

## Analyzing UNESCO's Report on Global Educational Challenges Amidst The COVID-19 Pandemic

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**ABSTRACT:** This article presents an analysis of the UNESCO report on global educational challenges in the context of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic. This paper examines the ways in which the pandemic has served to exacerbate pre-existing educational and gender inequalities, as outlined in the UNESCO report. The paper considers the United Nations' assessment and response strategies, evaluating their effectiveness in mitigating these disparities. A detailed analysis of the UNESCO report's findings and recommendations reveals significant deficiencies in addressing educational inequities during the pandemic. Moreover, it elucidates the broader implications for equitable access to education.

**KEYWORDS:** UNESCO Report, Educational Inequality, Gender Disparity, Epidemic Control Measures, Global Education Challenges

This paper primarily examines the impact of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic on education, with a particular emphasis on the assessment of the United Nations and the strategies implemented to address the crisis. Thus, it maintains a focus on UNESCO's report while emphasizing an analytical approach and specifying the context of the pandemic.

Prior to the emergence of the global health crisis, the international community was already confronted with considerable challenges in its efforts to achieve universal access to education as a fundamental human right and a tangible reality for all. The global pandemic has revealed substantial shortcomings in the approach taken to address educational and gender inequalities in the context of epidemic control measures.

The disruption to the academic year had a detrimental impact on students from vulnerable backgrounds who were unable to continue their studies in an environment that was conducive to learning. The time required for household tasks precludes children from acquiring the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in an academic setting. Moreover, students with disabilities are not adequately engaged in distance learning.

The global pandemic of 2020 was a significant challenge that necessitated prompt and practical responses. Past experience has demonstrated that radical shifts can occur with little warning. The ongoing crisis serves to highlight the vital role of public education in both individual and collective well-being.

The global pandemic has brought to light the myriad challenges facing humanity, offering a stark and unmistakable illustration of the existing inequalities and the necessary measures to be taken. The most crucial of these is to guarantee the education of all students who have been impeded in their learning due to the closure of educational institutions.

The advent of the global pandemic has also brought to light the remarkable ingenuity and potential of the human race. It can, therefore, be considered a fortuitous occurrence.

The decisions made today will have long-term consequences for the future of education. In order to ensure the future of education, it is essential that choices are made on the basis of a humanistic vision of education.

In her remarks, Sahle-Work Zewde, President of Ethiopia and Chair of the International Commission on the Future of Education, underscores the notion that our shared humanity necessitates global solidarity. This is exemplified in the following speech:

We cannot accept the levels of inequality that we have allowed to develop our planet. The world must support developing countries with investments in 21st-century educational infrastructure; this will require mobilizing resources and support from developed countries, particularly in debt cancellation, restructuring, and new financing. Regarding the digital divide in Africa, the magnitude of this challenge is clear. (...) We are already seeing that the disruption caused by the pandemic is widening inequalities both within

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and between countries. We urgently need investment and structural change to ensure that short-term setbacks do not turn into long-term problems.

H.E. Sahle-Work Zewde proceeds to state:

There is a high risk that Covid-19 will reverse decades of progress, including progress in poverty reduction and gender equality. While the pandemic provides evidence of our interconnected humanity, social and economic structures are causing disparate and unjust impacts of the virus. Gender discrimination means that the levels of education of girls may greatly suffer, with the risk that many will not return to school after Covid. We cannot accept this; on the contrary, we must do everything we can to prevent it. Covid-19 has the potential to reshape our world radically, but we must not remain passive and watch what happens. It is time for public deliberation and democratic accountability. It is time for intelligent collective action.

The report, entitled "The International Commission on the Futures of Education," was established by UNESCO in 2019 and is composed of eminent leaders from a range of disciplines, including science, government, business, and education. It sets out a series of core ideas that, when translated into specific actions, will help advance education worldwide.

The nine concrete actions are as follows:

It is imperative to reinforce the role of education as a collective asset and a safeguard against disparities. The Commission therefore urges that education be regarded as a public good and that it be strengthened accordingly.

It is recommended that the definition of the right to education be broadened to encompass the significance of connectivity and access to knowledge and information. The Commission calls for a global public debate on the means of expanding education and ensuring its accessibility to all people around the world.

It is of the utmost importance to recognize the value of the teaching profession and the significance of teacher collaboration. The Commission underscores the critical necessity of sustaining efforts to motivate educators by furnishing them with the requisite tools and resources to operate independently and in concert with their colleagues.

It is a fundamental tenet of education that students be afforded the opportunity to engage in the collaborative construction of beneficial change. It is of the utmost importance for the Commission to engage young people in the process of educational transformation.

It is essential to ensure the safeguarding of the social spaces represented by the educational facility. The Commission considers the physical space of the school to be of paramount importance and maintains that the school should be regarded as a distinct and separate entity, occupying a unique space-time continuum distinct from that of the home and other learning environments.

It is recommended that educators and learners have access to cost-free technological resources, given the potential benefits to both parties. The Commission underscores the importance of providing assistance for open educational resources and tools. The growing prevalence of digital technologies in education is a noteworthy phenomenon. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that the educational process cannot be contingent upon digital platforms that are under the exclusive control of private entities.

It is advocated that scientific literacy be integrated into the educational curriculum. The report indicates that a comprehensive reevaluation of the school curriculum is imperative to effectively counteract the rejection of scientific knowledge and combat misinformation.

It is of the most critical importance to guarantee the safeguarding of public education. In consideration of the aforementioned, the Commission is urging national governments, international organizations, and civil society at large to provide the requisite financial resources to this end.

It is of the essence that global solidarity be promoted with the objective of achieving equilibrium between the current levels of inequality and power imbalance. The Commission urges the international community to make a collective commitment to compassion. The global pandemic affects us all equally, and therefore the only viable solution is a collective human response.

The following nine proposals, put forth by UNESCO, advocate for the involvement of all stakeholders in shaping the future of education. As the report states, the pace of historical change is accelerating, and it is incumbent upon us to act collectively and to facilitate the development of a future-oriented educational system.

The ideas presented in the report have the potential to stimulate debate, commitment, and action among a diverse range of stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, civil society, education professionals, learners, and other interested parties.

In the context of the global pandemic, our objective is to rethink the very nature of learning. The global pandemic has brought to light a number of deficiencies, including the growing inequality resulting from the privatization of education and our inadequate preparation for the transition to digital learning.

Additionally, there has been a discernible increase in the visibility of positive attributes inherent to our societies. This is exemplified by the noteworthy creativity displayed by educators, families, and students, who are collectively engaged in the construction of exceptional learning experiences.

The global pandemic of 2019-2020 presented a significant challenge to the continuity of public education systems, with the potential for both educators and students to be lost to the sector as a result of the inability to resume in-person learning following the reopening

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of schools. The transfer of learning from the traditional school environment to the home setting has the potential to result in a form of privatization of the education process.

The work of teachers was brought to the attention of parents and communities, and their professionalism was acknowledged. There is a growing awareness of the multifaceted role of schools in promoting well-being and health. This heightened awareness, precipitated by the pandemic, can inform a revitalization of public education.

In the process of educational renewal, the role of human interaction is of paramount importance. Digital technologies that facilitate collaboration and distance learning are valuable tools that contribute to innovation. It seems inevitable that inequalities will increase as a result of the transition to globalized online distance education.

It is of the utmost importance to guarantee that the process of digitization does not infringe upon the fundamental rights to privacy, freedom of expression, and informational autonomy. In order to respond effectively to the crisis in the context of such uncertain times, it is necessary to prioritize areas where immediate decisions have long-term implications.

It is of overarching importance that there be no substitute for collective reflection, dialogue, and co-construction. Similarly, three fundamental commitments have been identified: public education, the common good and global solidarity.

The academic performance of students since the onset of the pandemic is indicative of the impact of the crisis on their abilities, particularly in the area of writing. It is therefore imperative to exercise vigilance with regard to the immediate, intermediate, and long-term consequences of the ongoing pandemic on the process of learning. It is anticipated that the existing disparities will become more pronounced for students who are most vulnerable.

In the wake of the pandemic, a primary concern emerged regarding the mental health and well-being of students. The question was whether the measures taken to control the pandemic had an impact on them. The results of the surveys indicated that students who had been experiencing social difficulties prior to the pandemic were particularly susceptible to developing additional mental health issues, including anxiety, anger, demotivation, sleep disturbances, and other problems.

The students employed various coping strategies to maintain social connections, including the use of social networking and the pursuit of new hobbies, in order to counteract feelings of boredom and reduce stress levels.

The advent of novel pedagogical approaches in the context of crisis requires a comprehensive reevaluation of the learning process with the aim of enhancing student engagement. It is recommended that the following forms of assistance be made available.

It is also acclaimed that conditions be promoted that facilitate academic success and holistic development. Students should be provided with the right to connectivity and universal access to digital equipment.

The global pandemic served to reinforce the continued relevance of inclusive governance of school networks, whereby all stakeholders are encouraged to make a meaningful contribution.

To forestall a further exacerbation of the educational crisis, it is of the utmost importance that all stakeholders act with alacrity. The realization of the right to education is a fundamental human right, the enjoyment of which is a prerequisite for the enjoyment of other rights. A decline in the quality of education systems will inevitably result in a decline in the overall functioning of societies.

The repercussions of the health crisis and the subsequent upheaval in education systems are still being felt. The considerable measures taken in response to the disruption to educational systems demonstrate that transformation is feasible.

It is imperative that novel approaches be devised to address the pressing issue of the education crisis. This encompasses the prevention of dropouts, particularly among marginalized groups; the development of employability skills; the empowerment of teachers; the removal of barriers to connectivity; and the increase of fluidity between different types of education and training.

In conclusion, reverting to pre-existing conditions is not a viable option. The contemporary era presents a distinctive and irreversible reality that demands our attention. It is thus imperative that we proactively engage in the development of a novel paradigm that fosters enhanced well-being and sustainability. By embracing this transformative opportunity, we can work towards establishing a more equitable and thriving future.

## REFERENCES

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