look at studies done elsewhere, what the situation has been like pursuing distance learning (online). For example, in Italy a UNICEF³ study shows some figures, where difficulties seem to have a serious impact on their school preparation: more than one in three students (35%) feel more unprepared than when they go to school face to face front and this 35% have to recover with more subjects than last year. Almost four in ten students report that they have had a

2 <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/>

3 <https://www.savethechildren.it/press/scuola-e-covid-il-28-degli-adolescenti-un-compagno-di-classe-ha-smesso-di-frequentare-la>

negative impact on their ability to study (37%). Adolescents report feeling tired (31%), insecure (17%), nervous (16%), anxious (15%), disoriented (14%), nervous (14%), discouraged (13%). But for more than 1 in 5 it remains a heavy burden to be kept inside, without sharing it with anyone (22%), which makes you realize that the emotional state of children has affected not only poor countries, but worldwide.

Experiences from previous crises even in economically powerful countries have shown that school closures reduce the level of learning and unequally affect disadvantaged people. In the US, the impact of the 2007-2009 recession on disadvantaged subgroups showed a small, but significant, long-term negative impact on test scores as the cause of this recession⁴. In 2014, major floods led to the closure of schools in Thailand for a period of up to a month and the reduction of student achievement, depending on the subject and level, from 7 to 25%⁵.

But will we be able to reshape the entire education system based on the use of technology? Children who start school from now on will become workers and leaders in a digital world that will require new skills and new ways of thinking.

The classroom was important when we had to convey a message at a certain time to a certain group of children when you should have been close to them, but this management and teaching model should no longer prevail.

But we should not think only of students capable of responding to these demands. A special policy should be designed and thought out for students with different abilities, as inclusion is also part of national strategies. Over the years, before the pandemic, this target group was present in the school benches and for the progress of their achievements, the assistant teacher and the employees of the psycho-social service paid special attention to them. This became extremely difficult during the pandemic, not to mention that in countries with low economic development there was a break from the education of these children. A challenge for society, policy-making institutions in education, schools, psycho-social services and parents remains the inclusion of people with disabilities in this new kind of teaching bag.

Stimulating and maintaining the school-home partnership is another important factor for children's inclusion⁶ and academic achievement⁷. Teacher attitudes can influence parental involvement in schools, and school psychologists need to have a benevolent approach to parental involvement.

Now, I will focus on teacher motivation, as it is a key element in the smooth running of the school recovery process and education in general.

Well-being in the relationship between teaching and learning depends on the degree of satisfaction that teachers feel during their work. They play an important role in the success of any educational policy initiative, but in most of the world teachers who are not motivated, consequently have a lower quality of teaching.

In a study conducted through an online questionnaire in several Italian countries on how teachers felt during the pandemic period, it was found that almost 1/3 (almost 34.1%) of the sample stated that they had a low level of mental well-being⁸.

"Motivation is a basic psychological process; it is the focal point where all knowledge and concepts for the individual focus on organizational behavior⁹"

Perhaps the time has come to go back to some theories such as "Maslow Theory (1943)", which formulated one of the many theories on employee motivation. In this theory he lists the five necessary needs hierarchically as: physiological needs, the need for security, the need for society, the need to be evaluated and the need for self-actualization, which must always be in coherence with time.

Another very significant theory for the time we are going through is "Herzberg Theory (1966)", This theory aimed to measure the motivation at work of individuals. Psychologist Herzberg identified several different sources of job satisfaction in the work environment such as: the importance of the work itself, responsibility during the performance of work, gratitude received from the realization of the work.

4 Shores, K. and M. Steinberg. 2017. "The Impact of the Great Recession on Student Achievement: Evidence from Population Data."

5 Thamtanajit, K. 2020. "The Impacts Of Natural Disaster On Student Achievement: Evidence From Severe Floods in Thailand." *The Journal of Developing Areas* 54 (4): pp 129-143.

6 Winter dhe O'Raw Literature Review of the Principles and Practices relating to Inclusive Education for Children with Special Educational Needs The National Council for Special Education was established under the Education for Persons with Special, National Council for Special Education 2010

7 Forry, N., Iruka, I. U., Kainz, K., Tout, K., Torquati, J., Susman-Stillman, A., et al. (2012). *Identifying profiles of quality in home-based child care. Issue Brief OPRE 2012-20*. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

8 <http://amsacta.unibo.it/6537/1/Insegnanti%20e%20COVID-REPORT%20finale%20compresso.pdf>

9 Kassimatis, K. (2005). *The training of teachers on the principles of t constructivism in order to build a knowledge society*. In *Euclidis* p. 63.

In the period of crisis that we are living, the "Theory of justice and equality of Adams (1963)", who developed the theory on which the idea is based, that an individual is motivated when he values the income he receives in accordance with the contribution he makes at work. The contribution is evaluated not only through salary, but also through the evaluation of other elements such as competence, personal skills, trust of the boss, etc.

Finally, I cannot fail to mention "McClelland's Theory of Need (1940)" which stressed that people have different needs and expectations at work such as, need for achievement and success, need for power and influence over others and the need for union, which is related to the desire for close friendly contacts, to be liked and accepted by others.

Humanity has faced various challenges in its history and with all it has emerged victorious, so I am convinced that the challenge to raise education to another dimension we will all win together.

3. Conclusion

The failure or failure to manage the situation of the created pandemic depends directly on investments in education and educational policies implemented and indirectly on the economic and financial situation of families with children in the education system. The budget for education from GDP should be increased in order to increase investments in this important sector.

Failure to attend school out of impossibility will lead to a knowledge gap which will accompany the person throughout life. A good assessment should be made of the whole education system and especially of the knowledge gained by the students and further to proceed on the ways of dealing with the knowledge which has not been acquired.

The impact on the mental well-being of teachers affects the reduction of performance in teaching. Different incentives must be found, both financial and moral, for their careers to increase their level of satisfaction in the process of educating children and teaching.

Increasing technological capacities and training of teachers is the primary obligation to have a quality teaching in these conditions. Of course, this will require a need identification for both of these actors who are even more important in the well-being of education.

Vulnerable groups such as children with different abilities are almost excluded from this type of teaching, so all actors involved in the school institution should work closely together in the interest of these students so that they do not feel lonely.

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