

Education Systems' Response to COVID19

Brief: March 24, 2020

School Closures continue

- **161 countries are now mandating school closures (out of the 181 reporting cases). Of these, 148 have closed schools** on a national scale, and an additional **12 countries have localized closures**.^[1]

World Bank Education Overview of school closures (For details, click the [link here](#))

	Africa	EAP	ECA	LAC (& North America)	MENA	SAR	Total
National School Closures	35	9	44	34	19	8	149
Partial/Localized School Closures	2	6	2	2	0	0	12
Total Countries with Closed Schools	37	15	46	36	19	8	161
Remaining countries (w/open schools)	12	16	4	4	1	0	37

- With India's closure announced on March 24th, the number of **children and youth out of school mounts to over 1.5 billion** or 75% of kids enrolled in schools globally.
- **Finland** has also closed its schools but decided to keep preschool, kindergartens and grades 1-3 open for children whose parents cannot keep the children at home because they have to work (these include essential professions for COVID-19 mitigation). The same approach is used in Germany and Russia
- **Switzerland** found itself this week with a fast-spiraling number of infections, quickly reaching magnitudes of Italy's rates. It has imposed school closures as well as a country-wide lockdown.
- Despite its growing number of cases, **Mexico** had not limited travel or work in a substantial way, due to the enormous economic challenges this might pose. On March 20, the government began a social-distancing campaign, telling people not to greet with hugs and kisses. As parents had already begun taking kids out of school, the Government also announced closure of public and private schools.
- While some countries closed schools out of abundant caution (many in Africa), a select few (the UK, New Zealand, Mexico, Switzerland) delayed closing until recently. It remains to be seen what effects the various policies will have on the virus spread (*Singapore has kept schools open. See box for summary*)

^[1] Source: Education GP dashboard is accumulating the information crowdsourced by the Bank Task Team Leaders on the ground and also by the best available information online. It might not be accurate but reflects the best knowledge of the situation globally by the Bank. Alternative source of information on closures is also presented by UNESCO - <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-emergencies/coronavirus-school-closures>.

Recent Bank Response

- In Pakistan, the World Bank team has been involved with government response to the COVID 19 since last week. The key objectives include:
 - Develop and implement distance-education delivery systems with existing curricula and content available, and in coordination with Provinces and stakeholders. Different mechanisms of delivery including EdTech are planned, with an eye to supporting all children, including those who were out of school before COVID-19 school closures.
 - Build system capacity to provide alternative modalities of learning. This includes developing missing curriculum content with the help of online content developers and public sector personnel
 - Raise awareness about: (1) the academic content available online; and (2) hygiene behaviors to counteract the spread of the virus.
- Some of the interventions will be supported under the recently negotiated World Bank, Pakistan Pandemic Response Effectiveness Project (P173796). In addition, resources from existing projects will be reallocated to some of the similar interventions in the provinces focusing on awareness and alternate tools.
- Additionally, several of the Education GP resources have been made available to the public. Links to the resources can be found here:

→ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/edutech/brief/edtech-covid-19> (External)

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Brief Highlight

Why Singapore Has Chosen to Keep Its Schools Open

Singapore remains a prominent outlier on school closures, having chosen to keep schools open. In a Facebook post on Monday March 23rd, the Minister of Education Ong Ye Kung explained his rationale for returning kids to schools after the March break, as well as measures the Government is taking to ensure their safety.

- there is a body of scientific evidence showing that COVID-19 does not affect the young very much as compared to adults. Neither is there evidence to show that the young are vectors or spreaders of the virus.
- Those who caught the virus [in Singapore] were infected outside of school.
- If schools are closed, many will not stay home, but may run around in the community and mingle with more people, exposing themselves to more risk. In that sense, schools remain safe places for children, especially as they seem to be more resilient against the virus.
- There are now in place additional precautionary measures to safeguard the entire system, to maintain the calm situation enjoyed before the March holidays.
- We have implemented a strict policy not allowing anyone to be in school if they have been overseas since the start of the March. As a further precaution, there will be 100% checks on their travel history at the gates.
- Students will only spend their time with their class for next two weeks and sit apart. Any activities that involve mingling have been suspended.
- Every morning, every student who is not feeling well, be it with a cough or sore throat, and not just fever, is placed in an isolation room or sent home.

Source: facebook @ongyekung)

<https://www.facebook.com/ongyekung/posts/3319748438039735>