

Education Systems' Response to COVID19

Brief: March 27, 2020

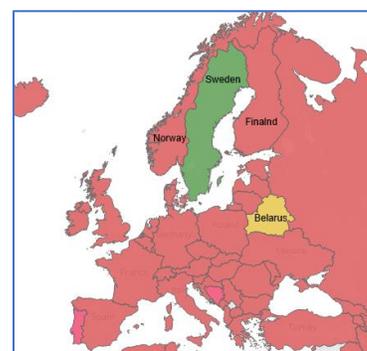
- 168 countries are mandating school closures and about 1.6 billion children and youth are out of school.¹

World Bank Education Overview of school closures

Country Status*	Africa	EAP	ECA	LAC & N. America	MENA	SAR	Total
Closed	39	10	44	35	20	8	156
Partly closed	3	6	2	1	0	0	12
SUM	42	16	46	36	20	8	168

* An additional 30 countries are not reporting, or open, or open with restrictions. They are noted [here](#).

- The World Bank Education Team has continued to develop resources to support cross-learning of responses and tools. An external landing page has been added to the Education Global Practice website with links to the school closure [dashboard](#), [guidance note](#), as well as the EdTech Solutions Repository. [Link is available here](#).
- **Sweden** has become a major international outlier, having a response strategy focused on keeping schools open for children up to 16 years of age, and closing universities and banning large gatherings while adopting few restrictions. In doing so, the Scandinavian nation embarks on what one health expert called a “huge experiment”.²
- **Belarus** is also keeping schools open with some restrictions on joint gatherings. Cases continue to increase in these countries and public pressure is mounting to pressure to close the schools and preschools.
- **Brazil** enforced only partial school closures leaving the decision to its states, known to have strong autonomy. As of March 24th, governors of all 26 states took the decision to close schools. The suspension of schooling was announced to last for 15 days
- **Egypt**, after launching an online learning platform, announced that grades would be frozen after March 15th and students would be required to finish the school year upon returning in the fall. The online platform would be supplemental and available to those who can access it. (*see below for details*)
- **Hong Kong's** school reopened in early March, but the spread increased once again, prompting the Government to re-impose quarantine measures. Schools were once again closed and though they are expected to reopen on April 20th, it is uncertain that the spread would be under control by then.
- **The Republic of Korea** was among those countries most affected countries during the initial outbreak. But their [multi-level and innovative approaches for managing crisis](#), including developing a drive-through testing facility, has stabilized cases at around 100 daily and the country is moving towards resuming normalcy. In education, the Ministry of Education of Korea (MOE) closed schools for break on March 2nd and extended the closures to April 6. Currently, after consultations across ministries and Korea's CDC, the Government is working to reopen schools, using the following measures:



¹ Source: Education GP dashboard is accumulating the information crowdsourced by the Bank Task Team Leaders on the ground and by the best available information online. It might not be accurate but reflects the best knowledge of the situation globally by the Bank.

² Source: Financial Times *Sweden Bucks Global Trend with Experimental Strategy* <https://www.ft.com/content/31de03b8-6dbc-11ea-89df-41bea055720b>

1. **Formation of a “New Semester Preparation Committee”** formed by MOE and sub national offices of education, and additional financial support (US\$233 million) to allow schools to respond to Covid-19.
2. **Adjustment of school year calendar and mode of teaching.** This includes revisiting of schedules, and postponement of student assessment till after reopening schools, and opening schools online.
3. **Safety Protocol for the Reopening,** including measures for social distancing in and out of schools, quarantine guidelines for schools (which comprise the identification of suspected cases in advance, designating a focal point in each school, and hygiene and sanitation measures to be applied before opening schools), and disaster response training.

- In **China**, half of provinces have announced planned dates for school reopening. The Ministry of Education (MOE) provided provinces with general guidance (see Education brief March 20th). Those have started schools have launched the spring the spring semester or have taken the following approaches:

- Re-adjust school calendar to make up for lost face-to-face instruction time (Shandong, Sichuan, Shaanxi, Hunan, Guangdong provinces).
- Assess students upon their return to schools (Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region)
- Make individualized plans for students with disadvantaged backgrounds (Sichuan and Hainan provinces).

- **Japan** began dealing with the COVID19 crisis earlier than most countries and has moved onto a recovery stage. Namely, on Feb 28th, the Japanese government stopped normal teaching practices. 99% of schools followed the government’s request, but many (64%) continued to open their grounds or buildings to keep some students during and/or after normal school hours, depending on the specific needs of households. On March 24th, the government announced guidelines for schools to resume from the new school year (early April), given the heightened awareness/knowledge of the population in coping with COVID19. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has a centralized website that synthesizes all information related to COVID19 response, including synthesis of diverse coping strategies that schools have undertaken. This includes useful (and regularly updated) PPT that outlines the latest info on policies and school/community-based coping strategies for local policy-makers, teachers and parents. Each school districts and schools have employed different coping strategies. While many of them are ICT-based distance learning (e.g., online-class delivery, video-conferences, groupware-based instructions), there are also many initiatives that maximize the usage of school grounds and facilities in a safe and healthy manner (e.g., promoting sports and individualized studies). I believe this is only possible since most teachers in Japan still go to school and work.

Brief Highlight
How high-stakes examinations and assessments are being addressed

Among the current global cohort of secondary school children, **about 85 million are expected to exit senior secondary school this year**. More students are also expecting to sit for other high stakes examinations at the earlier grades (e.g. entry to junior secondary and senior secondary). **Pressure is thus mounting from parents** and students whose school closures have already or are planned to interfere with these end of year milestones. Concern about standard examinations, grades, and completion are growing louder and Governments are working to addressing them, as well as develop mitigation plans for national and international large-scale assessments like PISA 2021.

Given the importance of these examinations, countries are exploring several approaches considering school closures:

- (a) delay the school closures till after examinations are completed (Nepal);
- (b) shorten length and change methodology of the exam to enable its administration online (USA);
- (c) cancel examinations for the current school year (UK);
- (d) arranging for highly controlled sites for examinations (Egypt, Russia); or
- (e) delay decisions until more information is available on length of closures (most other countries).

Each of the measures noted above has implications on the overall system, particularly for those transitioning to higher education institutions that are within country or outside. Such an approach will require the whole

Having experienced much difficulties in equitably delivering distance learning to all students, the Government of **Egypt** took the decision to end the 2019/20 school year on the following terms:

- Cut-off date for 2019/2020 school year to be March 15, 2020 (before school closures)
- students are accountable for content up until March 15, 2020
- The remaining curriculum will be completed during 2020/2021 school year with the following specifics:
- Grade 9: a research project for term 2 is enough for transition to grade 10
- Grades 10 and 11: Computer-based tests will cover material up until March 15
- Grade 12 examinations will include materials up until March 15, rest of material to be covered in first year of undergraduate studies
- Research Projects: The general framework of the required research project will be announced by April 2, 2020, assignments to be made April 5, 2020. Measures will be taken to ensure students do not cheat and/or submit identical projects.

For students abroad, access to the digital library (<https://study.ekb.eg>) will be available from seven countries abroad: Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon, Italy as of next week.

