



**Asia-Pacific  
Economic Cooperation**



# **Education Response to COVID-19 in the Asia-Pacific Region**

## **Challenges and Solutions**





**Asia-Pacific  
Economic Cooperation**

# **Education Response to COVID-19 in the Asia-Pacific Region**

## **Challenges and Solutions**

**Synthesis Report of EDNET Survey on Impact of COVID-19**

**APEC Human Resources Development Working Group**

**Education Network**

**November 2021**

Produced by  
Education Network  
APEC Human Resources Development Working Group

For  
Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Secretariat  
35 Heng Mui Keng Terrace  
Singapore 119616  
Tel: (65) 68919 600  
Fax: (65) 68919 690  
Email: [info@apec.org](mailto:info@apec.org)  
Website: [www.apec.org](http://www.apec.org)

© 2021 APEC Secretariat

APEC#221-HR-01.3

## **PREFACE**

The outbreak of COVID-19 has brought extreme and unforeseen problems for APEC member economies. The education systems in the APEC region came under increased pressure to ensure quality and equity of student learning. Challenges included interrupted learning, nutrition, parents unprepared for home schooling, unequal access to digital learning portals, gaps in childcare, increased pressure on schools and school systems that remained open, and rising dropout rates. At the same time schools had to provide safe spaces for learning, which would increase their financial burden post COVID-19. Effective education intervention in times of crisis can build resilience and social cohesion, and it can also be fundamental to recovery and sustainable development.

To overcome the crisis as efficiently as possible, APEC member economies reached consensus on producing a report which would reflect the impact of COVID-19, and document challenges brought by it and potential solutions. The initiative has been aligned with the vision in the APEC Education Strategy – that is “to have a strong and cohesive education community characterized by inclusive and quality education that supports sustainable economic growth, social well-being and employability of men and women in APEC economies”.

The report has been produced based on a survey entitled “Impact of COVID-19 on Education in the Asia-Pacific Region: Challenges and Solutions”. The survey collected information on how COVID-19 has impacted education in member economies, the challenges and obstacles encountered in education, effective solutions to the challenges as well as recommendations for the future of education in four sections: Preschool, Basic Education, Higher Education, and Technical & Vocational Education and Training. The survey was developed and finalized through inter-sessional consultations among member economies and it was conducted between May 10 and June 8, 2020.

Seventeen member economies – Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Chinese Taipei and Thailand – responded to the survey, and the report has been produced by synthesizing their responses. Based on this methodology, the report is not intended to be a comprehensive one. Since it is neither reasonable nor possible to include every detail of economies’ educational response to COVID-19, omission of information in this report is to be expected and should not be regarded as a flaw. Instead, this report provides a regional overview of APEC member economies’ educational responses to COVID-19 with focus on the main challenges and the solutions. In so doing, it is hoped that the report can inform and inspire relevant policies and strategies to ensure quality and equity of education in different contexts.

This Report was drafted by a team led by EDNET Coordinator, Dr. Wang Yan, with APEC Host Malaysia’s positive engagement playing a crucial role in its completion. It has benefited from the reviews, feedback and inputs from APEC member economies, especially Australia,

Malaysia, New Zealand and Singapore. Particular thanks are extended to Ms. Noor Hayati binti Uteh and Dr. Sheela Nair Gopala Nair of Malaysia MOE.

In addition, special appreciation is due to HRDWG Lead Shepherd, Prof. Dong Sun Park and APEC Secretariat Program Director Ms. Zhongzhen Liu, without whose support and leadership the Report would not have been possible. Special thanks also go to the Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China that has provided financial and administrative support for this Report.

Wang Yan  
Coordinator  
Education Network  
APEC Human Resources Development Working Group

## Table of Contents

<b>PREFACE</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>List of Boxes</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>EXECUTVE SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>I. Role of Government</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 School Closure and Reopening.....	1
1.2 Government Agencies in Charge of Education.....	2
<b>II. Sector Perspective</b> .....	<b>4</b>
2.1 Preschool and Kindergartens .....	4
2.2 Primary and Secondary Schools .....	7
2.3 Colleges and Universities .....	13
2.4 Technical and Vocational Education Institutions .....	19
<b>III. Stakeholder Perspective</b> .....	<b>22</b>
3.1 Student Well-being.....	22
3.2 International Students .....	29
3.3 Parents.....	36
3.4 Teachers .....	38
<b>IV. System-Wise Solutions</b> .....	<b>41</b>
4.1 Financial Implications.....	41
4.2 Education Quality .....	44
4.3 Education Equity.....	48
4.4 The Role of Technology and Education Innovation .....	54
<b>V. Recommendations</b> .....	<b>58</b>
Annex 1: Annex 1: Table 1: Age Range for Compulsory Schooling .....	60
Annex 2A: Systems of Tracking and Identifying Local Students Studying Overseas. ....	61
Annex 2B: Systems of Identifying Number and Origin of International Students. ....	64
Annex 3: Best Practices of Education Responses to COVID-19 .....	67
Australia: Response to COVID-19 in Higher Education Sector .....	68
Canada: Education Response to COVID-19 .....	70
Chile: Education for Rural, Under-Performing and Isolated Schools .....	72
China: Education Response to COVID-19.....	74
Indonesia: Education Response to COVID-19.....	77
Japan: Education Response to COVID-19 .....	80
Republic of Korea: Education Response to COVID-19.....	83
Malaysia: Education Response to COVID-19.....	87
New Zealand: Education Response to COVID-19.....	90
Peru: Education Response to COVID-19.....	95
The Philippines: Activities on Child Protection.....	96
Russia: Adjustments to High Stake Assessments.....	96
Singapore: Education Response to COVID-19 .....	98
Chinese Taipei: Education Response to COVID-19 .....	99

## **List of Boxes**

Box 1. Policy Measures for Pandemic Prevention and Control.....	9
Box 2. Peru: Mandates for Secondary Schools.....	10
Box 3. New Zealand: Adjustments to Learning Assessments During COVID-19.....	12
Box 4. New Zealand: Progressive Reopening of Colleges and Universities.....	18
Box 5. New Zealand: Adjusted Reform of Vocational Education.....	22
Box 6. New Zealand: Impact on Online Learning and Related Student Well-being.....	23
Box 7. The Philippines: Activities on Child Protection.....	26
Box 8. Peru: Policy Measures to Support Peruvian Students Abroad.....	33
Box 9. Singapore: Alternative Learning Arrangements.....	35
Box 10. New Zealand: Policy Actions to Resolve Financial Implications.....	43
Box 11. Chile: Quality Assurance for Preschool Education During COVID-19.....	48
Box 12. Canada: Financial Support for Vulnerable Children and Youth.....	53
Box 13. Korea: High Quality Education to All Students During COVID-19.....	54
Box 14. China: The Role of Technology in the Continuity of Education.....	56



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### School Closure and Reopening

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools and higher education institutions in the majority of member economies were closed for conventional teaching and learning. The duration of the closure varied among economies ranging from two weeks to an indefinite period of time beginning March 2020. At the time of closure schools in the different economies were at different stages of their academic calendar.

In March/April 2020<sup>1</sup>, *Chile, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore and Thailand* mandated a temporary closure of all schools and higher education institutions, both public and private.

The timing of school closures varied across economies and different levels of education. *Chile, China, Malaysia, New Zealand and Republic of Korea* closed their schools at the beginning of the school term or semester; *Russia* in the middle of the academic year; and *Australia, Japan, Mexico, Philippines and Thailand* at the end of the term/semester.

In economies with a federal structure or with decentralization structure – such as *Australia, Canada, Indonesia and Russia* – school closures were the responsibility of states, provinces and territories. In *Indonesia*, the school and universities in red zones are remain closed until further notice. The school in green zones can be opened after fulfilling a very strict requirements and recommendation from several parties, including central government and parents. In *Canada*, all schools were closed, and many provinces and territories chose to keep them closed for the remainder of the school year. In *Australia*, most states and territories asked students to learn from home for a number of weeks.

In *Australia, New Zealand and Singapore*, schools remained open to children of essential workers as well as vulnerable and disadvantaged children. Likewise, higher education institutions also allowed students from vulnerable backgrounds to study on campus.

*Brunei Darussalam, China, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand* had taken a calibrated approach to reopening schools by phases, starting with graduating cohorts or the third-year students of high schools (i.e. K12 students), and other levels returning on a weekly rotation. This helped to reduce congestion and the risk of contagion in the first few weeks.

In all member economies, before entering any school, from preschool to university, students must have their temperature checked. Students and faculty are also required to wear face masks in the classroom.

---

<sup>1</sup> 8 April 2020 in Singapore.

## **Preschool and Kindergartens**

Preschools and kindergartens, as well as early child development and education centers, were temporarily closed. Parents were obliged to school their children at home. In particular, it was challenging for essential workers with young children to find caregivers when preschools and kindergartens were closed – this impacted their ability to do their job.

When students continued their studies through home-based learning – either online or using home learning packs – the absence of connectivity and gadgets often resulted in disengagement.

The pandemic also caused uncertainty in funding and financial viability. Private kindergartens may encounter challenges in terms of achieving balance of payments, due to losses of income.

In economies that exercise a federal structure, the right to determine how preschool and kindergartens were operated was left to the individual states, provinces and territories.

The childcare burden on dual-earner families is particularly heavy due to preschool and kindergarten closures. It was a huge challenge for teachers and students to shift from the classroom to distance/online learning. In general, it's challenging to create effective online teaching and learning processes. High unemployment rates reduced participation and attendance numbers, and this impacted providers' ability to manage numbers, staff and budgets effectively.

During the pandemic, some member economies switched to community-based childcare services or at-home childcare services, including the use of flexi-time and family-care leave in the workplace; distance learning was offered in case children could not attend their childcare center.

A hybrid of face-to-face learning delivery and distance learning was used to ensure the continuity of education delivery in the majority of member economies. Budgets were allocated to help support early childhood education and care services. Several economies issued guidelines for COVID-19 prevention and control as well as home schooling.

## **Primary and Secondary Schools**

COVID-19 disrupted essential school-based services. A variety of delivery methods were used in schools in member economies, including a combination of temporary school closures, online education and physical school attendance.

Despite substantial efforts to ensure the continuity of education, the closure of schools brought about varying degrees of losses in learning. Increased dropout rates (over death of parents, economic or job losses, etc.) were observed, and a greater educational gap (or inequality) was generated both between and within rural and urban education.

For most economies, it was challenging to ensure student well-being and engagement in learning throughout the pandemic, as learning and teaching modes shifted from the classroom to a distance learning environment. According to the survey, one of the biggest challenges was providing (customized) support for students in need of additional assistance – i.e. the most vulnerable, including students with disabilities.

*Australia, Malaysia and the Philippines* said their biggest challenge was delivering education to children who do not have access to technology or adequate support to learn at home.

Almost all member economies took special policy measures for pandemic prevention and control to ensure the safety of students.

Almost all member economies transitioned to remote delivery of education by a hybrid means of Internet, TV and/or radio. *Chile, China, Indonesia, Korea, Peru and New Zealand* developed online platforms or Learning Management Systems (LMS) containing a variety of learning resources and materials to support home-based learning. *Australia, China, Indonesia, Korea* and other economies developed guidelines to support the remote delivery of education.

*Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Korea, New Zealand and Singapore* provided disadvantaged students with devices and materials for remote learning. Moreover, curricular and academic calendars were adapted to meet the needs of home-based learning.

*Brunei Darussalam, China, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand and Russia* adapted their timelines for assessments during COVID-19 – postponing high-stakes end-of-year or entrance examinations, as well as exams for transitional years.

Some examinations were cancelled in *Indonesia, Malaysia, Russia and Singapore*, such as public examinations for Grades 6 and 9 and school-based mid-year exams in *Malaysia*. Certain examinations were held as planned in economies such as *Chinese Taipei, the Philippines and Singapore*.

Economies also made adjustments to their existing assessment methods. Formative assessments, internal assessments and online assessments have been used as an alternative. To ensure fairness for both high school and university entrance examinations, certain areas were removed from the exam papers.

## **Colleges and Universities**

In *Australia, Chile, China, Indonesia, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore and Thailand*, colleges and universities were closed and learning was shifted online. This forced the suspension of many important experiments and research programs. With the postponement of school reopenings and the proliferation of non-face-to-face lectures, academic calendars were altered, student exchange programs as well as academic and international seminars were suspended or cancelled.

Many students on study abroad or exchange programs have had to return to their home economies and continue their studies online. International collaboration on research programs was also disrupted, as travel restrictions impeded researchers' ability to visit their colleagues. Generally, there has been a decline in the number of domestic and international students across the APEC region.

From a financial perspective, COVID-19 has had a significant economic impact on higher education. Universities have seen their revenues decline and expenditures increase due to, *inter alia*, expanded investment in online education systems and the costs related to disinfecting school facilities.

Alongside disruptions to teaching and learning, colleges and universities are also facing a significant body of work to ensure the resumption of face-to-face learning and practical elements within physical distancing protocols is conducted in an effective, efficient and safe manner. There are still a certain number of students who need support for distance learning. Typical issues include access to digital devices, as well as Internet access and connectivity.

Another major challenge has been the cancellation of on-site training. It is difficult to replace lab experiments and practical learning activities with online education.

Meanwhile, it has been also difficult to ensure quality of learning outcomes, in particular, in relation to assessments. Opportunities for cheating and not performing appropriately are immense.

The financial situation of universities deteriorated due to their investment in online education systems and a large number of students taking a leave of absence.

For the sake of financial security, and despite contracted fiscal revenues, *Australia, China* and *New Zealand* guaranteed funding for colleges and universities, regardless of potential changes in student numbers, to ensure education delivery could continue despite the disruptions brought about by COVID-19.

*Australia, New Zealand* and *Thailand* waived or postponed cost-recovery and regulatory measures, which helped relieve the reporting burden and some financial imposts on universities. In *Japan*, the government allowed universities flexibility in handling tuition fees, enrollment fees, deferral of payments, installment payments, and exemptions and reductions of fees. *Thailand* reduced tuition fee/university accommodation/ service fees.

*Indonesia, New Zealand* and *Japan* created initiatives to provide additional financial support to students who were experiencing hardship due to COVID-19.

*Australia, Korea* and *New Zealand* also gave colleges and universities greater flexibility in managing courses and programs in the context of COVID-19. Similarly, students in *Singapore*

were granted access to complimentary Continuing Education and Training modules to help broaden their skillsets and access to more opportunities across the sectors.

*Brunei Darussalam, China, Chile, Japan, Chinese Taipei and Thailand* developed plans, platforms or systems for remote and online learning.

*Japan, Chile and New Zealand* allocated earmarked funds to support the delivery of online learning.

*China and Korea* harnessed the power of MOOCs, and made high-quality educational content, produced by several universities and agencies, freely accessible, while additional content was developed to reduce gaps in quality between universities and lecturers.

Working groups, typically involving relevant government agencies, were established in *China, New Zealand and Russia* to steer educational processes and coordinate the activities of higher education institutions in the context of COVID-19.

*China, Japan, Thailand and Russia* postponed/extended semester openings/ examination periods to accommodate the new modes of teaching and learning in the context of COVID-19. In *Japan*, the government requested colleges and universities to delay the start time of lectures to avoid rush-hour and consider utilizing remote learning. The government of *Korea* made efforts to secure the right to education for all students by relaxing the operation standards for online education in universities, and replace face-to-face lectures with online lectures.

*Korea and Peru* formulated guidelines for pandemic prevention and control and/or continuity of university education.

## **Technical and Vocational Education Institutions**

All TVET institutions have been closed in member economies during COVID-19. TVET was impacted more than other areas as TVET delivery as it requires the acquisition of certain skills on equipment, in laboratories or workplaces. Many institutions do not have enough resources or facilities for the online delivery of education and training.

There are now fewer available apprenticeships and traineeship programs as many employers closed their doors due to government lockdown mandates or reduced their staff because of the economic downturn. As a result, there's likely to be a reduction in the volume of work-based vocational education.

COVID-19 has also brought about an immediate decrease in or loss of source of income for the continuous operation of TVET schools. It is compounded by additional costs incurred due to enhanced social distancing measures and hygiene protocols.

Nonetheless, in the medium term, it is highly likely that an increase in unemployment due to

COVID-19 will drive demand for vocational education, particularly in provider-based delivery (i.e., campus-based and online).

Similar to primary and secondary schools, as well as colleges and universities, training and delivery moved online. However, there are still many students who needed support from campus for distance learning such as facilities/equipment suitable for distance learning. Meanwhile, a certain proportion of teaching and non-teaching staff and students were not competent in distance learning.

Moreover, the closures of non-essential services affected the capacity of students to undertake workplace placements as well as conducting hands on activities, simulation as well as practice-based training and assessments, a compulsory part of many VET syllabi and qualifications. It was also difficult to ensure vocational internships, apprenticeships and traineeship programs at enterprises and third-party institutions. Even when practical/hands on learning was possible, cost rose from personal protective equipment for staff.

COVID-19 prompted the cancellation or suspension of vocational certification/certificate examinations and, even in cases where exams were not cancelled, students were at a disadvantage since they have not been thoroughly trained for the exams.

In that case, retaining student interest to ensure they return to class rather than drop out altogether became a major priority. It was particularly difficult for international students who may have lost their source of income from part-time employment.

Vocational high school graduates face daunting employment prospects due to the reduction of on-the-job training and lack of employment opportunities (adverse business context).

The governments of *Australia, Korea, Russia, Peru* and *the Philippines* supported vocational and technical institutions adopt flexible and online modes of delivering education and training, either through policy-making or legislation.

In *Australia, Korea, Malaysia, Russia* and *Mexico*, education processes/programs were reorganized to accommodate school closures during COVID-19, including adjustments to delivery and assessment arrangements.

To support the online delivery of education, online learning platforms were developed in partnership with governments (public sector) or businesses (private sector).

*Malaysia, Peru, Russia* and *the Philippines* developed guidelines for the continuity of vocational education and training in the context of COVID-19.

In response to COVID-19, governments invested in training and education for people who had lost their jobs, or those who wanted to move into a different sector with better prospects.

A variety of incentives were created to ensure apprenticeships for students for example, prime lending rates and loan support services for businesses that provide on-the-job training and employment opportunities to vocational high school students and graduates.

*Korea, Malaysia, Mexico and Russia* took measures to reschedule assessments, ensuring flexibility for calendars and processes as well as methodologies and timings of evaluations.

*The Philippines* employed a training-cum-production approach (whenever applicable) to ensure continuous learning whilst contributing to anti-COVID-19 initiatives, such as the production of face masks, PPEs and food packs for those on the front line.

In *Russia*, it was recommended that events should be staged using e-technologies, such as industrial internships, state final certifications, the presentation of graduation and diploma theses, and demonstration exams.

## **Student Well-being**

In member economies, school closures and social distancing measures have adversely affected student well-being. Many challenges, including confinement, physical distancing, increased screen time and reduced physical activity, hampered students' progress and development. Without the school serving as a place for socialization with peers, students' mental well-being was affected as a result of severance of social relations, lack of social interaction, isolation from fellow students, teachers, friends, family and other networks. Furthermore, they encountered emotional instability and stress over fears and frustrations related to COVID-19 generated through illness, contagion, death, unemployment or a lack of equipment and/or connectivity.

In *Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, the Philippines and Russia*, a certain proportion of students had no devices or connectivity during COVID-19. For many, access to the Internet was limited whilst they also lacked the proper equipment (such as a computer) and IT skills to access web platforms or TV programs for mainstream online learning.

Students from low social economic background rely on school food programs for their daily nourishment. Parents had to provide meals for their children when they were home due to COVID-19, placing a severe strain on their finances.

A considerable number of students no longer have the means to continue their studies due to economic and social factors arising from the pandemic, such as reduced family income.

Domestic violence, already a problem, was exacerbated by confinement, economic crisis and uncertainty due to COVID-19.

Member economies has employed the following strategies to ensure student well-being:

Mental Health Services: The mental health of students has been a major concern for member economies during COVID-19. Governments have taken various measures to ensure students'

mental well-being. For instance, *Australia* and *Canada* committed earmarked funds for mental health services. Websites and online platforms were utilized to provide mental health resources and guidance. Local school boards played a significant role by providing parents and students with resources for mental health and well-being. *Peru* issued guidelines for dealing with domestic violence and provided emotional support structures for students and their families in a distance education context.

Counselling Services: *Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, China, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Russia, Chinese Taipei* and *Singapore* all provide counselling services – such as helplines, hotlines and counselling centers – for students.

Support for Vulnerable Children and Youth: *Canada, China, Chile, Mexico* and *the Philippines* have provided special support, including financial support, to vulnerable children and young students.

Teacher Support: Teacher support is crucial in ensuring student well-being. They need help with recording classes, providing resources, online tutoring, problem-solving and communicating with parents, as well as monitoring students' mental and physical condition and learning progress through phone calls and text messages, and interaction in online classes.

Food Programs: Governments of member economies have made efforts to ensure students have access to food programs normally accessed at school, in particular, school meals for vulnerable students, such as children with disabilities or from low-income families.

Devices and Connectivity: *Chile, Brunei Darussalam, Mexico, New Zealand, Russia* and *Singapore* made efforts to ensure devices and Internet connectivity are available to students during school closures – this not only ensures students' engagement with remote education, but also connect them with others, which is important for wellbeing, especially in the context of social restrictions..

Textbooks and teaching materials: Textbooks and teaching materials have been distributed to facilitate home-based learning. In *China* and *Russia*, education authorities reached agreements with large publishers to provide free access to the electronic forms of textbooks through portals.

Regulation of Online Learning: Governments of member economies have also produced regulations and guidelines to ensure student well-being during remote learning.

Education on Pandemic Prevention: Member economies have used various means – such as the radio, Internet, and newsletters and brochures – to ensure students understand pandemic prevention and control measures.

Remedial Classes/Lessons: In *Korea*, special remedial classes have been provided by each school in a voluntary manner to make up for any learning losses during COVID-19.



**Employment Assistance:** In *Russia*, higher education institutions have launched different social programmes to assist students in the face of the pandemic – for example, special employment assistance programmes for students. More than 100 HEIs have provided temporary job placements for students during the pandemic.

## **International Students**

*Australia, China, Brunei Darussalam, Chinese Taipei, Korea, New Zealand and Russia* reported that it is a challenge for international students and their families to embark upon higher education in the first place. At the same time, prospective international students were unable to commence their studies due to border closures. Besides, the visas of many international students soon expired.

Many international students reported feeling homesick, isolated or anxious over their own health and well-being as well as that of their loved ones back home. This was often accentuated by other mental health issues due to the pandemic.

Although all lectures were recorded and simultaneously uploaded online, it was challenging for students to engage in in-class experiments, skills training and discussions with peers. Online education is not the most suitable mode of delivery in some sectors and for certain types of students. Some study programmes, such as those which rely on in-person elements or physical resources and facilities, were greatly impacted. A number of students have decided to defer their studies until they can return to face-to-face learning.

International activities, including internships and exchange programmes, have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 crisis, with a large proportion of international students finding themselves in financial predicament after losing part-time jobs because of lockdowns and many unable to return to their home economy.

*Australia, Canada, Japan and New Zealand* noted many students had reported financial hardships/concerns, including the loss of part-time jobs and uncertainty around future employment in sectors affected by COVID-19. They might also be impacted by financial struggles within their own family, and this may have had a knock-on effect on their studies.

To ensure continuity of learning for international students, *Australia, Brunei Darussalam, China, Chinese Taipei, Russia and Singapore* provided access to online learning.

Flexible tuition, study and employment policies were implemented in *Australia* and *China*. The *Canadian* government allowed international students to work a maximum of 20 hours per week while classes were in session, provided they were working in an essential service or function, such as health care, critical infrastructure, or the supply of food or other critical goods.

Financial support has been extended to international students in *China, Japan and New Zealand*.

Counselling and mental health support has been available to international students in *Australia* and *China*, through email, hotline, video conferencing and consultation centers.

*China, Korea, Mexico* and *Russia* have taken policy measures to help international students extend their visas.

Guidelines or protocols on pandemic prevention and control were developed to meet the needs of international students in *Australia, Korea, Thailand* and *Russia*.

Member economies have also provided logistical support for international students during COVID-19, for example, computer and equipment hire or secure housing.

The impact of COVID-19 on students of member economies studying abroad varies depending on jurisdiction. Many students encountered obstacles and problems in terms of entry due to strict control measures. Lockdowns and school closures/shutdowns have affected all aspects of their lives, such as health, accommodation, academic program schedules, and financing and resources for extended stays as a result of rising living expenses. Some may have psychological problems due to homesickness, an insufficient supply of daily necessities or worries over public security.

In the medium term, due to a tightening labor market, students may also be impacted by a loss of income from casual employment which they need to support their studies. Graduates seeking jobs overseas may face difficulties because of the pandemic. As the financial capacity of higher education institutions declines, future school enrolments may also be affected. And some students may choose to give up studying abroad.

*Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Mexico* and *Singapore* encouraged all their citizens to return home and provided assistance in this regard –, for example, repatriation flights or paid flights.

*China, Mexico, Russia* and *Thailand* offered possibilities to their citizens to return home. *Mexico* provided assistance in collaboration with diplomatic representations.

*Brunei Darussalam, China, Korea, Peru* and *New Zealand* have tracked and monitored the well-being of their overseas citizens.

*Japan* has urgently responded by providing financial support to its overseas students so as to reduce the financial burden of returning home.

*China* and *Thailand* provided guidelines on pandemic prevention and control for their overseas citizens.

*China* and *Korea* extended support on accommodation for their citizens abroad. The *Korean* government provided dormitories for its overseas students who could not find accommodation

for self-quarantine so that they could receive assistance from the Korean diplomatic missions abroad. Chinese embassies and consulates maintain communication with students, and provide support for those who have encountered problems regarding visas, accommodation and insurance, so as to guarantee the legitimate rights of Chinese students abroad.

Alternative online learning arrangements have been made in *China* and *Singapore*.

*China* provides instructions and information on employment according to the diverse needs of students and deploys online recruitment. It will organize the 15th “Chun Hui Bei” Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition for Chinese Overseas Students.

## **Parents**

Parents who were categorized as non-essential workers face the challenge of assisting with their children’s online learning. These parents became responsible for guiding their children without the pedagogical skills and/or tools to do so – some of them lost their jobs or had their employment suspended, bringing strain on the household’s income security. The burden of round-the-clock childcare increased. Besides, there was also the possibility of young children from dual-earner families being left unattended.

In *Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Chinese Taipei, Malaysia, Peru, the Philippines* and *Russia*, some parents could neither afford proper electronic gadgets nor Internet connectivity to support online learning.

*Chile, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, the Philippines* and *Russia* reported a lack of knowledge or understanding and experience among parents to support their children’s home-based learning.

*Australia, Russia* and *Singapore* ensured that essential workers were still able to send their children to school during COVID-19.

Financial assistance was provided to families in *Canada’s Ontario* during the pandemic – parents received a one-time payment of \$200 (CAD) per child up to 12 years of age (\$250 for those up to 21 years of age with special needs), including children enrolled in private schools, under the Support for Families initiative.

Home-based learning materials were made available online in *Canada, Chile, China, Japan* and *Singapore*.

*Canada, China, Indonesia, New Zealand, Peru, the Philippines* and *Singapore* provided guidelines for parents in terms of home schooling and ensuring the well-being of their children.

*China, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, the Philippines* and *Singapore* have all enhanced parent-teacher/family-school collaborations.

Counselling services have been provided in *Japan* and *Russia*, such as a 24-hour Children's SOS Hotline or hotlines on methodological support for teachers and parents.

## **Teachers**

Teachers, like many other professionals, experienced emotional stress and anxiety during COVID-19. Teachers needed to work in a safe and secure environment in the face of COVID-19, but also had to prevent themselves and students from contagion, which may put them under a great pressure.

In *Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Korea, Malaysia* and *Russia*, teachers had to rapidly shift to online and remote delivery of education, often using new technologies or new approaches, which required an advanced level of digital literacy/ICT skills.

Teachers have varying degrees of familiarity/expertise with various tools, techniques and methodologies for instructional technology and the related devices for distance /online teaching. This tended to affect their confidence in distance and online pedagogies.

It was also a challenge for teachers to adapt curricula or transfer already-developed courses into an online format. They were required to prepare online resources, online teaching materials or education content without any copyright infringement.

Member economies also reported the challenges of student supervision (monitoring students learning performance) and assessment – in particular, how to track students' progress and keeping the virtual classroom engaged.

*Peru, New Zealand, Mexico* and *Korea* noted teachers' increased workload as they had to strike a fair balance between teaching activities and domestic chores (needs coming from their families).

Mass school closures hindered teachers' abilities to directly interact with students, yet they were still required to meet the individual needs of each student through distance learning, while motivating them and answering their questions.

*Malaysia* indicated that online classroom etiquette or 'netiquette' was something that students and teachers had to establish to ensure the smooth flow of online lessons.

Teachers have been given the flexibility to utilize various learning strategies and tools for the remote delivery of education as reported by *Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia* and *Thailand* — such as using Google / Microsoft Online Forms for assessments, MsTeams, Zoom, Socrativ, WhatsApp, Quizzies — to facilitate their lessons.

*Chile, China, Japan, Korea, Chinese Taipei, Peru, New Zealand* and *Thailand* have provided training programs/courses, including virtual training on distance learning/ICT skills for

teachers.

*Japan, Korea, New Zealand and Malaysia* have set up learning support portals to help teachers perform their duties.

Member economies have prepared teaching materials for distance learning for their teachers.

Teacher network/communities have been created in *Korea, Canada, Mexico and Singapore* to facilitate their adaptation to changes in delivery of education.

*Peru, the Philippines and New Zealand* have developed guidelines, templates or guidance for teachers' work during COVID-19.

Additional teachers were recruited in member economies, in particular, for the delivery of remote learning.

Teachers also collaborated with parents to support student learning at home. In *Brunei Darussalam*, teachers liaise with parents to monitor their students' learning at home. *Indonesia* and *Malaysia* encourage teachers to collaborate and have a good relationship with parents.

In *Korea*, regulations and applications of copyright were relaxed temporarily to assist teachers who were developing online learning content to improve the quality of their teaching.

## **Financial Implications**

The fiscal capacity of member economies has declined due to COVID-19. Because of unexpected expenditures, governments needed to adopt a flexible approach in their accounting as they execute the budget appropriated in the previous year. They need either realign their budgets to augment efforts to bring COVID-19 under control or reallocate funds from regular programmes to improve the education situation.

Substantial and additional financial resources need to be provided (from known and potential sources of funds) to ensure the remote delivery of education, including digital gadgets and Internet connectivity.

Another challenge is managing hygiene in the classroom as students progressively returned to the classroom.

To reduce the regulatory and cost burden on education and training providers at this time, the *Australian* government decided to waive the majority of fees and charges of quality regulatory agencies.

A contingency budget has been allocated to procure items – such as school disinfection equipment and devices for remote learning – in *Brunei Darussalam, Japan, Korea, Indonesia*

and *Peru*.

Flexible policy measures have been taken to address funding gaps during COVID-19.

As schools transition towards reopening in *New Zealand*, cash flow relief was provided for school construction and transport areas which have been affected by COVID-19.

The financing of scholarships and educational credits is being carried out in *Peru* to help higher education students continue their studies.

A platform for families with school-age children to apply for a vacancy in public education institutions has been financed in *Peru*.

Spending on non-priority items has been reduced in programs, activities and projects under maintenance and other operating expenses in *the Philippines*.

Also in *the Philippines*, the government continues to engage with local governments, civil society organizations, parent-teacher associations, community leaders and other stakeholders to ensure transparency and accountability in amended budget and expenditure.

## **Education Quality**

In the transition from face-to-face to distance models of delivery, member economies have taken different approaches to monitoring the learning processes of students. In economies with a federal or decentralized structure, learning processes were monitored at local and jurisdictional levels, as was the case in *Australia, Canada and the Philippines*.

In *China*, higher education institutions have established an online teaching evaluation system based on big data – it ensures efficiency through focusing on online learning, online discussions, online assessments and exams.

In *Indonesia*, schools have been urged to continuously report to the national education database. A rapid survey was also conducted to gather information about learning processes in schools.

In *Japan*, in addition to support students' learning at home with ICT, their learning progress is monitored through individual meetings with teachers during special school attendance days and home visits. Likewise, in *Thailand*, teachers are assigned to go door-to-door to evaluate the learning progress of each student.

*Korea, the Philippines and Thailand* developed guidelines for monitoring students' learning processes. For example, *Korea* published Student Attendance Tracking, Evaluation and Record-keeping Guidelines for Online Classes including an introduction to full-scale online classes.

Education authorities are committed to quality assurance. To ensure quality of learning during

COVID-19, distance learning has been delivered through a mix of media, learning modalities and alternative modes of learning.

Member economies have taken various approaches to conduct evaluations of student learning performance.

Curriculum and learning tasks have been adapted to fit with changes brought about by COVID-19. In *Singapore*, homework and assignments have been reduced given that home-based learning hours are fewer than the usual school hours, aligned to the MOE's goal to inculcate self-directed learning and discovery of curiosity.

Regulations, frameworks and standards have been developed to ensure quality of learning during COVID-19.

Online forums and webinars have been used to enhance quality of learning during COVID-19.

## **Education Equity**

The sudden use of digital tools ran the risk of leaving those who were already disadvantaged in an even worse situation. It casts light on the inequity of education, which remains the biggest challenge in member economies.

The learning progress of vulnerable, marginalized and disadvantaged students was more likely to be impacted in such a situation, due to a range of factors, including poorer access to digital technology and support for remote home-based learning. For example, children from low-income families, or those who live in rural or remote areas, may not have access to Internet services or the technology nor gadgets/electronic devices (even a telephone) required for learning and social interaction.

Furthermore, it's also a challenge to ensure equitable access to online resources for learning, including distributing and monitoring the use of learning materials for underprivileged students and off-grid families, as well as those in rural areas.

Additionally, disruptions in sources of income for households presented challenges for many new and returning post-secondary students, as the case in *Canada*.

The pandemic also affected school feeding programs in certain member economies.

Considering limited access to devices and Internet connectivity, member economies have employed multiple modes of delivery, or a combination of online and offline education, to ensure gaps between urban, rural, poor and marginalized groups are not being exacerbated.

While the development of ICT environments for education is necessary and an ongoing process, investment is needed to close the digital gap.

Equipment and devices have been loaned/rented to various students to support their online learning.

Targeted interventions have been made for the most vulnerable groups in *the Philippines, Peru* and *Singapore*.

*The Philippines* has also increased the number of TVET institutions nationwide (through the creation of training centers in all provinces) to support those who want to re-skill and/or up-skill.

*Brunei Darussalam* provided its scholarship students (the majority are underprivileged students in public higher institutions) with a daily allowance even when they do not physically attend the institutions.

APEC member economies have taken various measures – through alternative modes of delivery in particular – to ensure children with disabilities are not left behind in learning during COVID-19.

Customized/personalized learning support has been provided to students with disabilities in *Korea* and *Mexico*. In tandem with different types of disabilities, both online learning and home visits have been used to support their learning and assistive equipment and learning packets have been provided.

The *Canadian* government is supporting new and returning post-secondary students this fall through enhancements to the Canada Student Loans and Grants program (in March 2021 this program was renamed the Canada Student Financial Assistance Program, including doubling the grants for students with permanent disabilities. This measure has since been extended to July 2023.

The government of *Japan* has prepared a supplementary budget for FY2020 to provide I/O devices for children with visual, auditory or other physical disabilities that cause difficulties when they use a PC/tablet.

Nearly all schools in *Australia* and *Singapore* have continued to provide vulnerable and disadvantaged students with face-to-face learning.

Member economies have taken measures to improve accessibility to the Internet and devices – for example, the Zero Rating on Data Plan for Educational Online Resources, and agreements between the government and Internet providers for lower rates for students.

Earmarked budgets have been allocated for vulnerable children in *Canada, Japan, New Zealand* and *Singapore*.

Free access to learning materials is available in *China, Korea* and *Mexico*. *Mexico* provides free



access to digital libraries, specialized publications and resources.

In *Singapore*, disadvantaged primary and secondary school students continued to receive meal subsidies during the circuit breaker period even though they were not in school. The money, deposited on a smart card, allowed them to purchase food and groceries.

## **The Role of Technology and Education Innovation**

Technology has enabled education institutions to continue delivery of education. However, the experience has not been the same for all children due to a range of reasons, such as differential access to laptops and devices, Wi-Fi, location, support and intrinsic factors (*Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Mexico and Peru*).

Distance learning has been implemented through a mix of media and channels, including print-based learning materials, one-way massive broadcasting (TV and radio programmes), web-based exchanges using social media channels or learning platforms, as well as innovative teacher-parent-community arrangements (*Canada and Peru*).

The role of technology in education during COVID-19 is about realizing “Future Learning” by structuring an environment where children are individually optimized for STEAM learning, such as programming education. In order to realize this, along with arranging educational ICT infrastructure, such as PCs and high-speed networks, it is necessary to introduce EdTech services currently being developed by the education industry to schools and promote learning style reform (*Japan*).

The role of technology in education is to enable all students to engage in learning in a stable manner by providing learning platforms and online education tools to connect home to school. This helps students realize their potential and satiate their intellectual curiosity even in the face of unforeseen school closures. Online learning platforms enable both young students and adult learners to access a wider pool of learning resources, regardless of where they are and which institution they belong to (*Korea and Singapore*).

The role of technology is optimized through the use of video conferencing, online learning platforms and digital document sharing. It facilitates the acquisition of competencies through videos, online tutorials and simulations (*Indonesia and the Philippines*).

Learning management systems allow students to access online learning materials and collaborate with one another. The Singapore Student Learning Space (SLS) – an online learning platform – contains resources aligned to curricula along with a range of features to support self-directed and collaborative learning among students (*Singapore*).

Technology has enabled a huge number of connections not previously possible. Multiple connections were made between the education authority and schools and early learning services leaders in a way that facilitates direct and quick decisions. Technology can be used to connect

government expertise with that of educators and sector leaders, as well as with the expertise of learners, parents, employers and others involved in education. Technology facilitates management discussions at policy level remotely which, in turn, produces more informed decisions (*New Zealand, Malaysia and Mexico*).

Online platforms can facilitate interactive and remote activities and carry a broad range of content to a connected community. Technology can also be used to monitor the learning progress of trainees, deliver support and career guidance, and provide capacity building interventions for teachers and school administrators (*The Philippines and Thailand*).

Faculties use various digital tools for (a) teaching, learning and assessments, (b) the continuous monitoring of student learning by teachers and parents and (c) assisting self-study/ distance learning/ online meetings. During COVID-19, in particular, educators have been maximizing the benefits of these technologies and learning how they can improve online/distance learning. This has led to important innovations and creative teaching methods that continue to improve education and blended learning (*Chinese Taipei and Thailand*).

Better communication has been made possible due to technology, and a better understanding of it can facilitate more sustainable ways of interaction. Technology enables better teamwork among teachers, especially through the sharing of resources, as well as more parent involvement in student learning activities. It can also serve main tool for the communication between teacher and student.

## **Recommendations**

*Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore and Thailand* suggested documenting, consolidating and sharing best practices on member economies' responses to COVID-19 with respect to education – including steps taken before, during and after the pandemic – and then developing a summary or a synthesis of the information gained from this survey. *New Zealand* suggested this could provide policy insights for member economies and for discussion at future EDNET meetings or virtual seminars. *Australia* proposed an information-sharing exercise that encouraged economies to share insights, innovations and strategies on how they adapted to remote learning, particularly online, with the aim of providing practical examples that could be adopted in a range of economic circumstances. *Malaysia* suggested that the sharing of best practices should focus on remote learning, especially for students with disabilities or special needs, as well as those marginalized.

*Brunei Darussalam, Chinese Taipei, Peru and Thailand* suggested closer collaboration among economies – for example, through “Epidemic Prevention Platforms” or “Community of Ideas” – for sharing strategies and lessons learned in response to COVID-19. As various schools and regions were forced to resolve their own individual problems, such platforms could allow faster solutions and more creative collaborations.

*Brunei Darussalam and the Philippines* proposed carrying out specific research/studies related

to education's response to COVID-19. *Brunei Darussalam* suggested research into marginalized areas and how authorities could better serve their technological needs. *The Philippines* recommended studies on economic and APEC-wide best practices, specifically on (a) ensuring equitable access to quality TVET; and (b) the financial impact on TVET, including best practices on the utilization of funds for the continuity of education.

*Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, the Philippines* and *Thailand* advanced the idea of improving capacity building for distance learning and remote learning. *Brunei Darussalam* suggested more training resources for institutions and disadvantaged students to enable and improve online delivery of learning and assessments. *Thailand* proposed that APEC contribute to teacher training materials so they could use technology in teaching and learning.

*Peru* suggested sharing strategies or guidelines on the role of parents as companions in the education of children, as well as sharing protocols for a safe return to school.

*The Philippines* proposed allocating funds for projects and initiatives related to COVID-19, or prioritizing the use of a portion of APEC funds for projects related to COVID-19 (for example, improving distance learning in economies, increasing social protection for the education sector), with a particular focus on poor and marginalized groups.

## I. Role of Government

### 1.1 School Closure and Reopening

#### 1.1.1 School Closure

Since March 2020<sup>2</sup>, *Chile, China, Japan, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore and Thailand* have mandated a temporary closure of all the schools and higher education institutions, both public and private. Students switched to home-based remote learning via various media including Internet, TV and radio for continuity of education, in particular, compulsory schooling.

The timing of school closures varied from economy to economy and also across different levels of education. *Chile, China, Malaysia and Republic of Korea* closed their schools at the beginning of the school term or semester, *Russia* in the middle of the academic year, and *Australia, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, the Philippines and Thailand* at the end of the term/semester.

In economies with a federal structure or with decentralization structure – such as *Australia, Canada, Indonesia and Russia* – school closures were the responsibility of states, provinces and territories. In *Indonesia*, the school and universities in red zones are remain closed until further notice. The school in green zones can be opened after fulfilling a very strict requirements and recommendation from several parties, including central government and parents. In *Canada*, all schools were closed, and many provinces and territories chose to keep them closed for the remainder of the school year.

In *Australia, New Zealand and Singapore*, schools remained open to children of essential workers as well as vulnerable and disadvantaged children. Likewise, higher education institutions allowed students from vulnerable backgrounds to study on campus.

#### 1.1.2 School Reopening

*Brunei Darussalam, China, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand* have taken a calibrated approach to reopening schools by phases, starting with graduating cohorts or the third-year students of high schools (i.e. K12 students), and other levels returning on a weekly rotation. In so doing, it reduces the congestion and the risk of contagion in the first few weeks.

Typically, the reopening of schools is based on:

- Timing and overall public health
- Benefits and risk assessments based on cross-sectoral engagement

Context specific evidence to ensure schools were ready and safe for resumptions (*Malaysia*).

In *Japan*, the government issued a notice regarding advice for the school management, such as

- Ensure social distancing by dividing classes
- Shift school hours or days by grades and classes
- Set school days prioritizing the final graders or the first graders who need face to face learning support.

---

<sup>2</sup> 8 April 2020 in Singapore.

In *New Zealand*, once the lockdown had eased to allow most people back to work, schools were also opened to for students up to age of 14, so that they could learn in a safe environment if their parents/guardians were not at home.

In all member economies, before entering any school, from preschool to university, students must have their temperature checked and are provided with free alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Students and faculty are also required to wear face masks in the classroom.

## **1.2 Government Agencies in Charge of Education**

### **1.2.1 Impact of COVID-19 on Education Systems**

The pandemic has been disruptive to students, families, institutions and both local and federal governments. In most member economies, even though the outbreak was controlled through quick actions and prudent policies of governments, **education authorities and education institutions remained vigilant and shifted to home-based remote learning to ensure continuity of education**. Even in *Brunei Darussalam Darussalam*, where there was no lockdown and schools remained open, teaching and learning were conducted through home-based online learning, or Home Learning Pack (HLP). Although schools remained safe spaces for learners, governments had to consider the wider impact of school measures on society, especially families. The limited mobility within member economies and across the globe also contributed to the decision of implementing remote learning.

In fact, the shift from the conventional norm to virtual mode, on an untested and unprecedented scale, involved a lot of trial and error. **Schools had to rapidly switch to distance models of delivery, often unprepared, and different schools took different approaches**. This means that experiences have varied across the system.

Not only teaching and learning but student assessments also moved online, and more digital learning platforms were introduced. Prolonged school closures also affected **timelines for assessments and high stakes examinations**, including national assessments, student next grade promotions and graduations. Governments of member economies had to reschedule and rearrange examinations with respect to the circumstances.

In all the surveyed economies, there are certain areas with poor Internet connectivity, families without the devices needed for remote home-based learning, as well as teachers and parents without the digital competence needed for guiding or helping students. Hence the pandemic has caused **a huge loss of learning time especially for those hard-to-reach children, particularly those in rural and remote areas**. For instance, in *Chile*, 12.6% of households have no Internet access, so reaching students in rural and isolated schools is very challenging.

It is worth noting that **the importance of online learning is on the rise** for protecting children's right to education. Not only in an emergency setting such as COVID-19, but also in terms of

preparing for a future education system. The importance of online learning that matches with children's developmental stages is particularly increasing.

### **1.2.2 Policy Actions Taken by Governments of Member Economies**

The governments of member economies have used creative strategies to resolve the unprecedented challenges brought about by COVID-19.

#### Pandemic Prevention and Control

Prioritizing student safety, the governments of all member economies introduced preemptive policies to curb the spread of COVID-19. Through its Education Response Policy, *Brunei Darussalam* managed related issues in **an integrated and collaborative manner** involving various government departments and agencies. For instance, *Brunei Darussalaman* students who returned from overseas had to undergo **14 days of self-isolation** at dedicated venues in the economy; activities such as mass **gatherings (i.e. graduation ceremonies or sports days) were postponed/cancelled**; and guidelines for remote learning included maintaining **high levels of personal hygiene and social distancing**. In *Japan*, to ensure students' well-being during school closures, the government requested local boards of education to maintain contact with students and their parents, and to utilize support hotlines as well as school nurses and counselors. In *Indonesia*, the government issued a **health protocol** for education, as well as regulations and circular letters; it also **encouraged community empowerment/involvement** to support parents, teachers and students through the pandemic. The education authority and health authorities in *Mexico* collaborated to support various social needs, such as establishing psychological, medical and legal advisories; the government also **translated its COVID-19 prevention and control campaigns into all its national languages and disseminate them throughout the respective regions**. In *Korea*, to reduce the burden of childcare on parents caused by school closures, **at-school childcare services** were offered, and with the cooperation of relevant ministries, local community centers were used to provide **emergency childcare services** in combination with at-home childcare services.

#### Remote Delivery of Education

Education authorities in *Australia, Brunei Darussalam, China, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Thailand, Russia* and *Singapore* **adapted their delivery of education** so that it could continue through the pandemic – this involved a significant effort to deliver education online. A differentiated approach was employed for students in various scenarios, – i.e. in *Thailand*, online learning was made available for upper secondary level, and on-site learning (with social distancing) for those living in remote areas. In *Brunei Darussalam*, all higher education institutions had to follow the Business Continuity Plan (BCP), whereby all teachers, lecturers, officers and support staff were advised to work from home on a daily basis, and students carry out **home learning/schooling**. In *China* and *Japan*, governments opened a **Learning Support Portal**, which introduced various learning materials to students and their parents. *China, Korea* and *Malaysia* developed **guidelines for teaching and learning** in the remote delivery of education. *Korea* prepared for a full-scale introduction of online education and developed guidelines for tracking and managing students' academic records, including grading policies in online class settings. *Korea* and *Thailand* **started online learning with pilot/testing**: in *Korea*,

pilot schools were operated to develop and distribute a generalized model of online classes; in *Thailand*, a testing period for distance learning via satellite or DLTV (Distance Learning Television) to provide on-air classrooms for primary and lower secondary education ensured that the system was stable and distance learning could be effectively accommodated if on-site learning was not applicable. In *Korea* and *Russia*, **training on e-learning technologies** was carried out to improve teachers' capacity in this area. *Russia* took a differentiated approach whereby the organization of training depended on regional characteristics (availability of infrastructure, and readiness of educational organizations to use e-learning technologies). In *Singapore*, schools and institutes of higher learning utilised existing online learning platforms and enhanced IT infrastructure and online teaching capabilities, to disseminate learning materials and resources for home-based learning. This ensured that teaching and learning could continue. In *Mexico*, the government and education institutions offered **free access to digital libraries, specialized publications and resources**. *China* and *Mexico* strengthened **scientific research in areas related to pandemic prevention and control**, such as biometrics, biotechnology, and the development of medical equipment.

Member economies also allocated **additional budgets for ICT infrastructure** support for the online delivery of education. In *Japan*, the government accelerated the GIGA School Program which provides each student with **one computer device** through an injection of 2.1 billion USD in FY2020. In addition, facilities and systems for distance learning in universities were also strengthened. By working closely with relevant ministries, local governments, provincial offices and private companies, *Korea* was able to provide **smart digital devices and Internet subscription fees** to students in need to ensure their participation in online classes.

### Digital Divide

*China, Japan, Korea, Peru* and *Russia* developed policies to address the digital divide and ensure the continuity of education of disadvantaged students. *Japan* provided **special equipment for children with disabilities**, and **mobile Wi-Fi routers for low-income families**. Likewise, in *Korea* customized policies were implemented to assist students with disabilities, students from multicultural families and low-income households. *Peru*, as an exception for the 2020 fiscal year, acquired informatics and/or electronic devices for focalized public educational institutions, to ensure **students with connectivity difficulties could continue their education**. *Russia* issued policies to support the most vulnerable groups of students, in particular, it provided **higher education programmes for students with special needs or disabilities**.

## **II. Sector Perspective**

### **2.1 Preschool and Kindergartens**

#### **2.1.1 Impact**

COVID-19 limited **children's access to early learning services and attendance** was compromised by a number of factors:

- Health concerns over sending children to early learning services
- More parents working from home

- Parents unable to afford fees because of job losses

**All preschools and kindergartens** in *China and the Philippines* as well as some early children development and education centers in *Australia* were temporarily **closed**. In that case, parents were obliged to school their children at home. This has increased the burden of childcare on dual-earner families. Some parents are not capable of assisting their children with home schooling so the latter often went without any formal learning during COVID-19.

Meanwhile, **it was challenging for essential workers with young children to find caregivers when preschools and kindergartens were closed** – this impacted their ability to do their job. In the *Russian Federation*, preschools and kindergartens operated in the mode of on-call groups for children whose parents worked in institutions that were continuously operating in emergency situations.

Pre-schools and teachers struggled to find suitable solutions to their problems. In *Brunei Darussalam, the Philippines* and *Malaysia*, **students continued their studies through home-based learning – either online or using home learning packs** – the absence of connectivity and gadgets often resulted in disengagement.

The pandemic also caused **uncertainty in funding and financial viability**. Going forward, private kindergartens may encounter challenges in terms of achieving balance of payments, due to losses of income as reported in *China* and *Malaysia*.

In *Chinese Taipei*, preschools and kindergartens remained open, and children went to school as normal. However, students and faculty were required to wear face masks in the classroom at all times.

In economies that exercise a federal structure, the right to determine how preschool and kindergartens were operated was left to the individual states, provinces and territories.

### **2.1.2 Challenges**

Early-grade learners are the most vulnerable when access to education becomes a problem, as they rely heavily on the guidance of adults as caregivers and facilitators of learning. **The childcare burden** on dual-earner families is particularly heavy due to preschool and kindergarten closures.

As a result of COVID-19, there is a transfer of the school experience to the home, and this brought about a huge challenge for **teachers and students in terms of preparing for distance/online learning**. Parents and families need the orientation to assist their children to learn through play. Teachers also need the orientation, in particular, to enhance their ICT capacity, to ensure the continuity of educational services.

In general, it's challenging to create **effective online teaching and learning processes**. Online education (or distance learning) for preschoolers and kindergarteners should be readjusted in



ways that involve the participation of households by considering the effectiveness of digital devices used in early childhood education. Cooperative efforts should be made between education authorities and early childhood education institutions and kindergartens to develop and utilize new online education models and educational content for the shift from face-to-face delivery to non-face-to-face and vice-versa.

Some parents chose to withdraw their children from preschool/kindergarten due to concerns over the pandemic, and high unemployment rates also reduced participation and attendance numbers, and this impacted **providers' ability to manage numbers, staff and budgets effectively**. It is challenging to get the timely data needed to support the network and prevent early learning services from closing.

### **2.1.3 Policy Actions**

During the pandemic, many member economies closed down kindergartens and switched to **community-based childcare services or at-home childcare services**, as was the case in *Korea, the Philippines* and *New Zealand*. In *Korea*, several ministries worked together to offer community-based childcare services and at-home childcare services – including **the use of flexi-time and family-care leave in the workplace**; in kindergarten, caring service and distance learning were supported for children who had difficulties in home care.. In *Thailand*, many offices allowed employers to work from home so parents could better manage their work while taking care of their children without leaving home. *New Zealand* allowed home-based childcare arrangements for essential workers (provided through three large providers that met health and safety requirements), and a temporary increase in discretionary hours to create some leniency for services not meeting qualification ratios.

**A hybrid of face-to-face learning delivery and distance learning** was used to ensure the continuity of education delivery in the majority of member economies. In *the Philippines*, a combination of face-to-face delivery with the teacher and **modular learning at home** was employed, the latter required the guidance of trained para-teachers. *Japan* opened **a Learning Support Portal** to support children's learning, which introduced various learning materials, videos that students and their parents could utilize at home, as well as specific games by which children could get a sense of satisfaction and deepen their learning at home. *Korea* established **a plan for distance learning in different times and/or space settings** to match the individual settings of each kindergarten, and developed and distributed learning packets (learning materials, books, etc.). In *Brunei Darussalam* and *Indonesia*, education ministries worked with local telco providers or technology partners/start-ups to **provide free services or preferential data packs for online learning**. *Brunei Darussalam* also used **home learning packs** aligned with preschool curricula to complement online learning while *Indonesia* broadcast learning materials and cultural content through the state television channel TVRI. *Thailand* offered **support for schools by hiring temporary assistants** to help take care of pupils.

The governments of member economies allocated **budgets to help support early childhood education and care services**. In *Australia*, **payments were made directly to early childhood education and care services** through a newly-created Early Childhood Education and Care

Relief package, to help keep doors open and staff in employment. *New Zealand* earmarked **advanced funding, retention of funding** with no claw backs and **emergency funding provisions** to compensate for funds due to children's non-attendance. *Russia* allocated financial support for both families with children and activities of all non-profit organizations in the field of preschool education.

*China, Indonesia, Peru* and *Russia* issued **guidelines for COVID-19 prevention and control as well as home schooling**. *China's* education ministry set out organizational safeguards and sanitation requirements for COVID-19 prevention and control in preschools and kindergartens; they were asked to formulate detailed prevention plans and measures, to establish an epidemiological inspection and reporting mechanism, as well as a sanitation management system. *Indonesia* provided teachers and parents with informative guidelines through video graphics and infographics, and encouraged them to actively communicate with each other. Likewise, *Russia's* ministries of education and ministry of health prepared methodological recommendations for institutions engaged in preschool training and childcare.

## 2.2 Primary and Secondary Schools

### 2.2.1 Impact

COVID-19 has **disrupted essential school-based services in the majority of APEC economies** with school closures and learning mode changes across the region. **Holidays were extended** (as in *China*) **or brought forward** (as in *Singapore*) as part of adjustments made to academic calendars. **Many private educational institutions closed down** due to reduced spending power of parents.

All schools needed to rapidly develop ways to deliver **remote home-based learning** to children, in particular, online learning or e-learning, which was complemented by study packs (as in *Brunei Darussalam*). Remote delivery drove demand for virtual resources, such as television, radio and telephone. However, it is difficult to offer courses in which competences are supposed to be developed in depth by means of TV, web and radio. A variety of delivery methods have been used in schools in member economies, including **a combination of temporary school closures, online education and physical school attendance**.

Despite substantial efforts to ensure the continuity of education, the closure of schools brought about **losses in learning to varying degrees**. The capacity for quality learning – especially for the most disadvantaged populations – is yet to reach a satisfactory level in most economies. Disengagement is likely to occur to those vulnerable groups. **Increased dropout rates** (over death of parents, economic or job losses, etc.) were observed in economies such as *Peru*, as well as absenteeism of adolescent students, which is reflected in the rating of the sessions. A **greater educational gap (or inequality)** was generated both between and within rural and urban education.

In *Chinese Taipei*, schools remained open, and children went to school as per normal.

### 2.2.2 Challenges

Starting the school year late or facing unforeseen interruptions alters the lives of many children, as well as their parents and teachers. It is important, therefore, not only to guarantee every student's right to education – even in the face of a pandemic or an emergency – through on- and off-line education, but also to develop accreditation standards for online education, assure the quality of teachers, establish infrastructure and close gaps in learning.

For most economies, in the face of education disruptions and school closures, it was a challenge to **ensure student well-being and engagement in learning throughout the pandemic**, as learning and teaching modes shifted from the classroom to a distance learning environment. Teachers and students need to not only prepare for online learning, but also adapt to distance learning and be able to respond with agility to rapidly evolving situation and alert levels.

According to the survey, one of biggest challenges was **providing (customized) support for students in need of additional assistance** – i.e. the most vulnerable, including students with disabilities. Similarly, it is challenging to provide targeted support for students who need help in line with their particular developmental stages and to prevent learning gaps from occurring – these include (a) students in the lower years of elementary school; (b) those who need additional assistance for their basic education; (c) those from multicultural families; and (d) drop-out students, as suggested by Korea.

*Australia, Malaysia, and the Philippines* report that their biggest challenge was **delivering education to children who do not have access to technology or adequate support** to learn at home – in other words, enlarging digital divide. In the same vein, *Brunei Darussalam* reports that its biggest challenge in primary and secondary education is narrowing the digital and economic gap amongst students. Schools have to cater to students from different economic and family backgrounds. Aside from some students not having devices and connectivity, the cost and quality of the connectivity is also an issue.

*The Philippines* reports particular difficulty with delivery of online learning materials, especially in the Last Mile Schools (i.e. schools with fewer than four classrooms, usually makeshift and nonstandard ones; no electricity; no funds for repairs or new construction projects in the last four years; a travel distance of more than one hour from the center, accessible only through difficult terrain; with multi-grade classes, with fewer than five teachers and 100 learners, more than 75% of whom are indigenous peoples).

*Chile, Thailand and other economies* acknowledged challenges in terms of maintaining children's health, with many left without the meals they would normally receive at school. School feeding programs provide children with their most nutritious meal of the day. They are essential for cognitive development and well-being. These programs demand very complex logistical and administrative efforts.

### **2.2.3 Policy Actions**

All almost all member economies have taken **policy measures for pandemic prevention and control** to ensure the safety of students during COVID-19. In *Australia*, a committee of medical

experts provided advice for school leaders on managing the impact of COVID-19 in schools. In *Thailand*, it was mandated that all agencies under the supervision of the Ministry of Education should keep their common areas and common equipment clean and provide alcohol gel at entrance gates for public use.

<b>Box 1. Policy Measures for Pandemic Prevention and Control</b>	
<b>Russia</b>	<p>In accordance with recommendations from the Ministry of Education, schools need to put in place the following preventive measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintain a distance of at least 1.5 meters, both between students and in contact with teachers;</li> <li>• mix different classes, union of classes, union of groups of different ages are all not allowed;</li> <li>• each study group should be assigned an appropriate office so children shall minimize their movements in the buildings;</li> <li>• start classes at different times;</li> <li>• disinfect premises in educational institutions.</li> </ul> <p>A working group of the Ministry of Education decided to cancel the planned arrival of children at children’s recreation centres and recommended that the centres consider distributing the children to other shifts.</p>
<b>Thailand</b>	<p>It was mandated that civil servants, government teachers and educational personnel, personnel of the Ministry of Education and its subsidiaries, including students at all levels, should take the following precautions to avoid infection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Wash hands frequently and wear a hygienic mask when going into crowded places. or using public transport;</li> <li>✧ Avoid staying close to people who have fever or symptoms of respiratory diseases;</li> <li>✧ Take measures to eat clean, cooked food;</li> <li>✧ Avoid live-animal markets.</li> </ul>
<b>Chinese Taipei</b>	<p>To ensure public health and safety, the education authority of Chinese Taipei issued the following guidelines for the suspension of classes based on the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classes suspended for 14 days if one student or teacher at the K-9 level is diagnosed with COVID-19.</li> <li>• Schools closed for 14 days if two or more students or teachers in the same school are diagnosed with COVID-19.</li> <li>• All schools within the same township, city or district will be closed if one-third of the schools are closed.</li> <li>• If students or teachers in a high school, college or university are diagnosed with COVID-19, any classes they attend or teach will be suspended for 14 days.</li> <li>• Any education institution must be closed for 14 days if there are two or more confirmed cases of COVID-19.</li> </ul>

Almost all member economies transitioned to **remote delivery of education by a hybrid**

**means of Internet, TV and radio.** *China, Brunei Darussalam, and Indonesia* worked with technology partners to facilitate the delivery of education services to students. In *Brunei Darussalam*, the Ministry of Education collaborated with the national network to provide edupack. In *Indonesia*, the education ministry worked with technology partners/start-ups to provide free service for students, teachers, and parents. In *the Philippines*, the Department of Education launched DepED Commons, an online platform that houses Open Educational Resources (OER) and enrichment activities, in which the teachers can retain, reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute content by blending it with a learning management system to deliver a distance learning modality.

*Chile, China, Indonesia, Korea, Peru and New Zealand* developed **online platforms or Learning Management Systems (LMS)** that provided a variety of learning resources and materials to support students' home-based learning. Following the complete suspension of classes, *Chile* developed the platform *Aprendo en Línea* to the whole educational community with resources for students from Grade 1 through the final year of secondary level. Likewise, *Korea* secured public online platforms with learning content and materials to support class operations. *New Zealand* provided access to online learning materials through a freely available LMS with resources shared by *New Zealand's* distance learning school Te Ahoo te Kura Pounamu; meanwhile, hard copy materials of resources were provided to support students learning from home using an online catalogue and application process developed by the Ministry.

*Australia, China, Indonesia, Korea and other economies* developed **guidelines to support the remote delivery of education** during COVID-19. In *Australia*, all jurisdictions agreed to a set of national principles to support school education. *Indonesia* provided teachers and parents with informative guidelines through video graphics and infographics and encourage them to actively increase communication. In *Korea*, online Classes Operation Standards in Primary and Secondary Schools was developed to inform schools of diverse ways to run their academic calendar.

### **Box 2. Peru: Mandates for Secondary Schools**

The strategy of “Aprendo en casa” indicates what teaching teams need to organize remotely through different means – i.e. WhatsApp, text messages, videos, etc – to guarantee student learning.

- Maintain quality of learning, minimize dropouts, and attract students to attend (virtual) classrooms
- Carry out an evaluation process that leads to adequate and timely feedback and the improvement of teaching and learning
- Maintain links of interest and satisfaction with the students from the learning being provided
- Develop socio-emotional and civic skills from their life experiences.
- Involve families in distance education, which can accompany and guide students
- Analyze the risks associated with returning to the traditional school setting

- Reopen closed private educational institutions
- Assessing learning proposals that takes into account the resources used during the pandemic.
- Decrease learning gaps

*Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Korea, New Zealand* and *Singapore* provided disadvantaged students **with devices and materials** for remote learning. *Chile* launched “*I Learn at Home*” for students with difficulties or no Internet access – this program distributed notebooks and educational material in printed format to 3,700 rural schools and others with limited Internet connectivity, and school feeding benefits were also provided to approximately 380,000 students who were deemed the most disadvantaged. *Brunei Darussalam* carried out a computer and devices donation drive, loaning of school computers to students, and donations of devices for underprivileged students. *Korea* provided smart digital devices and Internet subscription fees to support disadvantaged students, as well as customized support for students in need, including students with disabilities, those from multicultural or low-income families. *New Zealand* provided digital devices and Internet connectivity, with urgency, and where possible, to the homes of students who did not have them where possible. Similarly, in *Peru*, the education ministry delivered tablets to students in rural areas and organized their gradual return to schools where there had been no contagion. In *Canada*, many provinces – such as Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia – provided devices to households in need to overcome the gap in access to digital technology and Internet (digital divide) faced by many students. In *Singapore*, home-based learning has been challenging for some students from lower-income and vulnerable backgrounds and MOE has taken steps to mitigate this impact. For instance, schools had loaned out more than 20,000 computing devices and 1,600 internet-enabling devices to students who lack adequate technical tools for home-based learning.

**Curricular and academic calendars were adapted** to meet the needs of home-based learning during COVID-19. For instance, in *Chile*, the education ministry prioritized the most important learning units for each level and subject that needed to be covered this year, and integrated units with common objectives.

#### 2.2.4 Assessments and High-Stake Examinations

*Brunei Darussalam, China, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand* and *Russia* **adapted their timelines for assessments during COVID-19** – postponing high-stakes end-of-year or entrance examinations, as well as exams for transitional years. *Brunei Darussalam* postponed Primary School Assessment for Year 6 to a later date. In *China*, high school and college entrance examinations were postponed for one month, a decision made after considering the safety of examinees and personnel, as well as wide consultations and in-depth investigations among stakeholders. In *Korea*, to minimize the learning gaps caused by delayed school reopenings and to secure sufficient time for students to prepare for the national college entrance examination, the 2021 university admissions schedule has been readjusted – both the date of the CSAT (College Scholastic Ability Test) and the cut-off dates (i.e. closing dates) of high school students’ school transcripts were delayed by two weeks. *Malaysia* postponed exams for Grades 11 and

13. In *Singapore*, some national exams were rescheduled.

**Box 3. New Zealand: Adjustments to Learning Assessments During COVID-19**

The Minister of Education announced a number of adjustments to this year's National Certificate of Education Achievement (NCEA) and University Entrance (UE) to mitigate against lost learning and assessment time. These include:

- Extend the submission date for externally assessed achievement standards for 2020.
- Postpone the 2020 examination date by ten days to provide more teaching and learning time.
- Develop a process whereby students can earn supplementary credits to help them gain an NCEA in 2020.
- Work with universities and the New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA) to lower the number of credits required for University Entrance by two credits: from 14 to 12 for 2021 enrolments.

Provide daily bulletins to schools, updating them on the Ministry's policy decisions and actions and providing advice on how to communicate with their communities.

Education authorities in *China* and *Malaysia* **cancelled or postponed key public assessments** (Year 6 & Grade 9) for this academic year, and **rescheduled major examinations**.

**Some examinations were cancelled** in *Indonesia*, *Russia* and *Singapore*. Indonesia canceled the national examination which was planned for March – April 2020, meanwhile, regulating the grade promotion, graduation, and student admission. In Russia, mandatory exams in the Russian language and mathematics (BSE) were cancelled – final grades are to be awarded based on student grades during the school year. *Singapore* did away with school-based mid-year examinations to reduce anxiety for students amid the pandemic.

**Certain examinations were held as planned** in economies such as *Chinese Taipei*, *the Philippines* and *Singapore*. In *the Philippines*, the administration of national examinations continued during COVID-19, while summative tests were administered in schools where face-to-face learning or blended learning is possible. In *Chinese Taipei*, all entrance examinations are planned to be held as usual, provided that all test-takers and test personnel have to wear surgical masks. Similarly, in *Singapore*, national examinations are considered essential and those taking place towards the end of the year will continue as scheduled with precautionary measures put in place to protect the safety and well-being of students and exam personnel.

**Economies also made adjustments to their existing assessment methods with** formative assessments being used as an alternative. In the *Philippines*, learning outcomes in the form of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values are being assessed. Learners prepare their portfolio / e-portfolio, including written works, and performances (and products), whether they are hardcopy, softcopy or a combination of both. The portfolio/e-portfolio content is assessed using rubrics that capture evidence of learning. Testimonies of parents and other adults including community

leaders (aside from teachers) is also considered in the assessment. *New Zealand* supported teachers to provide internal assessment opportunities through distance learning. In *Brunei Darussalam*, teachers assess student performance online for upper secondary and sixth form. In *Peru*, formative assessments have been employed through a physical or virtual portfolio that record student learning performance and achievements, while teachers are provided with criteria to review their students' work.

**To ensure fairness** for both high school and university entrance examinations, the government of *Japan* asked the boards of education to take school closures into consideration so that individual applicants for admission were not at a disadvantage because of COVID-19. In *Singapore*, the Common Last Topics (for certain subjects) were removed from exam papers to reduce the scope covered in national exams. For skills-based subjects such as Languages, there are no 'Common Last Topics'; instead, the Exams Board is to take the disruption into consideration during marking and grading.

Russia's education authority set **distant entrance exams** as an alternative form of students' evaluation with the provision of all necessary documents in electronic form and changing the schedule of students' enrolment.

## **2.3 Colleges and Universities**

### **2.3.1 Impact**

In *Australia, Chile, China, Indonesia, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore* and *Thailand*, **colleges and universities shifted to online learning**. This was a significant undertaking – it involved the full adaptation of course material to a remote learning model and interrupted practical classes and placements. The quality of provisions and the expertise to adapt materials to the online mode vary across some private institutions. In public institutions, the struggle is generally related to a lack of technological devices and systems for distance educations.

Similarly, a significant amount of non-COVID-19 related research at universities has been halted, as staff work from home rather than in their laboratories. This forced the **suspension of many important experiments and research programs**. Government agencies have had to move quickly to change policy and regulatory settings to enable this shift in the mode of delivery.

Even after universities reopened, many of them have continued to offer non-face-to-face lectures. With the postponement of school reopenings and the proliferation of non-face-to-face lectures, academic calendars were altered, which, in turn, has caused **the schedules of student exchange programs, as well as academic and international seminars, to be suspended or cancelled**.

Many **students on study abroad or exchange programs have had to return to their home economies and continue their studies online**. In *Australia*, both students from other economies studying in *Australia* and Australian students that are abroad, had to return home;



English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) institutions and colleges have been severely impacted by COVID-19. This sector relies almost entirely on foreign students and international travel restrictions have halted all new international student arrivals. In *Singapore*, the AUs (Autonomous Universities) and other IHLs (Institutes of Higher Learning) have suspended all official overseas placements, including internships and exchange programmes, and students who were on overseas placements were recalled as soon as it was practicable.

Generally, there has been a **decline in the number of domestic and international students across the APEC region**.

**International collaboration on research programs was also disrupted**, as travel restrictions impeded researchers' ability to visit their colleagues.

From a financial perspective, COVID-19 has had a significant economic impact on higher education, a sector which relies heavily on tuition fees from international students to fund activities, including research. As more and more domestic and international students chose to take a leave of absence, **universities have seen their revenues decline and expenditures increase** due to, inter alia, expanded investment in online education systems and costs related to disinfecting school facilities.

The new trend has prompted universities to turn to online education/distance learning. **The perception of the value of online learning** among lecturers and students has improved, however. It has accelerated the development of the IT-based educational environments as well as digitalization in education, and furthered the media outreach of higher education.

### **2.3.2 Challenges**

It is important to guarantee every student's right to education even when it's difficult to physically attend school. Alongside disruptions to teaching and learning, colleges and universities are also facing a **significant body of work** to ensure that the resumption of face to face learning, as well as practical elements within physical distancing protocols, is conducted in an effective, efficient and safe manner as was the case in *Australia, China, Japan* and *Thailand*. Online education can be a great alternative, but it takes a great deal of effort to provide high-quality online education that's equal to offline education, regardless of the capacities of individual universities and lecturers.

In *Chile, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Malaysia, and Thailand*, although tertiary students and lecturers are generally technology native, there are still a certain number of students who need **support for distance learning**. Typical issues include access to digital devices, as well as Internet access and connectivity. Remote learning may not reach everyone due to limitations in Internet access and connectivity at home as well as the availability of equipment/electronic gadgets/digital devices for the continuity of service. Furthermore, it was a difficult task for students and academics to adapt to online teaching and learning due to lack of teachers and students' preparedness for remote learning, optimal skills

for teachers to base all the curricula in new modality, teachers' teaching capacities to assume their new role, computer skills of staff and teachers to organize study process in digital form and support online learning, as well as required materials for e-learning.

Another major challenge has been the cancellation of **on-site training**. Online education can hardly replace lab experiments and practice-based learning activities. Work had to be undertaken to ensure that researchers and PhD students could return to their laboratories and work spaces in a manner which complied with physical distancing requirements, whilst also allow them to conduct their experiments and other research activities to the best of their ability. It is important to ensure that students who study medicine, arts, sports, and engineering are always able to receive quality education, even in times of crisis, as reported by *Australia, the Philippines* and *Russia*.

Meanwhile, it has been also difficult to **ensure quality of learning outcomes**, particularly, in relation to assessments. Opportunities for cheating and not performing appropriately have been immense. Evaluation systems and methods have to be updated and a culture of academic honesty and integrity should be promoted.

In *Australia, Korea* and *New Zealand*, the **financial situation of universities** deteriorated due to their investment in online education systems and a large number of students taking a leave of absence. Universities are facing a significant challenge posed by predicted revenue losses over the decline in tuition fees from international students, as well as the cancellation of events and conferences. Universities have been confronted with the challenge of responding to student requests to refund their tuition fees due to a reduced number of face-to-face lectures.

For English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) institutions, their greatest challenges are overcoming financial losses and having to shift to a remote learning mode. These courses are generally only taught in-person, so the shift to online learning has been a difficult transition. Additionally, as it depends largely on a frequent turnover of new students, this resulted in a substantial loss of income – a situation which was compounded by the increased costs associated with the transition to online delivery (*Australia*).

### **2.3.3 Policy Action**

For the sake of financial security, and despite contracted fiscal revenues, *Australia, China* and *New Zealand* **guaranteed funding for colleges and universities**, regardless of potential changes in student numbers, to ensure education delivery to domestic learners could continue despite the disruptions brought about by COVID-19.

*Australia, New Zealand* and *Thailand* **waived or postponed cost-recovery** and regulatory measures, which helped relieve the reporting burden and some financial imposts on universities. In *Japan*, the government requested universities to flexibly handle **tuition fees, enrollment fees, deferral of payments, installment payments, and exemptions and reductions of fees**. *Thailand* **reduced tuition fee/university accommodation/ service fees**. In the same vein, the *New Zealand* Qualification Authority developed COVID-19 **relief package for non-university**

**tertiary providers**, which included the re-scheduling of some **quality assurance activities**, **deferred payment of fees**, and extending temporary approvals for online delivery to the end of 2020.

*Indonesia, New Zealand and Japan* created initiatives to provide **additional financial support to students** who were experiencing hardship due to COVID-19. In the case of *New Zealand*, this included:

- NZD \$20 million Hardship Fund for Learners to provide **assistance to learners who needed it the most**;
- NZD \$20 million Technology Access Fund for Learners **to support learners to access the technology they need to study remotely** (both these funds are provided directly to the tertiary providers);
- Initial support package for domestic tertiary students aimed at **covering extra costs by increasing potential student loans for course-related costs** from NZD\$1,000 to 2,000 dollars, while support payments for students unable to study online were extended for up to eight weeks;
- NZD \$1 million hardship fund **for international students to address urgent, temporary needs**, example – i.e., temporary inability to access cash or because of reduced part-time employment.

In *Japan*, the government decided to introduce a new financial support scheme named “Student Support Emergency Benefits for Continuing Learning” for **students suffering from financial hardship due to a sharp decline in their part-time job income**. The government of *Korea* provided financial support to universities that had difficulty in offering online education by designating KERIS (Korea Education and Research Information Service) as **the official online education support center** and by securing a supplementary budget. In *Indonesia*, adjustment of the utilization of school operational assistance to cater the school’s needs during the pandemic, including the internet data package support for students in all levels, teachers, and lecturers.

*Australia, Korea and New Zealand* also **gave colleges and universities greater flexibility in managing courses and programs** in the context of COVID-19. In *Australia*, providers were given **flexibility** to manage bachelor, postgraduate and sub-bachelor places within their allocated funding envelope, and the government also asked universities to commit to **the introduction of a new model of higher education certificate short courses** in areas of national priority, with significantly discounted student fees. In particular, the government asked providers to **develop short (less than six months), focused courses in fields of national priority** such as teaching, health, science, and information technology. Students who complete a short course will be awarded either an Undergraduate Certificate (UC) or a Graduate Certificate depending on their level of studies. The UC has been added to the Australian Qualifications Framework to ensure people who complete short courses at undergraduate levels receive a formally recognised qualification. In *Singapore*, to support fresh graduates, the IHLs granted students access to complimentary Continuing Education and Training Modules to help broaden their skillsets and access to more opportunities across the sectors. Some of these

modules can be combined to form micro-credentials. Singapore also provided fresh graduates with Government co-funded traineeship opportunities through the SGUnited Traineeships Programme to develop industry-relevant skills and build professional networks amidst a pandemic-hit job market.

*Brunei Darussalam, China, Chile, Japan, Chinese Taipei and Thailand* developed **plans, platforms or systems for remote and online learning**. In *Brunei Darussalam*, online learning was part of its Business Continuity Plan for all higher institutions during COVID-19. In *Brunei Darussalam*, the Ministry of Education **worked with the telecommunications service provider**, United National Network (UNN), to get special education packages for all students and a subsidized rate on mobile data for online learning. *Chile* developed an online teaching platform through **an agreement with Google that would make the Google Classroom application** – already used in the school system and by many higher education institutions – available to all institutions that require online teaching platforms **completely free of charge**. Through this platform, institutions are able to upload content for students, hold classes via videoconference and use various learning resources that facilitate interaction between teachers and students. *Japan* **developed a technical and educational support system for remote learning** (e.g. allocating technical specialists as teaching assistant (TA) for troubleshooting software, problems, etc.).

*Japan, Chile and New Zealand* **allocated earmarked funds to support the delivery of online learning**. The Japanese government allocated 2.7 billion JPY in the FY2020 supplementary budget for universities, colleges of technology and specialized training colleges providing high-quality education utilizing digital technology, including:

- To maintain a system and servers for remote classes;
- To provide equipment for remote classes (e.g. web-cameras and audio devices for the university side, mobile communicating devices for the student side);
- As for academic programs that require practical training such as teaching training, the government issued a guidance on points when such training was delivered.

*Chile* earmarked funds to support institutions for online education projects, specifically, a budget of approximately US\$ 14,000 for projects aimed at G9 universities, private universities, accredited and state professional institutes and technical training centers.

*China* and *Korea* harnessed the power of **MOOCs**, and made high-quality educational content produced by several universities and agencies, freely accessible, while additional content was developed to reduce gaps in quality between universities and lecturers.

**Working groups, typically involving relevant government agencies, were established in *China, New Zealand* and *Russia*** to steer the educational processes and coordinate the activities of higher education institutions in the context of COVID-19. In *New Zealand*, these agencies convened a COVID-19 **emergency management group** which comprised officials from the Ministry, Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), NZQA, Education New Zealand (ENZ), and Immigration New Zealand (INZ), as well as peak body representatives from across the tertiary education sector. This group met twice weekly during the pandemic, helping the government

better understand the situation and respond more quickly, and worked to resolve issues emerging within the tertiary sector. In *Russia*, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education created an operational headquarters and a Working Group involving rectors under the authority of the Minister, to coordinate the activities of higher education institutions in the context of COVID-19. The Working Group sessions were broadcast live on the Ministry's official YouTube channel. A **situation centre** was also established in the *Russian* Ministry of Science and Higher Education, with a **hot line** for concerns over the features of higher education institution activities. In *Chile*, the Undersecretary for Higher Education in the Ministry of Education activated the Coordination Committee of the National Insurance System of Quality – chaired by the Undersecretary of Higher Education and consisting of the Superintendent of Higher Education, the President of the National Accreditation Commission, the President of the National Council of Education, and all higher education institutions – to support higher education institutions and share relevant information for students and members of various education communities.

*China, Japan, Thailand and Russia* **postponed/extended semester openings/ examination periods** to accommodate new modes of teaching and learning in the context of COVID-19. In *Japan*, the government requested colleges and universities to delay the start time of lectures to avoid the rush-hour period and consider utilizing remote learning. The government of *Korea* made efforts to secure the right to education for all students by **relaxing the operation standards for online education in universities**, and replace face-to-face lectures with online lectures.

*Korea* and *Peru* formulated **guidelines for pandemic prevention and control and/or continuity of university education**. In *Korea*, to secure the health and safety of students and staff in universities, the government distributed “The Disease Prevention and Control Guidelines for Universities in Response to COVID-19.” In *Peru*, the Ministry of Education published guidelines for the continuity of university education.

#### **Box 4. New Zealand: Progressive Reopening of Colleges and Universities**

New Zealand's COVID-19 response has been managed within a framework of Four Alert Levels. While in Alert Level Four, tertiary providers were required to close their physical teaching sites and deliver all teaching remotely (where this was possible). Under Alert Level Three, limited class sizes of up to 10 people were permitted to return to face-to-face models only where it was not possible to teach online (for example, labs and workshops).

At Alert Level 2, all on-site activities at tertiary education facilities could resume, such as classes, lectures, labs, workshops, tutorials, and meetings, as long as appropriate public health control measures were in place (such as contact tracing and physical distancing). However, tertiary providers had to maintain their ability to deliver courses remotely, and needed to be in a position to transition to fully remote learning (if required).

## 2.4 Technical and Vocational Education Institutions

### 2.4.1 Impact

**All TVET institutions have been closed** in member economies during COVID-19. As a matter of fact, TVET was impacted more than other areas as TVET delivery require the acquisition of certain skills on equipment in TAFEs, in laboratories or in workplaces for professional practices and the application of conceptual studies.

While vocational education institutions in member economies shifted to a mode of full home-based learning, including video-conferencing, it is not an easy process for all the institutions to organize online teaching. Many of them don't have enough resources or facilities (such as Internet access and devices) that enable educational processes. It occurred that students don't have software required for their programs and teachers don't have skills for virtual training, as reported by *Peru*. The pandemic exposed the weaknesses of TVIs in implementing alternative modes of TVET delivery (e.g. flexible learning, distance learning, online learning, etc.). It was found that the learning objectives for the school year 2020-2021 could not be achieved due to these limitations. And this posed difficulties for students who were preparing for their vocational certificate examination.

There are now **fewer available apprenticeships and traineeship programs** and fewer students attending classes, as many employers closed their doors due to government lockdown mandates or reduced their staff because of economic downturns. As a result, there's likely to be **a reduction in the volume of work-based vocational education** (e.g., apprenticeships) as reported in *New Zealand*.

**Graduation ceremonies had to be cancelled** due to COVID-19 in member economies such as *Singapore*.

COVID-19 has brought about an **immediate decrease in or loss of source of income (e.g. tuition fees, etc.)** for the continuous operation of TVET schools. It is **compounded by additional costs incurred due to enhanced social distancing measures and hygiene protocols**.

Nonetheless, in the medium term, it is highly likely that **an increase in unemployment due to COVID-19 will drive demand for vocational education**, particularly in provider-based delivery (i.e., campus-based and online).

### 2.4.2 Challenges

Vocational Education and Training institutions face a number of challenges. Similar to primary and secondary schools, as well as colleges and universities, **training and delivery have moved online**. However, there are still many students who need campus support for distance learning such as facilities/equipment suitable for distance learning. Meanwhile, a certain proportion of teaching and non-teaching staff and students are not competent in distance learning. Trainers and assessors are unable to report to work due to quarantine measures and health protocols such as social distancing measures and/or other related factors. Developing materials and systems

that can be used in new learning methodologies is also a challenge.

Moreover, when non-essential services were closed, the restrictions affected the capacity of students to undertake **workplace placements as well as conducting practical/hands on learning work/activities/simulation/practice-based training and assessments** (and reduce their on-site training hours), a compulsory part of many VET syllabi and qualifications. It was also difficult to ensure vocational internships at enterprises and in third-party institutions when students switch to e-learning. Even with practical/hands on learning work, cost rises from personal protective equipment for staff.

There are also challenges relating to the final and intermediate **certification in occupations and specialties** of secondary vocational education. COVID-19 prompted the cancellation or suspension of vocational certificate examinations and, even in cases where exams were not cancelled, students were at a disadvantage since they haven't been thoroughly trained for the exams.

In that case, **retaining student interest to ensure they returned to class rather than drop out** altogether became a major priority. It was particularly difficult for international students who may have lost their source of income from part-time employment.

Vocational high school graduates face **daunting employment prospects** due to the reduction in on-the-job training and employment opportunities (adverse business context).

### **2.4.3 Policy Action**

The governments of *Australia, Korea, Russia, Peru* and *the Philippines* supported vocational and technical institutions adopt **flexible and online modes of delivering education and training**, either through policy-making or legislation. For instance, *Peru* enacted a legislative decree that establishes provisions to guarantee the quality of educational service provision in Institutes and Schools of Higher Education, within the framework of the health emergency; it also amended relevant laws and enabled the provision of educational services in the distance modality.

In *Australia, Korea, Malaysia, Russia* and *Mexico*, education processes/programs were reorganized to accommodate school closures during COVID-19. In *Australia*, **adjustments to delivery and assessment arrangements** were put in place, whereby the skill or assessment outcome could be achieved in other ways. This may involve, for example, learning cooking techniques in a domestic kitchen or being mailed bandage packs to practice wound dressing. In *Korea*, students were asked to first focus on general subjects and theory-based learning during the period of online education as part an intensive learning system, and then, after schools reopened, they could concentrate on practice-based training. Similarly, *Russia* reorganize the educational processes so that graduates could combine practical training with preparations for their final qualifying thesis and exams. In *Mexico*, objectives and study plans were adjusted to identify essential content, contemplate alternative means of evaluations and programming academic activities for regularization.

To support the online delivery of education, **online learning platforms were developed in partnership with governments (public sector) or businesses (private sector)**. Russia's education ministry recommended making freely available a number of federal and regional on-line educational platforms available for students of vocational and technical education institutions, as well as teachers and parents for free. *Brunei Darussalam* introduced EduPack by UNN (The Unified National Networks Brunei Darussalam) for students and teachers. *Chile* developed online resources for students in six specialties in partnership with institutions external to Mineduc (commissioned by the Ministry with competitive funds for their internal use in their own institutions).

*Malaysia, Peru, Russia and the Philippines* developed **guidelines for the continuity of vocational education and training** in the context of COVID-19. *Russia's* education ministry focused on increased sanitary and epidemiological measures. *Peru* concentrated on the development of institutional, pedagogical and support activities in public and private Centers of Technical-Productive Education (CETPRO) and Institutes and Schools of Higher Education. *The Philippines* reviewed and amended existing guidelines to align with health protocols. To ensure the quality of educational services, *Peru* developed technical standards for basic education conditions and for the technical regulation of supervision and control.

The *New Zealand* government **invested in training and education for people who might have lost their jobs due to COVID-19, or those who wanted to move into a different sector with better prospects**. It announced a \$1.6 billion Trades and Apprenticeships Training Package to provide opportunities for New Zealanders of all ages to receive trades training and will help *New Zealand's* recovery by rebuilding the economy and building a skilled workforce. *Singapore* implemented the SGUnited Traineeships Programme to allow graduating students to be equipped with relevant work experience and to boost their employability. Under this programme, employers can bring in fresh graduates as trainees to support their business needs and will be able to tap on Government support during the traineeship period. Substantial Government support in the form of co-funding of the training allowance for trainees will also be available for employers who can offer traineeship opportunities.

A variety of incentives were created to **ensure apprenticeships for students**. In Korea, diverse incentives – including instructor fees for practice classes and eligibility acquisition fees for students – were offered to vocational high schools. In addition, incentives such as corporate field education support, loan interest rates, and loan support services were provided to companies that provide field education and job opportunities to vocational high school students and graduates. It was a way to encourage businesses to actively participate in vocational education and training. In addition, more **flexible apprenticeship programs** allowed vocational schools and students to meet the demands of businesses in a more responsive manner. **More businesses are being proactively recruited and enlisted** before the second semester begins, giving vocational students a better chance to find on-the-job training.

*Korea, Malaysia, Mexico and Russia* took measures to **reschedule assessments, ensuring**



**flexibility for calendars and processes as well as methodologies and timings of evaluations.**

In *Korea*, taking into account difficulties in providing practice-based training amid COVID-19, the dates and the number of vocational certificate examinations were readjusted to ensure that vocational high school students were given sufficient opportunities to acquire certificates before their graduation.

**Box 5. New Zealand: Adjusted Reform of Vocational Education**

The challenges New Zealand faces recovering from the economic shock of COVID-19 highlight many of the issues RoVE seeks to address. This includes fragmentation of the polytechnic network, silos and competition between on-the-job and provider-based training, and inequitable access to education and training opportunities across different regions and population groups. To meet these challenges, the New Zealand government is accelerating key aspects of RoVE including:

- Earlier establishment of Workforce Development Councils (industry-governed bodies which will give industry greater leadership across vocational education) to strengthen the voice of employer and industry;
- Mechanisms to support transitional Industry Training Organisations (industry-owned bodies that arrange training for employees in the workplace) and tertiary providers including NZIST working together sooner; and
- The government also supported TEIs by guaranteeing their 2020 tuition funding, meaning no 2020 funding will be returned to the government due to adverse impacts on enrolments and key performance indicators resulting from COVID-19.

*The Philippines* employed a **training-cum-production approach** (whenever applicable) to ensure the continuous learning of students whilst contributing to anti-COVID-19 initiatives, such as the production of face masks, PPEs, and food packs for those on the front line.

In *Russia*, it was recommended that **events should be staged using e-technologies**, such as industrial internships, state final certifications, the presentation of graduation and diploma theses, and demonstration exams. If providing an e-format is not possible, the timing of the final certification may be set upon completion of a complex epidemiological situation.

### III. Stakeholder Perspective

#### 3.1 Student Well-being

##### 3.1.1 Impact

In member economies, school closures and social distancing measures have affected student well-being. **Confinement, physical distancing, increased screen time and reduced physical activity** were major challenges students face. **Students' learning progress** was hampered. As the role of the school as a place of socialization with its peers was disrupted, **students' mental well-being** (such as emotional and psychological stresses) was also affected as a result of severance of social relations, lack of social interaction, isolation from fellow students, teachers, friends, family and other networks. Furthermore, they also encountered emotional instability

and stress over fears and frustrations related to COVID-19 generated through illness, contagion, death, unemployment or a lack of equipment (computer, TV, radio, cell phone, etc.) and/or connectivity (Internet, TV and/or radio). *Peru* reported that the well-being of the children was impacted by stress, worry more than usual, nervousness and tension, difficulty for sleep, sadness and decay.

In *Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, the Philippines* and *Russia*, a certain proportion of **students had no devices or connectivity** during COVID-19. For many, access to the Internet was limited whilst they also lacked the proper equipment (such as a computer) and IT skills to access web platforms or TV programs for mainstream online learning. This caused many students to worry about their learning and whether they would be able to complete the school year.

Many students rely on **school food programs** for their daily nourishment. Parents had to provide meals for their children when they were home due to COVID-19, placing a severe strain on their finances.

A considerable number of students no longer have the means to continue their studies due to several economic and social factors arising from the pandemic, such as reduced family income.

Domestic violence was already a problem and was exacerbated by confinement, economic crisis and uncertainty.

#### **Box 6. New Zealand: Impact on Online Learning and Related Student Well-being**

Data shows that because of existing equity issues in the education system some students were impacted by the pandemic more than others. Linked telecommunications data indicates that up to 20% of students did not have an Internet connection before the lockdown, making it difficult for these students to stay connected to learning and to friends and family outside their bubbles. An online student survey conducted during the lockdown (which presumably excludes many of the 20% without connectivity) found 15% of students had to share the device they use for learning with other learners in their household.

These barriers were particularly pronounced for some student groups. 21% of Māori and 28% of Pacific Island students reported having to share a device with others. More than half of senior secondary students living in the most disadvantaged areas reported that they were not enjoying learning at home (53%) or not coping with their schoolwork while learning at home (51%).

There was a large disruption to learning, particularly for secondary school students. Only 54% of Year 11-13 students agreed that they were coping well with their schoolwork while learning at home during the lockdown (compared to 85% of primary school students). About a third of all students reported they did not enjoy learning at home, including 45% of senior secondary students.

### 3.1.2 Strategies Used to Ensure Student Well-being

#### Mental Health

Governments have taken various measures to ensure students' mental well-being during COVID-19. For instance, *Australia* and *Canada* **committed earmarked funds for mental health services**. The former made available a \$1.1 billion Australian Dollar package to boost mental health services and domestic violence support. The latter committed \$7.5 million (CAD) in funding to 'Kids Help Phone', which provides young people with mental health support.

**Websites and online platforms** were utilized to provide mental health resources and guidance. In *Australia*, the government maintains a Student Well-being Hub website which includes resources for educators, parents and students to maintain safe, inclusive and connected learning communities during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond. In *Canada*, most provinces and territories have provided mental-health resources and guidance through their websites or online learning platforms, such as

- The Department of Education of Nunavut developed a learn-at-home website, Angirrami Ilinniarniq ([angirrami.com](http://angirrami.com)), which offers free access to resources for managing stress and mental health.
- The "TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF AND OTHERS" web page in the [ecoleouverte.ca](http://ecoleouverte.ca) website of Quebec provides information and resources for students, parents and families.
- Nova Scotia provides additional mental health and well-being support to school communities through SchoolsPlus.
- The "Staying Healthy" page of Manitoba's "My Learning at Home/Mon Apprentissage Chez Moi" site provides information and resources for students, parents and families to support mental health and well-being.

*The Philippines* provides Mental Health and Psychological Support Services (MHPSS) online to promote health, enrich knowledge, and reinforce the "bayanihan" spirit in basic education.

**Local school boards played a significant role** by providing parents and students with resources for mental health and well-being. For example, in the province of Alberta of *Canada*, many school authorities have made a variety of resources for mental health and well-being available to parents and students. The government of *Japan* has requested local boards of education to maintain contact with children (and their parents) at home, evaluate the children's general state of well-being, and support their well-being through hotlines as well as school nurses and counselors. The government also requested that school operators submit reports to the government on the progress of these efforts, as well as any other issues they encounter.

*Peru* has issued **guidelines for dealing with domestic violence and provided emotional support structures for students and their families** in a distance education context. In accordance with current care protocols, it highlights the importance of certain entities in rural areas such as the communal authority, justice of the peace, lieutenant governors and sub-prefects. These intermediaries follow the *Aprendo en Casa* strategy, which incorporates the welfare conditions of students and their families and the identification of alerts (that affects the well-being of students) as part of monitoring and evaluation instruments.

### Counselling Services

*Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, China, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Russia, Chinese Taipei* and *Singapore* all provide counselling services – such as helplines, hotlines and counselling centers – for students. In *Australia*, services are available for school children and their families when they need support or would like someone to talk to about their concerns – these include Kids Helpline and Headspace which provides confidential telephone and online counselling. In *Canada's* Northwest Territories, mental wellness counselling services via virtual care technology and telephone services are available for all students; and Child and Youth Care Counsellors and counsellors from Northern Counselling and Therapeutic Services (NCTS) reach out to students on an individual basis. In *Japan*, hotlines as well as school nurses and counsellors are available to those who need additional support.

In *Malaysia*, counseling support is provided through hotlines. In *Mexico*, mental health counselling has been arranged through telephone lines and websites, which could identify potential risks, among other things. *Brunei Darussalam* ensures access to well-being support, such as welfare and counselling – to help students when they face any learning related issues. In *Chinese Taipei*, schools offer counseling to ensure students are well, both physically and emotionally. In *Russia*, a navigator for counseling centers has been launched on a free state portal, and the centers provide psychological, pedagogical and methodological support on the raising and education of children, as well as e-learning services (163 consulting centers have been already operating in *Russia*). In *Singapore*, remote counselling services continue, while face-to-face counselling is available either at school or through home visits for critical cases. Self-help resources and helplines are also available to students. In *Korea*, homeroom teachers and/or counselling teachers (i.e. counselor teachers of the “Wee Class”) offer guidance to students through phone calls or online platforms. Students are informed of various remote counseling tools, including phone calls, mobile chatting and online bulletin boards, so they can maintain composure even when they cannot attend school due to COVID-19. Also, counselor teachers have continued to provide services to those students they were working with before COVID-19. The Ministry of Education and Provincial Offices of Education have established student mental health support centers to offer additional psychological support by working with mental health experts.

#### **Box 7. The Philippines: Activities on Child Protection**

Looking to ensure that all children have equal opportunities in areas such as protection, education, and health and nutrition amid COVID-19, the DRRMS (Risk Reduction and Management Service), in collaboration with the Office of the Undersecretary for Legal Affairs (OULA) and Youth Formation Division (YFD), have carried out the following activities with respect to Child Protection:

- The DRRMS reinforced lessons on Child Protection and launched “Online Kuwentuhan: DRRMS Booklatan”, through a pilot episode in May 2020. This weekly program aimed to provide an online learning platform for all elementary learners through a weekly-themed story session until August 2020. It showcased narratives on the rights of

children, risks of abuse, and what they could do to protect themselves while they are staying at home due to community quarantine.

- The second online learning activity organized by DRRMS was the OKKK Tambayan. It featured arts-based activities intended for secondary learners. The first episode was broadcast via Facebook Live on May 21<sup>st</sup>. As a weekly online program, it offered various arts-based activities that promoted the well-being, development, participation and protection of children.

- Plans and Policies: disseminate existing policies, guidelines, and protocols on child protection via email blasts and other social media platforms (e.g. joint memorandum of CWC and DILG re Reiteration of Protocols for Children in conflict with the law during ECQ)

- Reporting, Coordination, and Monitoring: promote existing helplines/hotlines for children experiencing abuse at home while awaiting resumption of classes (e.g. Bantay Bata – finalizing referral pathway); monitor and track the status (displaced, missing, injured, sick and deceased) of personnel and students of schools.

- IEC and Advocacy: create a repository of IEC and advocacy materials for different regions and divisions; develop and disseminate IEC materials on child rights and child protection – including child trafficking, child labour, prostitution, domestic and sexual abuse – as well as helplines/hotlines where such cases can be reported [e.g. dissemination of IEC materials on 3Ws (What, When, Where) to report cases of child abuse], IPED, SPED and/or learners with disabilities via mainstream media – e.g. television, radio and online platforms; and promote Parenting during Home Quarantine through dissemination of IEC materials via mainstream media – e.g. television, radio and online platforms

- Online Learning Activities on Child Protection for Elementary and Secondary: blend Online Story Telling Sessions, Online Arts-Based Activities, and the dissemination of IEC materials. Discussions have been held with Save the Children Philippines (SCP) to provide resource personnel for Child Protection in light of COVID-19.

### Support for Vulnerable Children and Youth

*Canada, China, Chile, Mexico and the Philippines* have provided special support, including financial support, to vulnerable children and youth. Canada's government is investing \$15 million (CAD) (this figure has since been increased to \$118 million for the 2021-23 period), to help ensure they do not become further marginalized as a result of COVID-19. This funding can help organizations – that have established, trusted relationships with vulnerable children and youth – migrate their programming and supports online. In *Russia*, in support of children with special educational needs, information for specialists and parents is available on the website of the Institute of Correctional Pedagogy of the Russian Academy of Education in a specialized section containing methodological and informational materials for teachers, defectologists, and psychologists; educational webinars and best practices in the use of e-technologies in teaching children with disabilities are also available for parents; and they can also get advice from leading specialists in the field of correctional pedagogy and psychology. In *China*, local governments emphasized the need to give special care and attention to students from rural or disadvantaged backgrounds, or families with medical workers and frontline workers; television and Internet resources were utilized to achieve mutual sharing and wider access among all students, — this aims to meet the requirements of disadvantaged students in

rural areas, avoid network congestion and mitigated the adverse impact on students' eyesight.

### Teacher Support

**Support for teachers has been crucial** in ensuring student well-being during COVID-19. In *Mexico*, strategies and means to promote an individualized follow up from teachers were encouraged. In *China*, teachers play an important role in recording classes, providing resources, online tutoring, problem-solving and communicating with parents as well as providing psychological support. In *Singapore*, teachers regularly check in on students and refer them to school counsellors when additional support is needed; school counsellors follow up with students with problems and maintain close collaboration with community agencies and medical professionals. In *Korea*, homeroom teachers regularly monitor students' mental and physical condition by checking in on them through phone calls and text messages; real-time interactive online classes have been offered to resolve the problem of severance of social relations.

### Food Programs

Governments of member economies have made efforts to **ensure students have access to food programs normally accessed at school**. In *Canada's* Prince Edward Island, community businesses and organizations are supporting children and families with food insecurity issues; the provincial government, the PEI Home and School Federation, and Breakfast Club of Canada are working together in this regard. In Alberta, the government is repurposing \$3 million previously earmarked for non-profit organizations for a special school nutrition program; the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (TNI) are providing \$2 million for community food programs for children and elders. In *Russia*, in the context of e-learning or extended vacations, the Ministry of Education has recommended that regional authorities provide school meals for socially vulnerable categories of students, such as children with disabilities or from low-income families. In *New Zealand*, as many children and young people are receiving free and healthy school lunches as they return to school.

### Devices and Connectivity

Devices and connectivity not only ensure students' engagement with remote education but also connect them with others, which is important for well-being, especially in the context of social restrictions. *Chile, Brunei Darussalam, Mexico, New Zealand, Russia* and *Singapore* made efforts to ensure devices and Internet connectivity are available to students during school closures. In *Chile*, the Ministry of Education decided to deliver a total of 122,867 notebooks to the most vulnerable students within one month – 96,595 for students in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade of public schools and 26,272 for those in private subsidized schools. The notebooks had 50 educational programs incorporated and included 11 months of free Internet access. In many cases they became the only computer in the household.

As part of *New Zealand's* efforts to get online learning up and running, the Ministry prioritized 82,000 households for digital connectivity, and distributed over 9,000 devices to students who did not previously have them. *Brunei Darussalam* tried to ensure that students and teachers had easy online access through increased data allowances by telecommunication companies' donation drive on data packages, and reduced data plan rates. In *Mexico*, institutions established

different agreements with Internet providers and encouraged donations to help all students get access to online learning. In *Singapore*, IHLs provided IT devices and mobile routers to students who did not have access to learning devices and broadband. In *Russia*, education authorities partnered with the digital environment operator for the online delivery of education.

#### Textbooks and teaching materials

Textbooks and teaching materials have been distributed to facilitate home-based learning. In *China* and *Russia*, education authorities reached agreements with the largest publishers to provide free access to the electronic forms of textbooks through portals. In *Peru*, high school textbooks were distributed to students. For the Early Intervention Programs, within the framework of the *Aprendo en Casa* strategy, various materials were prepared in simple terms—they are aimed at families with young children (< 3 years) with disabilities or at risk of acquiring a disability. These materials have been disseminated over the Internet and radio, and are organized by age groups: 0-9 months, 10-18 months, 19-24 months, and 25-36 months.

#### Regulation of Online Learning

Governments of member economies have also **produced regulations and guidelines to ensure student well-being during remote learning**. In *China*, most provinces limited the duration of online classes to 20 minutes and also avoided strict universally-applied requirements on a) teachers regarding live or recorded broadcast teaching, and b) students regarding daily sign-in and uploading learning videos. In particular, efforts were made to avoid placing too much of a financial burden on families to buy new devices, such as printers. In *Brunei Darussalam*, directions/instructions regarding home-based learning have been continuously shared with students and parents to help them understand their learning and better prepare their Home Learning Packs (HLP); guidelines were put in place to ensure students had proper learning environment at home; students had to report to their teachers every day. In *Japan*, the government asked communities and schools to work together to secure places and learning opportunities for children who could not stay at home during temporary school closures. In *Singapore*, schools remained open for students whose homes were not conducive for home-based learning or whose parents work in essential services; the IHLs recognised that some students face greater challenges with home-based learning and were committed to supporting them; on-campus lessons and student support were also made available for a small group of students who did not have conducive learning environments at home; the AUs have also adopted various ways to ease anxieties about disruptions to learning (e.g. allowing students to exercise the Pass/Fail option for more/all modular credits this semester, or to take a course and attain the modular credits for graduation without receiving a letter grade). In *Russia*, the Ministry of Education, together with the television channel “360”, prepared 354 video lessons for students of Year 9 and 11. The first broadcast was delivered on April 27, and the series was intended to continue until the end of the school year.

#### Education on Pandemic Prevention

Member economies have used various **means – such as the radio, Internet, and newsletters and brochures – to ensure students understand pandemic prevention and control measures**. In *Korea*, to relieve stress and anxiety over virus infection, newsletters and

brochures were published to give accurate information on how to prevent infection; on the websites of educational institutions, relevant and useful information was posted to help raise awareness around COVID-19. In *Peru*, protocols for prevention and comprehensive care were developed for teachers and welfare staff to address situations where the well-being of students was at risk, including warnings around mental health, risk of suicidal behavior, abandonment, desertion due to pregnancy, drug use, among others; in rural areas, at a pedagogical level, an emphasis was placed on prevention and health care within the framework of the National Curricula of Basic Education's competencies through the development of radio sessions, as well as on the web.

#### Remedial Classes/Lessons

In *Korea*, special remedial classes have been provided by each school in a voluntary manner to make up for any learning losses during COVID-19.

#### Employment Assistance

In *Russia*, higher education institutions have launched different social programmes to assist students in the face of the pandemic – for example, special employment assistance programmes for students. More than 100 HEIs have provided temporary job placements for students during the pandemic.

### **3.2 International Students**

#### **3.2.1 Tracking/Identifying International Students**

Please refer to Annex 1A and Annex 1B.

#### **3.2.2 Challenges for International Students**

*Australia, China, Brunei Darussalam, Chinese Taipei, Korea, New Zealand* and *Russia* reported that it is a challenge for international students and their families **to embark upon higher education in the first place**. At the same time, prospective international students were unable to commence their studies due to border closures. The closure of borders and border restrictions as well as international flight control prevented international students from arriving at their destination of overseas study. This forced many international students to take a leave of absence, so there were not enough freshmen to begin the new semester as previously planned. In *Australia* and *New Zealand*, tertiary education institutes (TEIs) delivering vocational and technical education faced reductions in deliveries and revenue.

Besides, **the visas of many international students soon expired**, so they needed to have them extended. However, because they could not depart for their destination economy, they had difficulty extending their visas to further their studies in the destination economy. Border restrictions also prevented current students from returning home as many are unable to re-enter their home economy, or transit in other economies.

As reported by *New Zealand, Peru, Russia* and *Thailand*, COVID-19 limited the connections that international students were able to make while studying. As a result, many international



students reported **feeling homesick, isolated or anxious over their own health and well-being as well as that of their loved ones back home**. This was often accentuated by other mental health issues due to the pandemic. Although little could be done to ease their concerns for their loved ones overseas, many students returned home on repatriation flights facilitated by their government.

As reported by *Australia, Canada, Peru, Chinese Taipei, New Zealand and Thailand*, international students were impacted by the decision of post-secondary institutions to transfer coursework online. Although lectures were recorded and simultaneously uploaded online, **it was challenging for students to engage in in-class experiments, skills training, and discussions with peers**. Online education is not the most suitable mode of delivery in some sectors and for certain types of students. Some study programmes, such as those which rely on an in-person elements or physical resources and facilities, were greatly impacted by the health response to COVID-19 such as lockdown and physical distancing requirements. A number of students have decided to defer their studies until they can return to face-to-face learning. *Peru* reported such challenges as Internet connectivity and access to various platforms of the universities. *Russia* noted a lack of sufficient equipment and computer skills for on-line learning.

International educational activities, including internships and exchange programmes, have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 crisis, with **a large proportion of international students finding themselves in financial predicaments after losing their part-time jobs** because of lockdowns and many unable to return to their home economy.

*Australia, Canada, Japan and New Zealand* noted many students had reported **financial hardships/concerns, including the loss of part-time jobs**, and uncertainty around future employment in sectors affected by COVID-19. They might also be impacted by financial struggles within their own family, and this may have had a knock-on effect on their studies.

### **3.2.3 Strategies**

To ensure continuity of learning for international students, *Australia, Brunei Darussalam, China, Chinese Taipei, Russia and Singapore* have **provided access to online learning**. In *Australia*, universities continue to move operations online – personalised student support has been provided in relation to the transition to online and blended learning.

In *New Zealand*, the NZQA has **granted approximately 18 tertiary providers temporary approval to deliver offshore**. This has enabled currently enrolled international students who were unable to travel to New Zealand due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and border closures, to continue and complete their studies in their home economies.

In *China*, for students in their graduation year, HEIs have provided online tutoring and supervision regarding the completion of their thesis or dissertation, and also arranged an online viva for them. In *Chinese Taipei*, lecturers were asked to assist students affected by COVID-19 in initiating independent studies by providing digital learning materials/online audiovisual resources. In *Singapore*, schools and institutions have given international students the same

access to online learning and home-based learning resources as local students and are also offering them necessary academic support.

**Flexible tuition, study and employment policies** were implemented in *Australia* and *China*. In *Australia*, universities introduced flexible tuition options as part of the national effort to slow community transmissions of COVID 19, as well as protecting the most vulnerable. The federal government has offered flexibility to ensure that education providers can respond to students' individual circumstances and needs. In *Korea*, the Ministry of Education published "Academic Management Plan in COVID-19" (March 4, 2020) to assist international students who want to continue their studies in Korean universities – the plan includes measures to temporarily relax regulations on distance learning, leave of absence, and return-to-school policies. The *Canadian* government has temporarily **removed the restriction that allows international students to work only a maximum of 20 hours per week** while classes are in session, provided they are working in an essential service or function, such as health care, critical infrastructure, or the supply of food or other critical goods.

**Financial support has been extended to international students** in *China*, *Japan* and *New Zealand*. In *Japan*, the government decided to introduce a new financial support scheme called "Student Support Emergency Benefits for Continuing Learning" for students who are under pressure financially due to a sharp decline in their part-time job income, and international students are also eligible to apply. In *New Zealand*, tertiary institutions also had access to a NZ\$20 million Technology Access Fund to support their students' transition to online learning – the government also established an international student hardship fund for tertiary education providers during COVID-19. In *China*, HEIs supported international students in terms of tuition fees and accommodation fees.

**Counselling and mental health support** has been available to international students in many member economies. In *Australia*, counselling and mental health support is available to all international students with **a dedicated email and hotline** through their institution and through the services funded by the government and community organisations. Likewise, *China* has psychological support structures in place. *Thailand* set up a consultation center, and *Brunei Darussalam* offered resources and assessments through various approaches, such as the use of e-mails, video conferencing and text messaging via online media platforms such as Microsoft One Drive, Forms and Teams, Google, Zoom and WhatsApp.

*China*, *Korea*, *Mexico* and *Russia* have taken policy measures to **help international students extend their visas**. In *China*, the MoE required local education authorities and HEIs to support procedures to extend international students' time in China. In *Korea*, the Ministry of Education worked closely with the Ministry of Justice to assist international students with their visas to be issued and extended. International students in *Mexico* are entitled to an automatic extension of their visas as well as advisory on their status. In *Russia*, regulations have been adjusted to prolong visas and temporary residence permits to resolve problems and concerns connected to borders closure.

**Guidelines or protocols on pandemic prevention and control** were developed to meet the needs of international students in *Australia, Korea, Thailand* and *Russia*. *Thailand* produced guidelines for international students. *Australia* monitored students' welfare on a regular basis and offered access to counselling or referrals to relevant support services when needed. In *Korea*, in principle, non-face-to-face lectures should be provided until the COVID-19 situation stabilizes. However, in the case of subjects that need face-to-face interactions – such as arts, sports, and practice-based learning – face-to-face lectures are allowed. In such cases, however, **strict management and disinfection measures** should be exercised, including temperature checks, social distancing and the provision of blended learning, etc. In *Russia*, all students including international students, have the right to stay for self-isolation on campus or to leave campus on a voluntary basis. International students were provided with organization and information support, especially those who couldn't leave the campus or economy.

Member economies also provided **logistical support for international students** during COVID-19. *Australia* arranged “logistical” support with distance learning – for example, computer or equipment hire for students when required. Besides, the government also acknowledged the importance of **secure housing** by announcing a six-month ban on evictions for all tenants who were experiencing financial hardship, including international students.

### **3.2.4 Impact on Overseas Students**

The impact of COVID-19 on students of member economies studying abroad varies depending on jurisdiction. Many students encountered obstacles and problems in terms of entry due to strict control measures. Lockdowns and school closures/shutdowns have affected all aspects of their lives, such as **health, accommodation, academic program schedules, and financing and resources for extended stays as a result of rising living expenses**. Some may have psychological problems due to homesickness, an insufficient supply of daily necessities or worries over public security.

With more and more economies issuing travel restrictions, Korean students studying abroad have been forced to take a leave of absence and decide whether to register for the spring semester. For those who had already departed Korea when the outbreak occurred, many were faced with problems, such as being unable to find accommodations during the self-quarantine period.

*New Zealand's* overseas students were faced with a choice of remaining abroad or returning home. They also had difficulties just getting home; Many reported fears of getting infected, anxieties over lockdown, financial worries from loss of work; and concern for loved ones.

In *Singapore*, in view of not just tightened travel restrictions but also border restrictions in host economies, Singapore residents enrolled in overseas institutions abroad might not be able to travel or get their Student Pass renewed to commence or continue with their studies abroad. Singapore residents returning home from abroad may be required to serve a Stay-Home Notice depending on prevailing health guidelines to stem importation risk.

### **Box 8. Peru: Policy Measures to Support Peruvian Students Abroad**

In Peru, each student has an Emergency / Urgency Action Card COVID-19 with their personal data, such information as medical insurance details, student services of their universities, close friendships, as well as data from the PRONABEC specialist who accompanies him and data from a relative in Peru and data from the Chancellor at his study headquarters. It can be accessed in an emergency situation.

Inter-institutional and international cooperation has been arranged through collaborations between the ministries of education and foreign affairs, as well as various embassies / consulates, to ensure the protection of all the scholarship holders who are studying abroad. This involves sharing students' location and contact details to manage direct actions with them. This arrangement has been updated three times since the start of the pandemic, with official documents being sent in February, May and June.

In the medium term, due to a tightening labor market, students may also be impacted by a loss of income from casual employment which they need to support their studies. Graduates seeking jobs overseas may face difficulties because of the pandemic. As the financial capacity of higher education institutions declines, future school enrolments may also be affected. And some students may choose to give up studying abroad.

#### **3.2.5 Strategies Used to Help Overseas Students**

*Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Mexico and Singapore* **encouraged all their citizens to return home during COVID-19 and provided assistance in this regard.** The *Australian* government organized repatriation flights where commercial options were unavailable. The government of *Brunei Darussalam* organized and paid for the flights which brought home its students who were studying abroad. The *Canadian* government worked with airlines and foreign governments to assist its overseas students with access to commercial flights. The government of *Singapore* liaised with airlines to facilitate flights to key cities in order to cater to the demand for return flights.

*China, Mexico, Russia and Thailand* have **offered possibilities to their respective citizens to return home.** *Mexico* arranged assistance in collaboration with diplomatic representations. *Russia* helped its citizens return home if that was what they wanted to do. *New Zealand's* students who enrolled with domestic providers have received assistance with flights, and those who registered with MFAT's Safe Travel service have been sent region-specific updates and alerts to assist their return home.

*Brunei Darussalam, China, Korea, Peru and New Zealand* **have tracked and monitored the well-being of their overseas citizens.** Korea's Ministry of Education works in cooperation with Korean diplomatic missions around the world to monitor Korean students studying abroad and provides them with assistance. *China's* Ministry of Education and Chinese embassies and consulates have constructed a monitoring and reporting system to track the health status of *China's* overseas students – they also coordinate with local governments to provide support for

confirmed cases, and offer distance counselling for critical and severe cases. For *Brunei Darussalam* students who have opted to stay in their respective economy of study, the government, through its missions abroad and relevant ministries are closely monitoring their welfare and well-being. All *New Zealand*'s overseas travelers have been encouraged to register with MFAT's SafeTravel service, which offers region-specific updates and alerts. In *Peru*, an Emergency / Urgency Action Card COVID-19 was created to ensure the well-being of its overseas students.

*Japan* has urgently responded by **providing financial support to its overseas students** who were returning home.

*China* and *Thailand* provided **guidelines on pandemic prevention and control** for their overseas citizens. *China*'s Ministry of Education arranged an English version of the online teaching international platform through "Ping An Liu Xue" (safety in studying abroad) for HEIs and more than 100 Chinese embassies and consulates. It also invited Chinese experts to give lectures on pandemic prevention and control, and provided psychological counselling and helped students understand their symptoms.

**Information and counselling services have been** provided in *Australia*, *China* and *Russia*. The *Australian* government has used a Smart Traveller website for this purpose, which provides the most up-to-date and relevant information and guidance on returning to *Australia*; it also **works with local authorities to help affected Australians, supports those who are trying to return home, and advises them of their options whilst they are abroad**. In *China* and *Russia*, a special hot line deals with questions concerning the features of higher education activities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic for students studying abroad.

*China* and *Korea* **extended support on accommodation for their citizens abroad**. The *Korean* government provided dormitories for its overseas students who could not find accommodation for self-quarantine, so that they could receive assistance from the Korean diplomatic missions abroad. Chinese embassies and consulates maintain communication with students, and provide support for those who have encountered problems regarding visas, accommodation and insurance, so as to guarantee the legitimate rights of Chinese students abroad.

**Alternative online learning arrangements** have been made in *China* and *Singapore*. In *China*, the Ministry of Education provides online learning resources including "icourse" by the Higher Education Press and "Xuetangzaixian" by Tsing Hua University to ensure high quality online learning for students abroad.

#### **Box 9. Singapore: Alternative Learning Arrangements**

As many economies imposed travel restrictions or closed their borders, transport operators and airlines cut services, and many services and facilities were disrupted to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

For students enrolled in local IHLs, and were expecting to go on overseas exposure programmes (e.g. overseas exchanges, overseas internships) but were now unable to do so, the IHLs have supported them by providing alternative learning arrangements locally. These included credit bearing modules during the summer semester or local internship placements. As most of the affected were second or third year students, they had the option of taking additional credits in subsequent years. The IHLs worked with each affected student to finalise these alternative arrangements. No additional financial costs were imposed on students for these alternative arrangements, and all additional modules or local internships did not add to the current fees.

There were also be prospective Singaporean undergraduates who were planning to enroll in overseas universities, but now prefer to study locally. To support these students, more places were set aside in AY2020 and the AUs had extended their application window by two months.

The AUs were also aware that there may be students who are midway through their studies at overseas universities and are unable to continue with their studies during this period or may wish to pursue other forms of learning in the meantime. Those who wished to transfer to the AUs could apply directly to the AUs and their applications were assessed on a case-by-case basis. Alternatively, they could sign up for Continuing Education and Training (CET) modular courses offered by the AUs and other training providers.

**China has provided instructions and information on employment** according to the diverse needs of students and organized online recruitment. It will organize the 15th “Chun Hui Bei” Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition for Chinese Overseas Students.

**Financial adjustments** have been made in *Chile* regarding alterations with their citizens who are studying abroad. If their studies have been suspended or are continuing online, a letter has to be presented indicating the situation so financing can be kept from the agency in charge in *Chile*. Studies and financial aid can also be suspended. The same applies if studies are re-scheduled.

In *New Zealand*, if a student is on an overseas exchange program, then their domestic provider is responsible for assisting and supporting them. All Ministry-approved exchanges require providers/operators to prove that they have an understanding of and commitment to pastoral care, and that they will require the same of any schools or providers overseas where they would send their students. For students who are not studying overseas as part of an exchange or scholarship, there is no formal system to support them beyond what is available to any of New Zealand’s citizens. Citizens are not required to register or apply for approval from the Ministry to leave the economy to study overseas through a foreign provider. These students are considered to be under the care of the school or provider with which they are studying. If students are not getting the support they need from their provider, local embassies or consulates can connect students with emergency contacts or legal services, and offer assistance in crises.

### **3.3 Parents**

#### **3.3.1 Challenges**

In *Australia, Canada, Malaysia, New Zealand, and Mexico*, parents who were categorized as non-essential workers face the challenge of assisting with their children's online learning. These parents **became responsible for guiding their children without the pedagogical tools to do so – many had lost their jobs or had their employment suspended, bringing strain on the household's income security**. Their burden to provide round-the-clock childcare increased. Many had to balance their remote working whilst assisting their children with online schooling. Besides, there was also the possibility of young children from dual-earner families being left unattended.

In *Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Chinese Taipei, Malaysia, Peru, the Philippines, and Russia*, some parents **could neither afford proper electronic gadgets nor Internet connectivity** to support online learning. Some parents may also have needed help accessing online learning resources, whilst others hadn't the appropriate for learning at home. Some parents don't even have TV or radio, if they had Internet connectivity, it was probably a poor one.

*Chile, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, the Philippines, and Russia* reported a **lack of knowledge or experience** among parents who were trying to support their children's home-based learning. Pupils from the early grades need to be closely supervised in the use of technology. During home-schooling, it's important to keep children stimulated intellectually so as to prevent psychological instability from restrictive social relations and physical activities. Many parents needed help to understand their dual role as parents and tutors or teachers – it has been a major challenge helping them to guide their children through learning modules, and organizing work processes, leisure time and extracurricular activities, as well as providing emotional support in the education process.

#### **3.3.2 Strategies**

*Australia, Korea, Russia and Singapore* **ensured that essential workers were still able to send their children to school during COVID-19**. In *Korea*, emergency childcare services were provided in kindergartens, childcare centers and primary schools, and parents were encouraged to take family-care leave and flextime in the workplace. Caregivers make home-visits to provide childcare services to households in need. In *Thailand*, many businesses allowed their staff to work from home so they could better manage their work while taking care of their children. *New Zealand* allowed home-based childcare arrangements for essential workers (provided through three large providers that met health and safety requirements), and a temporary increase in discretionary hours to create some leniency for services not meeting qualification ratios. *Russia* made differentiated arrangements for the following essential workers with preschool children during the pandemic:

- Those in continuously operating institutions;
- Those in medical and pharmacy institutions;

- Those in institutions providing the population with food and essential goods;
- Those performing emergency work in emergency situations;
- Those performing emergency repair and handling operations;
- Those providing financial services in terms of emergency functions (primarily settlement and payment services);
- Those in other institutions determined by the Russian government.

**Financial assistance was provided to families** in *Canada's Ontario* during the pandemic – whereby parents received a one-time payment of \$200 (CAD) per child up to 12 years of age (\$250 for those up to 21 years of age with special needs), including children enrolled in private schools, under the Support for Families initiative.

**Home-based learning materials were made available** online in *Canada, Chile, China, Japan* and *Singapore*. In *Singapore*, the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) made available to preschools and parents a repository of home-based learning resources. In *Chile*, all textbooks were made available online; the Ministry of Education also provided a monthly reading plan with suggested titles for each level that could be downloaded from the same online platform or withdrawn at the educational institution. In *Canada*, many provinces and territories are working to provide families with offline learning packages. For example, in Nova Scotia, every two weeks, authorities mail learning packages to over 340,000 households to support students up to Grade 9. In *Japan*, MEXT has opened a Learning Support Portal on the Internet, which includes various learning materials, and videos that students and their parents can utilize at home (all are updated regularly). The portal enables children to access educational television programs and subject-based educational resources produced by the textbook companies.

*Canada, China, Indonesia, New Zealand, Peru, the Philippines* and *Singapore* **provided guidelines for parents on home schooling and ensuring the well-being of their children**. In *Canada*, most provinces and territories provided recommendations for the appropriate amount of hours for learning per week for each grade. Indonesia provided parents with informative guidelines through video graphics and infographics and encourage them to maintain communication with teachers/schools. In *New Zealand*, regular school bulletins included advice to parents on how to manage their role and ensure the well-being and resilience of their children. In *Singapore*, the Ministry of Education launched the “Parent Kit” to support parents during the home-based learning period. It included practical tips on how to supervise children for home-based learning as well as transition back to school, among others. In *Peru*, the education authority developed guidelines for home-based learning for pre-primary, primary and secondary education, as well as other tips and materials on stimulation and play for young children.

*China, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, the Philippines* and *Singapore* have all enhanced **parent-teacher/family-school collaborations**. In *China*, the Ministry of Education requires family-school collaboration in areas such as physical education, instructions and supervision on student learning, mental health and physical education, and the creation of positive learning environments for students to ensure learning efficiency. In *Korea*, homeroom teachers



constantly communicate with students and parents to provide a sense of reassurance during the pandemic. In *Malaysia*, teachers use social media to reach out to parents to facilitate their children's learning. In *Mexico*, teachers' skills have been reinforced to reduce the burden on parents. *The Philippines* encourages parents – through Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) – towards possible collaborations with schools on adapting to the new normal; it also engages parents in the promotion of the new school system. In *Singapore*, the Ministry of Education utilized a common mobile app to boost communication between parents and teachers to make home-based learning more efficient.

**Counselling services** have been provided in *Japan* and *Russia*. In the former, a 24-hour Children's SOS Hotline was set up, and support has been provided through school nurses and school counsellors. In the latter, the Ministry of Education has organized hotlines which provide methodological support for teachers and parents.

### **3.4 Teachers**

#### **3.4.1 Challenges**

Teachers, like many other professionals, experienced **emotional stress and anxiety** when COVID-19 first emerged (*the Philippines* and *Peru*). In *Korea*, *Chinese Taipei*, *Thailand* and *other economies*, teachers needed a safe and secure work environment in the face of COVID-19, but also had to keep themselves posted on the latest situation of COVID-19 so as to prevent themselves and students from contagion, which may **put them under a great pressure**.

In *Australia*, *Brunei Darussalam*, *Canada*, *Korea*, *Malaysia* and *Russia*, teachers had to rapidly **shift to online and remote delivery of education, often using new technologies or new approaches**. Both online classes during school closures and blended learning activities after school reopening required an advanced level of digital literacy/ICT skills to fully utilize technological resources for teaching and learning and to identify the best platforms for their teaching.

In *Australia*, *Indonesia*, *Chinese Taipei*, *New Zealand* and *Thailand*, teachers have **varying degrees of familiarity/expertise with various tools, techniques and methodologies** for instructional technology and the related devices for distance learning/online teaching. This tended to affect their confidence in distance and online pedagogies. *Malaysia*, *Peru*, *Indonesia*, *Thailand* and *New Zealand* also reported a lack of technological devices/equipment and digital skills, connectivity and academic resources, platforms and educational resources to support distance learning. *Chile*, *China* and the *Philippines* found the training of teachers in the use of ICT for learning delivery particularly challenging. *The Philippines* suggested that the competencies of TVET trainers in distance learning, particularly in conducting online classes and the development of curricula, needed to be enhanced.

*Australia*, *Brunei Darussalam*, *Chinese Taipei*, *Korea* and *Russia* reported that an immediate challenge for teachers was **adapting curricula or transfer already-developed courses into an online format** so they could continue to deliver services to students. They were required to prepare online resources, online teaching materials or education content without any copyright

infringement. This may have increased the teaching workload.

*Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Russia, Chinese Taipei and Thailand* also reported challenges in terms of **student supervision (monitoring students learning performance) and assessment** – in particular, how to track students' progress and keeping the virtual classroom engaged. Teachers across *Canada* had to adapt to a new context surrounding assessment, grade progression and graduation.

*Peru, New Zealand, Mexico and Korea* also noted **teachers' increased workload** as they had to strike a fair balance between teaching activities and domestic chores (family needs). In addition, teachers also had to carry out administrative work on top of preparing for online classes and providing remote counseling to students (*Korea*).

*Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Indonesia and New Zealand* noted that while students were often “attending” online classes, they were not responding and were instead merely passive listeners. Mass school closures hindered teachers' abilities to directly interact with students, yet they were still required to **meet the individual needs** of each student through distance learning, while motivating them and answering their questions.

*Malaysia* indicated that **online classroom etiquette or 'netiquette'** was something that students and teachers had to establish to ensure the smooth flow of online lessons.

### **3.4.2 Strategies Used to Help Teachers Perform Their Duties During COVID-19**

Teachers have been given the flexibility to utilize various learning strategies and tools **for the remote delivery of education** as reported by *Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand*. In *Brunei Darussalam*, teachers were encouraged to use different teaching and learning tools — such as using Google / Microsoft Online Forms for assessments, MsTeams, Zoom, Socrativ, WhatsApp, Quizzies — to facilitate their lessons. In *Malaysia*, teachers have been given the flexibility to utilize various learning platforms to facilitate student learning.

*Chile, China, Japan, Korea, Chinese Taipei, Peru, New Zealand and Thailand* have provided **training programs/courses, including virtual training on distance learning/ICT skills for teachers**. In *Japan*, the National Institute for School Teachers and Staff Development (NITS) has provided several programs for teachers. In *Korea*, teachers are encouraged to advance their ICT skills by participating in training programs on digital devices, online platforms and blended learning. *New Zealand* provides support for teachers through: a) repurposing centrally funded professional learning and development to be offered online and to all schools that asked for assistance with support for distance learning; and b) provision of webinars for teachers and parents focused on various issues with regard to teaching and learning during COVID-19. *Peru* provides teachers with training courses on ICT tools in education. In *Chinese Taipei*, the government and various corporations work together to offer training courses on online teaching software and strategies. The teachers of *Thailand* have opportunities to enhance their ICT skills and become more comfortable in teaching in front of a camera.

*Japan, Korea, New Zealand and Malaysia* have **set up learning support portals to help teachers perform their duties**. *Japan* has provided various suggestions and tips on how to learn each subject, and includes free learning materials and videos that can be used at home. Also, MEXT provides a website on which good practices at schools can be shared. *New Zealand* developed an online learning platform to provide access to quality NCEA linked curriculum materials.

**Many member economies have prepared teaching materials for distance learning for their teachers**. *Brunei Darussalam* prepared hard copy assignments and resources for students engaged in home-based learning on a weekly basis. *Mexico* created libraries and reservoirs for distance learning materials at the higher education level. In *Canada*, many provinces and territories have worked to provide families with offline learning packages. For example, in Nova Scotia, every two weeks, the education authorities mail learning packages to over 340,000 households for primary students up to Grade 9.

**Teacher network/communities** have been created in *Korea, Canada, Mexico and Singapore* to facilitate their adaptation to changes in the delivery of education. In *Korea*, teacher communities were created to share practical knowledge on online education tools and online learning content, and to resolve common obstacles in running online classes. In *Mexico*, a network for mentoring and advising teachers on distance learning activities was implemented. In *Singapore*, online learning network communities have been established. In *Canada*, innovative teacher-parent-community arrangements are encouraged.

*Peru, the Philippines and New Zealand* **developed guidelines and templates for teachers' work** during COVID-19. *Peru* issued "Pedagogical Guidelines for Educational Services of Basic Education" and established exceptional and temporary provisions for the remote work of teachers and education assistants. *The Philippines* provided clear guidelines on the conduct of classes via face-to-face or other alternative modes of TVET delivery. *New Zealand* provided templates and guidelines to help school leaders and teachers to cope with scenarios they are facing.

**Additional teachers were recruited in many member economies, particularly, for the delivery of remote learning**. In *Korea*, the government hired 30,000 additional teaching staff, including after-school, retired, and part-time teachers to assist school operation. In *Russia*, HEIs created IT volunteers' headquarters – students with advanced computer knowledge helped teachers at schools and universities develop their computer skills for distance education.

**Teachers have also collaborated with parents to support student learning at home**. In *Brunei Darussalam*, teachers frequently liaise with parents to monitor their students' learning at home, while *Indonesia* and *Malaysia* encourage teachers to collaborate and have a good relationship with parents.

Most education authorities **made plans to upskill teachers through a professional development roadmap** which included E-pedagogy. Resources were also made available to

teachers to help them adapt to home-based learning, including self-paced online learning modules, online learning network communities, sharing from practitioners via video conferencing platforms and social media, forums and blogs.

**Clear and regular communications through multiple channels** were also provided by the ministries for teachers to discuss various issues regarding teaching and learning during COVID-19.

In *Korea*, **regulations and applications of copyright were relaxed temporarily to assist teachers** who were developing online learning content to improve the quality of their teaching.

In *Indonesia*, the government **revised its budget scheme** to support the teachers' needs to perform their duties relating to home-based learning.

In *Australia*, the strategies used to help teachers perform their duties during COVID-19 vary by jurisdiction but most states and territories have sought to provide support for teachers to deliver lessons online. Some jurisdictions are more experienced with distance education than others and they have shared their resources.

In *Malaysia*, online tutorials for teachers were provided on how to begin online teaching through the Digital Learning Community (in collaboration with UNICEF).

## **IV. System-Wise Solutions**

### **4.1 Financial Implications**

#### **4.1.1 Challenges**

**The fiscal capacity** of member economies has declined due to COVID-19. In *Australia*, governments at all levels faced decisions over investment priorities in many sectors, including education. Budgets have been impacted by a loss of income from the cancellation of events or having them moved online. In the medium-term, staff reductions are likely to make up for the loss in revenue. There may also be less capacity and willingness to invest in new opportunities until a complete financial recovery is in place.

In *Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Peru, the Philippines and Thailand*, because of **unexpected expenditures, governments needed to adopt a flexible approach** in their accounting as they execute the budget appropriated in the previous year. They need either realign their budgets to augment efforts to bring COVID-19 under control or reallocate funds from the regular programmes to improve the education situation.

According to *Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Peru, the Philippines and Thailand*, **substantial and additional financial resources need to be provided** (from known and potential sources of funds) **to ensure the remote delivery of education**, including digital gadgets and Internet connectivity. In addition, the government need to supply paper and photocopier machine toner to accommodate the Home Pack Learning for students, and set up a Photocopier Service Booth

to meet teachers' requirements (*Brunei Darussalam*).

*Australia* and *Brunei Darussalam* reported **additional challenges in managing hygiene** in the classroom as students progressively returned to the classroom. In *Brunei Darussalam*, the education authority managed to provide schools with face masks, hand sanitizer and thermometers; disinfectants, hand washes, gloves and small towels were also distributed before school reopenings.

Meanwhile, in *the Philippines*, TVET-related scholarship funds were realigned to the government's COVID-19 programs, leading to fewer scholarship beneficiaries for the year.

#### **4.1.2 Policy Action**

To reduce the regulatory and cost burden on education and training providers, the *Australian* government decided to **waive the majority of fees and charges** of quality regulatory agencies, returning almost \$72 million to the sector. In addition, the *Australian* government also announced a **higher education relief package** in April 2020<sup>3</sup> for workers displaced by COVID-19 to upskill or retrain, and support universities and other higher education providers to continue teaching. The assistance encompassed:

- Funding guarantees
- Deferral of HELP recoveries
- Short online courses
- Loan fee exemption
- Regulatory fee reliefs
- Changes in cost recovery arrangements

**A contingency budget was allocated to procure items – such as school disinfection equipment and devices for remote learning** – in *Brunei Darussalam*, *Japan*, *Korea*, *Indonesia* and *Peru*. In *Peru*, an endowment of technological devices has been financed together with Internet access for families with access difficulties, up to an approximate amount of S/. 650 MM (PEN). In *Korea*, the central government and provincial governments have used their own funds and/or reserve funds to pay for school disinfection equipment. Likewise, *Indonesia* has revised the regulations for school operation funds to support home-based learning from home. *Japan* has supported learning opportunities for children during the school closures through:

- 13.7 billion JPY for measures to prevent infection at schools (e.g. purchase of masks and sanitizers),
- 10.6 billion JPY for the improvement of school hygiene
- 800 million JPY for school instructors,
- 700 million JPY for students whose family's household income sharply decreased,
- 229 billion JPY for providing “one computer for each student”, accelerating the “GIGA School Scheme”, including making available an IT network in each student's home
- 2.7 billion JPY to provide learning opportunities through remote lectures in

---

<sup>3</sup> More details here: <https://www.dese.gov.au/covid-19/higher-education/higher-education-faq>

universities.

**Flexible policy measures** have been taken in many member economies to address funding gaps during COVID-19. For example, in *Korea*, the government secured four rounds of supplementary budgets for its response to COVID-19. Part of the budget came from funds that cannot be executed due to school closures – it was used to compensate for kindergarten tuition fee refunds, and help provide online lectures in universities as a means to promptly cater to the educational needs of students. Also, the reserve fund will be executed more flexibly compared to the previous year.

As all schools have now re-opened in *New Zealand*, **cash flow relief has been provided for school construction and transport areas** which have been affected by COVID-19.

#### **Box 10. New Zealand: Policy Actions to Resolve Financial Implications**

In addition to policy measures for early learning, colleges and vocational learning, other actions have been put in place to resolve any financial issues within school property and school transport.

##### School Property

The Ministry is one of the largest buyers of construction services in the economy and is playing an important role in kick-starting the economy.

As soon as school construction sites were safely closed down for Alert Level 4, the Ministry's attention turned to how it could support construction suppliers to get school projects back up and running as quickly and as safely as possible. One of the key actions the Ministry took was to provide short-term cash flow relief to contractors by releasing the money the Ministry holds back to ensure they meet their obligations, and suspending the collection of this money until construction activities resumed.

Moving forward into the recovery phase, Ministry-led construction projects continue to create jobs to support people and businesses across the economy. These include:

- a \$160 million property improvement package to upgrade hundreds of small and remote schools,
- the \$400 million School Investment Package announced late last year. Indicative data shows there are around 850 approved school projects with an estimated value of \$85 million on the go.
- the Sustainability Contestable Fund, established to support schools to reduce their environmental impact and improve their operational efficiency
- Major redevelopment of Taita College in Wellington.

##### School Transport

The Ministry took a similar approach with transport, which is critical to maintaining school attendance particularly in rural areas. With school transport off the road during Alert Level

4 many transport providers were also affected the demise of tourism and charters, but were still faced with overhead costs. The Ministry designed an appropriate support package to keep these businesses viable. This would allow them to keep their staff employed and ready to immediately resume services once schools reopened. The Ministry didn't want transport to become a barrier to education. As of June 5, services were fully up and running' with usage at 90% of normal volumes in most areas.

**The financing of scholarships and educational credits** is being carried out in *Peru* to help higher education students continue their studies, with an investment of approximately S/. 140 MM (PEN) for this year (*Peru*).

**A platform for families with school-age children to apply for a vacancy in public education institutions has been financed.** This makes it possible to assess the number of new students in the education system and evaluate alternatives that guarantee their access (*Peru*).

**Spending on non-priority items has been reduced** in programs, activities and projects under maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE) and capital outlay (CO) (*The Philippines*).

Also in *the Philippines*, the government continues to engage with Local Government Units (LGUs), civil society organizations, parent-teacher associations, community leaders and other stakeholders to ensure **transparency and accountability in amended budget and expenditure** (*The Philippines*).

## 4.2 Education Quality

### 4.2.1 Monitoring Students' Learning Processes

In the transition from face-to-face to distance models of delivery, member economies have taken **different approaches to monitoring the learning processes of students**. In economies with a federal or decentralized structure – such as *Australia, Canada, the Philippines, and New Zealand* – learning processes were monitored at local and jurisdictional levels. In *the Philippines*, the Department of Education oversees 17 Regional Offices and 223 Schools Division Offices with Regional Directors and Schools Division Superintendents who implement localized mechanisms to monitor students' learning processes.

In *China*, higher education institutions have **established an online teaching evaluation system** based on big data – it ensures efficiency through focusing on online learning, online discussions, online assessments and exams. *The Philippines, New Zealand and Singapore use existing online monitoring systems/learning management systems*. In *Singapore*, teachers keep track of their students' progress through the automated marking features on the Singapore Student Learning Space online platform, or give students individual or group feedback through email or teleconferencing; and teachers can also provide comments and suggestions for improvements based on students' responses through these platforms.

In *Indonesia*, **schools have been urged to continuously report to the national education**

**database.** A survey was also conducted to gather information about learning processes in schools.

In *Japan*, in addition to supporting students' home-based learning through ICT, **their learning progress is monitored through individual meetings with teachers during special school attendance days and home visits.** Likewise, in *Thailand*, **teachers are assigned to go door-to-door** to evaluate the learning progress of each student.

*Korea*, *the Philippines* and *Thailand* developed **guidelines to monitor students' learning processes.** *The Philippines* prepared special guidelines for TVET institutions, while *Thailand* introduced online learning guidelines for universities. *Korea* published **Student Attendance Tracking, Evaluation, and Record-keeping Guidelines for Online Classes** including an introduction to full-scale online classes. The guidelines divide online classes into three types – real-time interaction classes; content-oriented classes; and task-oriented classes – to track student attendance, manage student learning, and oversee student management. In particular, for students who could not participate in online classes, alternative learning programs were offered. Also, depending on whether teachers could directly observe students' assignments and tasks during online classes, four different types of record-keeping methods allow teachers to monitor students' progress.

In *Brunei Darussalam*, student learning processes are monitored using a mix of approaches and strategies:

- Submission of Home Learning Pack (HLP) via Mobile Apps/Online Assessment Tools such as Socrates/Class 123.
- Home-Based Learning Daily/Weekly/National Report – School Level / Head of Cluster Level / Department of Schools / Deputy Permanent Secretary Office.
- Based on staff and student feedback.
- Public higher education institutions' examination boards.
- Review performances in assessments, student feedback surveys, consultations with student representatives, quality assurance processes including the monitoring of module boxes.

In *Mexico*, working with nongovernmental organizations that incorporate both public and private institutions, the Ministry of Education established **networks for peer identification of best practices to ensure quality of content and practices for distance learning.**

In *Russia*, higher education institutions **revised curricula to include new forms of attestation that help assess students' knowledge gained from distance learning.** The period of attestation was set by the curriculum and academic calendar of the educational programme. The period of attestation can be postponed, but not later than the end of the academic year.

#### **4.2.2 Ensure Quality of Learning**

**Education authorities are committed to quality assurance.** In *Australia*, all school authorities have remained committed to delivering quality learning opportunities during COVID-19. All jurisdictions are also committed to getting students back into the classroom at



the earliest opportunity to minimize disruptions to learning. Likewise, in *Japan*, all local governments are committed to taking the best possible approaches to ensuring the continuity of children's learning, together with providing information on various successful initiatives that schools have taken, and gaining an understanding and cooperation of families.

To ensure quality of learning during COVID-19, distance learning has been delivered through **a mix of media, learning modalities and alternative modes of learning**. In *Canada*, distance learning in provinces and territories is implemented through a mix of media and channels – including print-based learning materials, one-way massive broadcasting (TV and radio programs), web-based exchanges using social media channels or learning platforms, or innovative teacher-parent-community arrangements – to ensure continuity of curriculum-based study and learning objectives for all students. *Malaysia* ensures teachers, with the support of parents, are able to maintain and deliver quality lessons via multiple platforms. In *the Philippines*, different learning delivery modalities have been adopted in the basic education sector depending on COVID-19 restrictions and the particular context of the learners in the school or locality. In the Technical and Vocational Education Sector, alternative modes of learning were strengthened in light of limitations and restrictions on the face-to-face mode of TVET delivery. In *Thailand*, DLTV (Distance Learning Television) has been one of the main education solutions during COVID-19 – it has been used to bridge the knowledge gap for learners in urban and, rural areas, as well underprivileged children and youth. In *Korea*, after schools reopened, students were able to take online classes while physically attending school.

**In terms of student learning performance evaluations, member economies have taken various approaches to ensure quality of learning**. For instance, in *China*, higher education institutions established mechanisms to ensure the quality of online teaching, involving **daily, weekly and monthly reports**. In *Korea*, to reduce the burdens of evaluation, **the ratio of student performance evaluation has been readjusted**; to minimize learning gaps, **student evaluations cover what students have learned both online and offline** (i.e. after they are allowed to physically attend school), using both student performance assessments and paper-based assessment methods.

**Curricula and learning tasks have been adapted** to fit with changes brought about by COVID-19. In *Singapore*, **homework and assignments have been reduced** given that home-based learning hours are fewer than the usual school hours, aligned to the MOE's goal to inculcate self-directed learning and discovery of curiosity. **Remedial programmes** have been introduced to support students who may have fallen behind in their learning and preparation for national examinations. In *the Philippines*, the K to 12 **Curriculum has been streamlined into the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs)**, giving more focus to learning activities and resources, and sufficient time for coverage and mastery. The MELCs serve as a supplementary guide for teachers as they address the instructional needs of learners, and field implementers are encouraged to contextualize the MELCs in order to accommodate the varying contexts of learners, teachers, learning environments, and support structures considering both content and performance standards. In the Technical and Vocational Education Sector of *the Philippines*, **the training curriculum is updated and revised as needed to ensure the skills**

## **and competencies being learned meet industry requirements**

**Regulations, frameworks and standards have been developed to ensure quality of learning during COVID-19. Peru adapted the technical standard for the implementation of distance pedagogical support.** In *New Zealand*, prior to COVID-19 the Ministry had already been undertaking an **Evaluation Framework for Equitable Digital Access**, which, combined with four digital access pilots in collaboration with schools and the private sector, provided a foundation for the Ministry to enable distance learning in response to the health crisis. *Russia established a special licensing regime in 2020 in the framework of current education legislation and* educational programmes whose state accreditation expired during the period March 15- December 31. In *Japan*, the government clarified **the basic concept and direction of its initiatives** in order to maximize children’s learning opportunities while ensuring that measures are being taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

**Online forums and webinars** have been used to enhance quality of learning during COVID-19. In *the Philippines*, **webinars, online discussions as well as social media platforms** are being organized by various agencies to help teachers get the most from various online applications. *Indonesia* is also using online forums to enhance communication among stakeholders.

*Mexico* has linked higher education institutions with UNESCO initiatives as well as regional networks to enhance **international collaboration and experiences**. It’s hoped this can be very useful to meet the particular needs of each institution and environment.

Member economies have also taken on board an array of structured policy measures to ensure quality of learning:

In *Peru*, the Ministry of Education has developed distance learning sessions, through the strategy “Aprendo en Casa” which has been carried out within the framework of the provisions of the National Curriculum of Basic Education. To make these sessions culturally and linguistically relevant, as well as pedagogically appropriate, the following policy measures have been taken:

- **In areas where there is no connectivity, the teacher roams, always complying with health protocols.**
- **Technical regulations were adapted and issued with pertinent provisions to ensure the development of educational services in all territories.**
- **The acquisition and distribution of technological tools (tablets) for the most vulnerable students.**
- **Technical standards for the implementation of distance pedagogical support were adapted.**

In *Brunei Darussalam*,

- ALL schools must have a well-planned Business Continuity Plan (BCP) in place.
- Home-Based Learning Strategies for Students.

- Work from Home (WFH) initiatives for Teachers and Educators.
- Educational Pricing (Lower Price) for IT devices and data-plan.
- Hotline Setup for General Public Support on Home-Based Learning.
- Ensure the continuity of blended learning.

#### **Box 11. Chile: Quality Assurance for Preschool Education During COVID-19**

“Chile Learn More from the First Steps” Quality Plan consists of a series of 11 pilot educational programs, some of which have been run since 2018, benefiting approximately 630 institutions that provide Early Childhood Education, which translates to almost 30,000 boys and girls under the age of six. These programs are organized in three sections: (a) role of the family, (b) development and learning of boys and girls, and (c) Management and executive leadership. Given the current context, the activities planned for this year have been rescheduled.

In doing so, an exhaustive analysis of the stipulated objectives has been conducted and two decisions were made:

- All the activities can be carried out online as long as the quality of the implementation is maintained, the objectives of the program are adhered to and all the participants are reached.
- Face-to-face activities should be postponed until during the second semester, whenever the school year resumes.

In either case, the executing institutions need to agree on dates and times with each holder and / or director of the schools.

### **4.3 Education Equity**

#### **4.3.1 Challenges in Terms of Education Equity in Relation to COVID-19**

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on children, youth, and their families, particularly as they adapt to school closures and disconnection from social networks. **The sudden switch to online learning runs the risk of leaving those who were already disadvantaged in an even worse situation.** It casts light on the inequity of education which remains the biggest challenge in member economies. Structural problems such as socioeconomic inequalities, social segregation and the digital divide, have been exacerbated. The widening gap between the rich and poor has become even more evident (*Thailand*).

According to research commissioned by the Australian government, the **learning progress of vulnerable, marginalized and disadvantaged students was more likely to be impacted in such a situation**, due to a range of factors, including poorer access to digital technology and support for remote home-based learning. In particular, children from low-income families, or those who live in rural or remote and far-flung areas/outmost area/island (e.g. *Indonesia*), may not have access to Internet services or the technology nor gadgets/electronic devices (even a telephone) required for learning and social interaction. The pandemic also underscored the importance of supporting special needs students, students from multicultural families, and

students who do not have an adult to accompany and guide them.

Furthermore, it's also a challenge to ensure **equitable access to online resources for learning**, including distributing and monitoring the use of learning materials for underprivileged students and off-grid families, as well as those in rural areas. In *Peru*, only 34% of students in urban areas used the government's web modality, this proportion dropped to just 1% in rural area. In *Brunei Darussalam*, there was a mismatch in device availability and lesson time which consequently resulted in extended teaching hours – students could only be connected once their parents were back from work, thus lessons started beyond normal curriculum hours.

Additionally, disruptions in sources of income for households presented challenges for **many new and returning post-secondary students, as the case in Canada**.

The pandemic has also affected **school feeding programs** in certain member economies. In *Peru*, a lack of basic services in rural and remote areas, especially critical and border areas made it difficult to continue distributing quality food to students, within the framework of the National School Feeding Qali Warma. In *Chile*, foreign students with an Identifier Provisional School (IPE) or those who do not have a national identification number, and therefore are not in the household social register (RSH), may not be included in the payrolls of beneficiaries.

Given the differing circumstances and capacities of learners and households to cope with the new modes of learning, more learners might be left behind, so efforts to provide **remediation and enhancement activities** should be given more attention. In addition, it's also important to ensure students' mental and psychological stability.

#### **4.3.2 Closing the Learning Gaps**

Considering limited access to devices and Internet connectivity, member economies have **employed multiple modes of delivery, or a combination of online and offline education**, to ensure gaps between urban, rural, poor and marginalized groups are not being exacerbated. In *Canada*, for those students with limited or no Internet access at home, offline accommodations – such as print-based course packages and telephone check-ins – have been provided, and schools have been encouraged to employ any modes of delivery available to them. *Brunei Darussalam* uses blended approaches which combine Online Platform and Offline Platform to Home-Based Learning to notify teachers regarding submissions of printed school work, in particular, the Free Educational TV Broadcast was revived, especially for examination classes, and Home Learning Packs (HLP) were delivered to underprivileged families free of charge. In *Chile*, pedagogical material for students has been sent out to rural schools and to those with little or no Internet connectivity, in printed format, which aims to reinforce and support learning in an attractive and easy way. This resource is intended for every student, from first basic to 12th grade. The material is distributed directly to educational institutions before being withdrawn by parents. In *Indonesia*, the government provides alternative modes of learning, including through the national television channel, TVRI. In *Korea*, for students who cannot participate in online classes, educational television channels have been expanded and learning packets mailed to students. In *Japan*, the government has requested each school, via education

superintendents in each municipality, to take alternative measures, such as distributing printed documents for home study, if any households have difficulty utilizing ICT devices or accessing a communications network.

While the development of ICT for education is necessary and an ongoing process, **investment is needed to close the digital gap**. In *Australia*, a \$750 payment from the federal government to eligible families has provided many with the means to purchase the technologies and Internet access required for undertaking their studies online. In *Canada*, the provinces of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Ontario and Quebec are providing students in need with access to devices and Internet services. In *Japan*, the government is implementing a program to establish ICT networks in schools through its GIGA school program. The *New Zealand* government's COVID-19 education investment of approximately NZD 90 billion (EUR 50 billion) has been primarily focused on equity – ensuring underprivileged students are prioritized and have access to opportunities to learn from home. *Brunei Darussalam* improved students' access to devices and the Internet through initiatives such as Donation Drive (IT Devices) and Purchase of Data-Plan by School. This was especially aimed at underprivileged students.

**Equipment and devices have been loaned/rented to various students to support their online learning**. In *Canada*, school districts in British Columbia are loaning out equipment to students and/or staff with limited access to the necessary technologies in their homes. In *Korea*, in order to give equal access to education, digital devices have been loaned to all 283,000 students who applied for them; and the 174,000 students who did not have an Internet connection at home received Internet subscription fees or mobile Wi-Fi routers.

**Targeted interventions have been made for the most vulnerable groups** in *the Philippines*, *Peru* and *Singapore*. *The Philippines* has implemented programs and interventions that are based on and responsive to the specific needs of the most vulnerable groups. They provide targeted interventions (scholarship allocations, contextualized training programs, etc.) to special groups (PWDs, IPs, etc.). In *Peru*, each Directorate of the Ministry of Education has been working on appropriate content, instruments, tools and other materials differentiated by educational levels, cycles or grades, considering the geographical scope and type of IIEE. In *Singapore*, various schemes of financial support have been put together to help reduce the burden on students and families; information on how vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals are being supported is available on an official government website.

*The Philippines* (TESDA) has also **increased the number of TVET institutions** nationwide (through the creation of training centers in all provinces) to support those who want to re-skill and/or up-skill.

*Brunei Darussalam* has provided **its scholarship students (the majority are underprivileged students in public higher institutions) with a daily allowance** even when they don't physically attend the institutions.

In certain places in *Thailand*, such as remote areas that lack resources, or where children lack

parental support or a conducive learning environment, **students are welcome to return to schools where safe spaces and teacher supervision are available.**

*Mexico* is looking to **shift its orient policies more towards inclusion and social welfare** – these include scholarships and the creation of universities in secluded areas that specialize in knowledge areas that trigger employment. Across institutions, strategies have been created to ensure intercultural dialogue that reinforce recognition and respect for national languages, cultures and live perspectives.

*New Zealand* education providers have reported **an increased uptake in mental health services for students.** The Ministry is looking to continue its focus on equity as it recognizes that education, equity and well-being are interlinked and mental health will likely be at the centre of future policies.

**Meals / food rations have been provided for the families of students** in *Peru*, with telephone follow-up by local schools.

#### **4.3.3 Ensuring Children with Disabilities Are Not Left Behind**

APEC member economies have taken various measures – through **alternative modes of delivery in particular** – to ensure children with disabilities are not left behind in learning during COVID-19. In *Australia*, nearly all schools have continued to provide face-to-face learning for vulnerable and disadvantaged students. However, many children with disabilities are also medically vulnerable and have a higher risk burden in relation to COVID-19. These children continue to be supported by their school, but there are challenges in providing the appropriate adjustments to meet their needs. In *Brunei Darussalam*, ICT device donations for disadvantaged students have been useful and students with special needs have also been provided with adequate learning resources. *Russia* mandates that when persons with disabilities are being taught, e-learning and e-learning technologies should provide for the possibility of receiving and transmitting information in accessible forms. In *the Philippines*, to address the issue of social distancing and limited learner access to the Internet (which limits possibilities for online instruction), ALS teachers should be encouraged to utilize the following options for the continuance of ALS learning interventions:

- Blended approach for advanced elementary and secondary level learners
- Face-To-Face Learning Sessions for lower elementary and basic literacy level learners
- Radio-Based Instruction (RBI) or Broadcast of ALS “Ibang Klase” TV episodes on the Knowledge Channel
- Online learning with gadgets and Internet access

**Customized/personalized learning support has been provided** to students with disabilities in *Korea* and *Mexico*. In tandem with different types of disabilities, both online learning and home visits have been used to support their learning and assistive equipment and learning packets have been provided. Students have also received counseling services. For students from multicultural families, translation/interpretation services have been provided by the regional multicultural education support centers located at the Provincial Offices of Education; the

Ministry of Gender Equality and Family has offered home-visit programs to assist their learning. In *Mexico*, the personalized monitoring of students at the higher education level is in place, while various tools and materials are seen as beneficial in distance learning. In *New Zealand*, the government has provided COVID-19 advice particular to children with special needs, including those with disabilities. Ministry specialists, Resource Teachers, Outreach Teachers and others continue to be available to help. They have resumed school visits and provide a range of strategies, advice and support for individuals or groups of students – including ways to adapt curricula, manage student anxieties and help them re-connect with peers and re-engage in learning. In *Singapore*, as SPED school students need their caregivers' support for their learning, caregivers receive daily check-ins from SPED school personnel (e.g. teacher, allied professional) with regards to the activities for the day, their well-being and the well-being of their children.

The *Canadian* government is supporting new and returning post-secondary students this fall through **enhancements to the Canada Student Loans and Grants program** (in March 2021 this program was renamed the Canada Student Financial Assistance Program), including doubling the grants for students with permanent disabilities. This measure has since been extended to July 2023.

The government of *Japan* has prepared a **supplementary budget for FY2020 to provide I/O devices** for children with visual, auditory or other physical disabilities that cause difficulties when they use a PC/tablet.

#### **4.3.4 Strategies**

Nearly all **schools** in *Australia* and *Singapore* **have continued to provide vulnerable and disadvantaged students with face-to-face learning**. Where the students are unable to attend school, schools generally put in place suitable arrangements and provide additional support. Singapore has kept schools open for students from vulnerable backgrounds, as well as those whose parents work in essential services and have no childcare support. Schools have proactively identified those at risk or with high needs so they can be supported and engaged in school, and so teachers can supervise their learning and look after their overall well-being. For at-risk or high-needs students who choose to remain at home, teachers stay connected with them and support them virtually.

Member economies have taken measures to **improve accessibility to the Internet and devices** – for example, the Zero Rating on Data Plan for Educational Online Resources in *Brunei Darussalam*. *Mexico* has made agreements with Internet providers for lower rates for students and called for donations to close the gap between those who have educational resources and those who have not.

**Earmarked budgets have been allocated** for vulnerable children in *Canada*, *Japan*, *New Zealand* and *Singapore*. The government of *Japan* is allocating a supplementary budget to support low-income households that do not have Internet access by lending devices (Wi-Fi routers, etc.) to them. In *Singapore*, all universities have frozen tuition fee increases for the

Academic Year 2020 for citizens enrolled in government-subsidized undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Financial support will also continue to be extended through a combination of government assistance and financial aid provided by the universities to ensure the affordability of higher education.

**Box 12. Canada: Financial Support for Vulnerable Children and Youth**

The government will invest \$15 million (CAD) (this figure since been increased to \$118 million for the 2021-23 period), to help organizations working in the after-school space to reach approximately 14,700 vulnerable children and young people through the delivery of online wrap-around supports and increase the connectivity for these young learners and their families to help them stay in school, graduate on-time, and access post-secondary education. This investment will help organizations that have well established and trusted relationships with young people ensure that the critical support structures they provide, such as mentoring and tutoring, can continue to be delivered in an online environment.

To support students and recent graduates who cannot find summer employment due to COVID, the government is providing financial support through the Canada Emergency Student Benefit. Students who have dependents living with them or have a disability are entitled to additional financial support.

Additionally, the government is supporting new and returning post-secondary students this fall through enhancements to Canada Student Loans and Grants, now known as the Canada Financial Student Assistance Program, that will be in effect for one year starting August 1, 2020. This includes:

- Doubling Canada Student Grants for all eligible full-time students and part-time students. The Canada Student Grants for Students with Permanent Disabilities and Students with dependents would also be doubled and this measure has been extended through to July 2023.
- Removing the expected student and spousal contribution, in recognition that many students and families will struggle to save for school this year
- Raising the maximum weekly loan amount that can be provided to a student in 2020-21.

**Box 13. Korea: High Quality Education to All Students During COVID-19**

The government has worked hard to provide high-quality education to all students in a stable and non-discriminatory manner during school closures.

First, two public online education platforms were expanded so each could accommodate the simultaneous access of 3 million users (total of 6 million) to provide quality education to students in a timely manner.

Second, around 50,000 examples of educational content have been provided as part of quality



online education, and even private content has been released to be used freely. In addition, more educational TV channels have been created, and teacher capacity-building programs have also been continuously operated.

Third, to give equal opportunities in education to all students, Internet subscription fees and digital devices, and one-on-one home visit services have been provided to students from low-income families. Students have received not only learning support, but also emotional and psychological support through counseling, and emergency childcare services have been offered to reduce burden on parents.

Fourth, the government is tapping into public-private partnerships to provide available resources to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

**Free access to learning materials** is available in *China, Korea* and *Mexico*. *Mexico* provides free access to digital libraries, specialized publications and resources. In *Korea*, around 50,000 examples of educational content have been provided as part of quality online education, and even private content has been released to be used freely.

In *Singapore*, **primary and secondary school students continued to receive meal subsidies** during the circuit breaker period even though they were not in school. The money, deposited on a smart card, allowed them to purchase food and groceries.

## 4.4 The Role of Technology and Education Innovation

### 4.4.1 The Role of Technology

Technology has **enabled education institutions to continue delivery of education**. However, the experience has not been the same for all children due to a range of reasons, such as differential access to laptops and devices, Wi-Fi, location, support and intrinsic factors (*Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Mexico* and *Peru*).

Distance learning has been implemented through **a mix of media and channels**, including print-based learning materials, one-way massive broadcasting (TV and radio programmes), web-based exchanges using social media channels or learning platforms, as well as innovative teacher-parent-community arrangements (*Canada* and *Peru*).

The role of technology in education during COVID-19 is about **realizing “Future Learning” by structuring an environment where children are individually optimized** for STEAM learning, such as programming education. In order to realize this, along with arranging educational ICT infrastructure, such as PCs and high-speed networks, it is necessary to introduce new EdTech services to schools and promote learning style reform (*Japan*).

The role of technology in education is to enable **all students to engage in learning in a stable manner by providing learning platforms and online education tools** to connect home to school. This helps students realize their potential and satiate their intellectual curiosity even in the face of unforeseen school closures. Online learning platforms enable both young students

and adult learners to access a wider pool of learning resources, regardless of where they are and which institution they belong to (*Korea and Singapore*).

The role of technology is optimized through the **use of video conferencing, online learning platforms and digital document sharing**. It facilitates the acquisition of competencies through videos, online tutorials and simulations (*Indonesia and the Philippines*).

**Student Learning Space (SLS) – an online learning platform** – contains resources aligned to curricula along with a range of features to support self-directed and collaborative learning (including online synchronous and asynchronous learning). Synchronous learning is where all students are required to be online at the same time, and the teacher can take them through the content via eLearning platforms, such as the MOE's SLS. This can be augmented by video conferencing platforms if the teacher deems it necessary. Asynchronous learning is where material and assignments are available on SLS for students to access in a self-directed manner and in their own time. Similarly, **learning management systems** allows students to access online learning materials and to collaborate with one another (*Singapore*).

Technology has enabled **a huge number of connections** not previously possible. Multiple connections have been made between education authorities and schools and early learning service leaders in a way that facilitates **direct and quick decisions**. Technology can be used **to connect government expertise** with that of educators and sector leaders, as well as with learners, parents, employers and others involved in education. Technology facilitates management discussions at policy level remotely which, in turn, produces more informed decisions (*New Zealand, Malaysia and Mexico*).

**Technology solutions are very important** in distance learning. **Online platforms can** facilitate interactive and remote activities and carry a broad range of content to a connected community. Technology can also be used to **monitor the learning progress of trainees, deliver support and career guidance, and provide capacity building interventions for teachers and school administrators** (*The Philippines and Thailand*).

**There are now enhanced digital skills** among school administrators, teachers, students and parents. Teachers are being encouraged to learn and practice 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pedagogies and students to develop 21st Century Skills which are aligned with the National Education System of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (SPN21) (*Brunei Darussalam*).

Faculties use various **digital tools** for (a) teaching, learning, and assessments, (b) **the continuous monitoring of student learning** by teachers and parents and (c) **assisting self-study/ distance learning/ online meetings**. During COVID-19, in particular, educators have been maximizing the benefits of these technologies and learning how they can improve online/distance learning. This has led to important **innovations and creative teaching methods** that continue to improve education and blended learning (*Chinese Taipei and Thailand*).

Better communication has been made possible due to technology, and a better understanding of it can facilitate **more sustainable ways of interaction. Technology enables** better teamwork among teachers, especially through the sharing of resources, **as well as more parent involvement in student learning activities.** It can also serve as the **main tool for the communication** between teacher and student.

#### **Box 14. China: The Role of Technology in the Continuity of Education**

The MoE and MIIT, with the support of relevant tech companies, have jointly established **a coordinating mechanism to provide network bandwidth, cloud services and free data roaming for distance-learning platforms.** Many educational organizations have provided free digital textbooks and learning materials. The National Online Cloud Classroom and CETV have provided knowledge and resources on pandemic prevention as well as learning materials for schools. Open free online courses and platforms have been made available for TVET institutions. HEIs selected 37 online platforms to provide more than 30,000 online courses and 515 expert lectures for free.

The application of ICT in education has reformed the theory of traditional education. It aims to provide a novel mode of “Internet+ education” which focuses on all-round and characterized student development. In general, ICT has played an important role in this online education experiment:

1. It encourages transition in education theory. There are substantial differences between online and school-based education in terms of theory, methodology and management. Education continuity during the pandemic has facilitated the reforming process of education theory and promoted the idea of online and school-based education running together.
2. It advances the concept of balance in education development. Online education can effectively mobilize high quality resources for the public. Students from rural and remote areas, who have problems accessing the Internet, now have alternatives. In general, large-scale online education expands access to quality education resources and narrows the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged in society.
3. It improves the quality of education. Online education provides sufficient and diverse resources and focuses on the process of learning so as to exert timely intervention.
4. It contributes to the development of a learning society. Lifelong learning is the objective of education modernization in China. Online education, which has virtually no limit on time and space, can meet the requirements of mobile learning, ubiquitous learning, and fragmented learning. Its open, mutual sharing and ubiquitous features can be beneficial to lifelong learning for different groups in society. It can combine degree and non-degree education to establish a qualification recognition mechanism.

#### **4.4.2 Innovative Education Policies/Strategies**

Member economies have taken various innovative education policies and strategies in response to COVID-19.

**Operational Plan:** *Brunei Darussalam* developed a School Operation Plan with various models of schooling. *The Philippines* formulated an operational plan (TVET Towards a New Normal) for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, which provides specific, actionable steps to be undertaken in the short-, medium-, and long-term. The plan aims to empower TESDA to contribute to the economy's food, health, and job security and adapt to a "new normal" state by implementing its mandate of providing skills training and certification to Filipinos which can help them get better jobs.

**Delivery of Online Education:** The government of *Canada* will invest \$15 million (CAD) (this has since been increased to \$118 million for the 2021-23 period) to help organizations that have established and trusted relationships with vulnerable children and youth, to move their programming and support structures online. The measures are two-fold:

- Support for the transition to, and implementation of, digitized services (e.g., tutoring and mentoring);
- Support for getting vulnerable children, youth, and their families connected, in partnership with other federal government and private sector partners.

**Preparation for School Reopenings:** In *China*, the Ministry of Education and the National Health Commission have reiterated their arrangements regarding the reopening of schools in the new normal. The bodies organized a video conference on pandemic prevention and control efforts, and arrangements to reopen kindergartens, schools and HEIs amid COVID-19. They organized seven investigation groups to monitor the progress of pandemic control in schools in Shanghai, Jiangsu, Henan, Hunan, Guangxi, Sichuan and Shaanxi. They also issued "20 Questions for the Reopening of Schools in the New Normal State" based on local best practices and consultations with experts.

**Redesigning Curriculum:** *Chinese Taipei* has encouraged teachers to redesign their curricula: because students have a limited attention span, teaching methods and materials have to change accordingly. Classes must now be shorter and taught at a faster pace while at the same time, maintain high levels of interaction with students.

**MOOCs:** Massive Open Online Courses can be used for the remote delivery of education, but they also share quality education resources among higher education institutions across the board.

**Integration of Digital Tools:** In *Chinese Taipei*, remote learning means the inclusion of more technologies. Courses and ratings can also benefit from the assistance of digital tools. The BTS School – an experimental school in Taipei City famous for integrating technology into its curriculum – is a great example of how technology can assist education. In addition to the many types of highly important conference software packages, many subjects are now integrating online tools such as Seesaw (a ratings tool), Google (for co-editing) and Jamboard (interactive whiteboard), to increase learning. The simultaneous, real-time education model of "1-to-many" even allows for the hosting of meaningful P.E. and art classes.

**Public-private partnerships:** In *Korea*, two online education platforms were expanded to allow the simultaneous access of three million users each (i.e. six million in total), and students were informed of other private platforms which facilitated online classes in a stable manner. Also, a public-private joint online class monitoring team was created to monitor situations on the ground.

**Customized learning support to minimize learning gaps:** In *Korea*, for all students to receive equal educational opportunities, students with disabilities, and students from low-income families or multicultural families were provided with customized learning support to minimize potential learning and information gaps.

**Real-time emergency response system:** In *Korea*, a real-time emergency response system has been in operation to efficiently utilize educational resources by cooperating with universities, local governments, and other relevant institutions.

**Emergency childcare services:** In *Korea*, emergency childcare services have been provided to lower the burden on the parents of kindergarteners and primary school pupils caused by school closures, especially dual-earner families.

**Multimedia Cross-Disciplinary Lesson Package:** *Singapore* created a “**Bye Bye Virus**” lesson package to help bring the message of good personal hygiene and social responsibility to younger students. It includes a rap (on YouTube), a set of stickers and a cast of virus-fighting superheroes.

## **V. Recommendations**

*Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore and Thailand* suggested **documenting, consolidating and sharing best practices on member economies’ responses to COVID-19 with respect to education** – including steps taken before, during and after the pandemic – and then developing a summary or a synthesis of the information gained from this survey. *New Zealand* suggested this could provide policy insights for member economies and for discussion at future EDNET meetings or virtual seminars. *Australia* proposed an information-sharing exercise that encouraged economies to share insights, innovations and strategies on how they adapted to remote learning, particularly online, with the aim of providing practical examples that could be adopted in a range of economic circumstances. *Malaysia* suggested that the sharing of best practices should focus on remote learning, especially for students with disabilities or special needs as well as those marginalized.

*Brunei Darussalam, Chinese Taipei, Peru and Thailand* suggested closer collaboration among economies – for example, through “**Epidemic Prevention Platforms**” or “**Community of Ideas**” – for sharing strategies and lessons learned in response to COVID-19. As various schools and regions were forced to resolve their own individual problems, such platforms could allow faster solutions and more creative collaborations.

*Brunei Darussalam* and *the Philippines* proposed carrying out specific **research/studies related to education's response to COVID-19**. *Brunei Darussalam* suggested research into marginalized areas and how authorities could better serve their technological needs. *The Philippines* recommended studies on economic and APEC-wide best practices, specifically on (a) ensuring equitable access to quality TVET; and (b) the financial impact on TVET, including best practices on the utilization of funds for the continuity of education.

*Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, the Philippines* and *Thailand* advanced the idea of improving **capacity building for distance learning and remote learning**. *Brunei Darussalam* suggested more training resources for institutions and disadvantaged students to enable and improve online delivery of learning and assessments. *Thailand* proposed that APEC contribute to teacher training materials so they could use technology in teaching and learning. *Malaysia* and *Thailand* noted the assessments of students' learning outcomes in this regard.

*Peru* suggested **sharing strategies or guidelines** on the role of parents as companions in the education of children, as well as **sharing protocols** for a safe return to schools.

*The Philippines* proposed **allocating funds for projects and initiatives related to COVID-19 or prioritizing the use of a portion of APEC funds for projects related to COVID-19** (for example, improving distance learning in economies, increasing social protection for the education sector), with a particular focus on poor and marginalized groups.

## Annex 1

**Table 1: Age Range for Compulsory Schooling**

<b>Economy</b>	<b>Age Range for Compulsory Schooling</b>
Australia	5-18
Brunei Darussalam	6-15
Canada	5 or 6 - 16 in most provinces and territories, except for Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, and Nunavut, where the compulsory age is 18, or as soon as a high-school diploma has been achieved.
Chile	Students attend school mandatorily in Chile from age 5 to age 17, on average. Schooling is mandatory until 12th grade. Nevertheless enrolment rates are about 85% for secondary level and about 98% for elementary levels.
China	Starting from 6, 9 years.
Chinese Taipei	6-18
Indonesia	7-18
Japan	1 <sup>st</sup> grade (6 years old) – 9th grade (15 years old), i.e. elementary school to junior high school.
Korea	Up to the 3 <sup>rd</sup> year of middle school, i.e. 14 year-olds, K9.
Malaysia	Grade 1 to 6, 6 years.
Mexico	3 to 1 years old.
New Zealand	6-16
Peru	Education is compulsory for students at pre-primary, primary and secondary levels. And the kinder level is divided on out-of-school education for kids from 0 to 2 years-old and school education from 3 to 5 years-old.
The Philippines	Kindergarten (4-6 years old) up to senior high school (17-18 years old)
Russia	
Singapore	Above 6 years old and under 15 years old.
Thailand	6-15

**Annex 2A.**

**Systems of Tracking and Identifying Local Students Studying Overseas**

<b>Economies</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Tracking System</b>
Australia	Yes	Via Australian consular services.
Brunei Darussalam	Yes	Through Brunei Darussalam’s individual higher education institutions and Scholarship Division, and the MOE; and collaborate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as foreign embassies in Brunei Darussalam.
Canada	N/A	
Chile	Yes	Yes, and this has been identified as important because it leads to: - knowing about your immigration status if you have RUN or IPE; - having a better command of Spanish; - whether or not they belong to the Social Registry of Homes; - yes, they live with their families or they are in family reunification processes, which may have been interrupted as a result of the pandemic; - how long have they been in this migratory project since they left their city of origin; - their conditions of habitability and emotional containment; - access to technologies that facilitate learning.
China	Yes	The MoE requires local authorities to include international students in the COVID-19 prevention and control system based on the principle of residence management. HEIs should report daily on the status of international students to the MoE.
Chinese Taipei	Yes	Through our overseas office.
Indonesia		
Japan	Yes	Each higher education institution tracks its students in exchange programs. Universities are requested to ensure the security of students in overseas economies or regions, referring them to the “Guidelines on Crisis Management on Studying Abroad at Universities”, which include the temporary suspension of programs and temporary return to Japan. The students are instructed to register at the local Japanese consulate by submitting a certification of residence so as to ensure prompt contact with the



		universities. Universities should be able to track overseas students periodically and confirm their locations.
Korea	Yes	<p>The Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) tracks Korean primary and secondary school students who study abroad annually. The information is posted on the educational statistics website (<a href="http://www.kess.kedi.re.kr">www.kess.kedi.re.kr</a>). Every year, the Ministry of Education also posts updated information on Korean students studying in higher education institutions abroad on its website (<a href="http://www.moe.go.kr">www.moe.go.kr</a>) by working with Korean diplomatic missions around the world.</p> <p>For students in exchange programs, universities are responsible for the management of the entire process of their study, from selection to exit and entry.</p> <p>For those who study under a government scholarship, the National Institute for International Education and other relevant organizations are responsible for constantly monitoring the process of student selection, secondment and counseling.</p>
Malaysia		
Mexico	Yes	Mexico keeps track of students abroad who are beneficiaries of state scholarships and state exchange programs.
New Zealand	No	<p>All outbound students must be registered on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs &amp; Trade (MFAT)'s SafeTravel website. However, detailed tracking and identifying those outbound students is the responsibility of their domestic provider.</p> <p>Similarly, scholarship students are tracked by the agency or organization providing the scholarship. These students are also encouraged to register on SafeTravel.</p> <p>If students are not enrolled with a domestic provider when they go overseas to study, the Ministry does not hold information on them.</p>
Peru	Yes	<p>The Ministry of Foreign Affairs keeps track of Peruvian citizens (residents as well as students) who are living in other economies. The National Program of Scholarships and Student loans (PRONABEC) has its own system to track students who are creditors of government scholarships and students loans.</p> <p>All those interested in obtaining a scholarship with PRONABEC to study abroad must have registered on the Integrated Scholarship System – SIBEC. SIBEC identifies the scholarship holders who are studying abroad by number and place of study. Thus, when scholarship recipients travel abroad, they are asked to immediately update their profile data, which includes their new address, telephone number or other profile data.</p>

		<p>Similarly, access to the migration system allows specialists who monitor scholarship holders to see if they are abroad or in Peru, for the purpose of accompaniment or subsidy or fulfillment of obligations at the end of their studies.</p> <p>In addition, due to risks related to COVID-19, the Emergency / Urgency Action Card COVID-19 was created in which the fellows fill in their personal data – including data from medical insurers, student services of their universities, a close friendship, the PRONABEC specialist who accompanies him, a relative in Peru and the Chancellor at his study headquarters.</p> <p>An inter-institutional and international cooperation link has been generated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the various embassies / consulates for the actions of protection and humanitarian return of all the scholarship holders who are studying abroad. This involves sharing the location details of the fellows and their contact details to manage direct actions with them. This platform has been updated three times since the start of the pandemic, with official documents being sent in February, May and June.</p>
The Philippines (TESDA)	No	For the TVET sector, a system to track students abroad has yet to be developed.
Russia	No	There is no centralized system, but domestic and international students involved in exchange programmes are identified and monitored by HEIs.
Singapore	Yes	<p>The MOE can request data from our IHLs regarding their students who are abroad on exchange programmes or overseas internships;</p> <p>Singapore public agencies that offer overseas scholarships track their own scholars.</p> <p>We are not able to track Singaporeans who take on other scholarships, including scholarships to study overseas, if they do not register with the Singapore embassies in those economies.</p>
Thailand (HE)	Yes	Especially students who got the scholarship from the government and institutions including exchange programs.

## Annex 2B.

### Systems of Identifying Number and Origin of International Students

Economies	Yes/No	Tracking System
Australia	Yes	Australia uses student visa data to understand the number and origin of international students.
Brunei Darussalam	Yes	We have information about international students studying in Brunei Darussalam under core and higher education institutions, both within public and private institutions.
Canada	N/A	
Chile	Yes	<p>The Provisional School Identifier (IPE) is a unique number that the Ministry of Education (Mineduc) * gives to foreign students who do not have RUN and who wish to join the Chilean educational system. This number is kept until it is replaced by the identity card (RUN).</p> <p>The IPE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow participation in the processes of the school admission system (SAE) and enrollment</li> <li>• Certifies studies</li> <li>• Guarantee access to school texts, food, school insurance, the National Student Card (TNE) and the computers that are delivered by the JUNAEB program. I connect to learn.</li> <li>• Is only intended to protect access to the educational system, guaranteeing kindergarten, as well as basic and middle education. Like all nationals, however, the irregular migratory situation of students, as well as that of their families, tends to be associated with situations involving housing insecurity, labor abuse, lack of protection in the health field, not belonging to the RSH, as well as the increased risk of being victims of crimes such as human trafficking. Therefore, students with IPE are subjects of special protection, particularly at school, since they represent a universe of families that are exposed to greater situations of exclusion.</li> </ul> <p>* Important: The Mineduc manages the IPE for basic and secondary education, while the National Board of Kindergartens (JUNJI) and the Integra Foundation manage for pre-school education, as appropriate.</p>
China	Yes	
Chinese	Yes	Our overseas office has been tracking international students studying here.

Taipei		
Indonesia		
Japan	Yes	JASSO conducts a survey to keep track of international students every year. MEXT issued an announcement to universities to study the crisis management framework, referring to the “Guideline on Crisis Management on Studying Abroad at Universities”, which includes ensuring emergency contacts, exchanging information with universities, ensuring one-stop inquiry centers and establishing a system to contact MEXT, health centers and related organizations.
Korea	Yes	The Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) provides updates on international students studying in Korea on its website ( <a href="http://www.kess.kedi.re.kr">www.kess.kedi.re.kr</a> ) by categorizing them into economies, universities and provinces.
Malaysia		
Mexico	Yes	Mexico keeps track of foreign students registered in exchange programs established by the state.
New Zealand	Yes	The Ministry collects a combination of enrollment data from the education sector and visa data from the immigration system, which the Ministry can use to track and identify inbound international students. All schools use a centralized register to record and update both domestic and international students’ enrolment and withdrawal from schools. All tertiary education providers submit enrolment data for both domestic and international students three times per year.  Enrolment figures are published annually and are available to the public: <a href="https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/">https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/</a> Visa data is published on the INZ website: <a href="https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/resource-library">https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/resource-library</a>
Peru	Yes	Foreigners who study in Peru through reciprocity or academic mobility scholarships granted by PRONABEC follow the same registration procedure as Peruvian students in SIBEC, so all the information requested is registered in the system.
The Philippines (TESDA)	Yes	The TESDA Training Management Information System (T2MIS).
Russia	Yes	There is a system supported by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education for statistical monitoring of HEIs which provides information on international students and their economies of origin.

Singapore	N/A	MOE does not track the total number and origin of all international students studying in Singapore.
Thailand (HE)	Yes	MHESI has an online system to collect data from universities.

## **Annex 3**

### **Best Practices of Education Responses to COVID-19**

## **Australia: Response to COVID-19 in Higher Education Sector**

Universities are currently facing a significant body of work to ensure that the resumption of face to face learning and practical elements within physical distancing protocols is conducted in an effective, efficient and safe manner.

Similarly, work is being undertaken to ensure that researchers and PhD students can return to their laboratories and work spaces in ways that comply with physical distancing requirements and sustain their ability to conduct experiments and other research.

Universities have also done a significant amount to support their student cohort, both domestic and international, through times of uncertainty and financial insecurity. All comprehensive universities have established hardship schemes for their students, and though the scale and nature of these vary across institutions, they have all offered critical support for students in need. This has taken the form of direct cash payments, assistance with accommodation, grocery vouchers, food packs, access to IT equipment and internet packages, increased access to mental health, housing, legal and financial advice, and enhanced student welfare checks and services.

Many university researchers in a variety of disciplines have also rapidly shifted research focus to concentrate on COVID-19 related research — investigating the virus from a medical and scientific perspective and also examining the public health, economic and social impacts of the pandemic.

Meanwhile, universities are facing a significant challenge posed by the predicted revenue loss resulting from the decline in international student tuition fees, as well as cancellation of events and conferences.

The Australian Government has committed to a number of actions in response to the pandemic, to respond and provide certainty to the education sector, including:

- Guaranteeing existing funding for domestic students, based on universities' projected/expected number of students, regardless of whether the actual numbers of students turn out to be lower than the projections. This provides the sector some degree of financial security.
- Waiving or postponing cost-recovery and regulation measures, which helps relieve the reporting burden and some financial imposts upon universities.
- Guaranteeing funding for universities in 2020 at current funding levels, even if there is a fall in student numbers. Providers have flexibility to manage bachelor, postgraduate and sub-bachelor places within their allocated funding envelope. In return for greater flexibility in the use of Government funding, the Government is asking universities to commit to the introduction of a new model of higher education certificate short courses in areas of national priority, with significantly discounted student fees.

- Asking providers to develop short, focused courses in fields of national priority such as teaching, health, science, and information technology that can be offered for six months from May 2020. Students who complete a short course will be awarded either an Undergraduate Certificate or a Graduate Certificate depending on the level of their studies. The Undergraduate Certificate is a new qualification that has been added to the Australian Qualifications Framework to ensure that people who complete short courses at undergraduate levels of study receive a formally recognised qualification.
- Establishing the JobKeeper initiative to provide income support for employees of businesses that have been financially impacted by COVID-19. For the ELICOS sector, this enables private providers to maintain their staff despite declining income. The ELICOS sector has also benefitted from the freeze on evictions during the pandemic period, whereby private institutions have been able to negotiate lower or deferred rent payments.



## **Canada: Education Response to COVID-19**

Canada's federal and provincial and territorial governments have taken action to counter these education challenges with the following initiatives:

### **Federal Government:**

- Six-month interest free moratorium on repayment of all Canada Student Loans and Canada Apprentice Loans (from March to September 2020);
  - Canada has since introduced measures to waive the accrual of interest on student and apprenticeship loans through March 31, 2023;
  - The threshold for student and apprenticeship loans repayments have been increased and will be indexed to inflation, and payments will be capped at 10% of household income, lowered from 20%;
- A Canada Emergency Student Benefit which will provide financial support to students and new graduates (available from May to August 2020); Enhancements to Canada Student Loans and Grants that will be in effect for one year starting August 1, 2020, including:
  - Doubling the Canada Student Grants for all eligible full-time and part-time students, including those with dependents and disabilities; has since been extended through to 2023;
  - Raising the maximum weekly amount that can be provided to a student;
  - Broadening eligibility for student financial assistance by removing the student's and spouse's expected contributions;
- Seeking to expand federal employment programming for students; supports for approximately 215,000 job opportunities over 5-years has been announced.
- Temporarily removing the restriction that allows international students to work only a maximum of 20 hours per week while classes are in session if they are working in an essential service or function; and
- Increasing funding for youth and mental health support.

Provinces and territories have taken steps to facilitate learning for all students throughout the suspension of in-class learning in response to COVID-19.

### **Manitoba:**

- Giving a bursary funding boost for post-secondary students. For 2020-21, MB will match funds raised by institutions at a 1:1 ratio instead of 1:2. Manitoba has also allocated an extra \$5 million (CAD) for one bursary program and an additional \$1.8 million (CAD) for students in need;
- Expanding access to summer school programming for Grade 9-12 students by waiving course fees and removing an enrolment cap;
- Committing up to \$120 million (CAD) for the Summer Student Recovery Plan, a new wage subsidy program to support high school and post-secondary students in the private and non-profit sectors. Program will provide a \$7/hour (CAD) wage subsidy, up to \$5,000/student (CAD), for up to 5 students, from May 1 to Sep 4; and
- Deferring student loan repayments for 6 months (to Sep 30).

### **Ontario:**

- Giving a one-time payment of \$200 (CAD) per child up to 12 years of age (\$250 for those up to 21 years of age with special needs), including children enrolled in private schools, under the Support for Families initiative;
- Made agreement with eCampusOntario to make digital learning supports available to postsecondary institutions (cost undisclosed) and \$25 million (CAD) for publicly assisted colleges, universities and Indigenous Institutes to help address pressing needs such as cleaning, medical supplies or offering mental health supports; and
- Forming partnerships with Apple and Rogers to provide 21,000 iPads and data to students in need.

**Newfoundland and Labrador:**

- Committing \$300,000 (CAD) for a new Students Supporting Communities Program to grant organizations \$3,500 (CAD) to hire students to help seniors and other vulnerable groups facing social isolation.
- 4,500 devices are being provided to students without access to technology or the Internet.

**New Brunswick:**

- Investing \$860,000 (CAD) to improve students' access to Internet and technology to support home learning, through 1,000 tablets with data plans, 500 laptops and 300 MiFi hubs; and
- New Brunswick's Emergency Bridging Fund for Vulnerable Post-Secondary Students will provide a one-time payment of up to \$750/student (CAD), to be distributed by post-secondary institutions based upon eligibility criteria (\*cannot be combined with \$900 (CAD) emergency income benefit).

**PEI:**

- Committing to 1,000 new job placements for post-secondary students through existing employment programs and increased private-sector wage subsidies for student jobs.

**Quebec:**

- The province has developed a partnership with Telus and Apple which will allow the ministry to provide students who lack access to the Internet with tablets that will automatically have access to the Internet.

**British Columbia:**

- Most school districts are loaning out equipment to students and/or staff; to date, almost 23,000 devices have been loaned or are ready to be loaned out.
- Enabling a free online/phone mental health counselling and referral service for students.

## **Chile: Education for Rural, Under-Performing and Isolated Schools**

The main mission of the Ministry of Education – through the Rural Education program ‘*Escuelas Arriba*’ – is to provide quality learning opportunities in rural and urban schools particularly at those where educational results have not reached good levels of performance. This has been done through the implementation of the current curriculum, the development of teaching strategies, guidelines and materials for educational activities, and the improvement of learning.

In the context of COVID-19, pedagogical material, in printed format, has been sent to rural schools and/or those with little or no Internet connectivity. The aim is to reinforce and support learning at different levels – from first basic to 12th grade – in an attractive and easy way. Since it is not possible to address all Learning Objectives, the material concentrates only on the essential ones. It is distributed directly in educational institutions and is then withdrawn by parents. Project coordination is in the hands of the Ministry of Education.

The “I Learn at Home” Plan (‘*Aprendo en Casa*’):

Plan Description: The strategy aims to send printed pedagogical material, in the subjects of Languages and Mathematics, to students from first basic to 11th secondary grade, who attend (a) rural schools, (b) under-performing schools or (c) schools in areas with little or no Internet access.

Its central purpose is to help children with their most critical learning objectives. The material is validated and is part of various strategies implemented by the Ministry of Education. Families may request schools to have this material.

Enrolment: about 350,000 students from Grades 1-11

Beneficiaries: 3,800 schools

Pedagogical time: about 25 days

Description of the material:

Grades 1-2: Students will receive a collection of six books with activities, designed to help them read and write.

Grades 3-7: One booklet per level, with 30 daily activities for Languages and 30 daily activities for Mathematics. These activities make up the Learning Objectives defined by the plans and programs of the Ministry, and correspond to previous level. Their purpose is to consolidate and reinforce learning. In addition to the activities, there is also a monitoring table for parents and/or guardians.

Grades 8-12: Student guides for Languages and Mathematics, and the corresponding guidelines with solutions. The guidelines with solutions for Languages are available on the web, while the guidelines for Mathematics are in printed format. Ideally, each student makes two guides per week in both subjects. The purpose of these guides is to help students revise the content from

previous courses and reduce learning gaps.

Learning objective: It encourages learning, gives students a taste for reading and writing, develops communication skills, and promotes creativity and literary sensitivity. It pushes for spontaneous expressions of emotions and ideas, and integrates various areas of learning. It supports and complements curricular work.

Grades 3-7: Booklets with daily activities for Languages and Mathematics. These activities comprise the most critical learning objectives for all the units defined by the Ministry's plans and programs, and correspond to the previous level, so their objective is to consolidate and reinforce learning. Based on Booklets I “Aprendo sin Parar” (non-stop learning).

Grades 8-11: Six guides “Unit 0” in the subjects of Languages and Mathematics. Two guides per week apply. They include content and skills from previous levels and aim to reduce learning gaps. They are distributed progressively and are essential for good academic performance at the corresponding level. They are based on the “Liceos bicentenario” program.

## **China: Education Response to COVID-19**

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in January, China's Ministry of Education (MoE) has designed an array of measures to curb its spread and keep people safe. Now that social and economic order is being restored, education institutions of all types and at all levels are gradually being reopened, with the safety and well-being of approximately 280 million students and 17 million teachers a top priority.

### **Basic Education: Disrupted Classes, Undisrupted Learning**

To ensure the continuity of education, a nationwide initiative – “Disrupted Classes, Undisrupted Learning” – was launched soon after the outbreak of COVID-19. By pooling resources from governments, schools, enterprises and individuals, a host of alternative online solutions were offered by means of radio, television and the Internet (including live broadcasts, recorded videos and distance instruction). Meanwhile, various methods and strategies were used to monitor the quality of online teaching.

On February 12<sup>th</sup>, the MoE and MIIT (Ministry of Industry and Information Technology) issued a joint notice regarding the arrangements for “Disrupted Classes, Undisrupted Learning”. The MoE opened a “National Online Cloud Classroom” – an online learning platform offering a number of different courses based on regularly used textbooks in China – on February 17<sup>th</sup> and updated it a week later. It eventually featured ten sections: (i) epidemic prevention, (ii) moral education, (iii) subject-based course life, (iv) safety education, (v) mental health, (vi) family education, (vii) classics reading, (viii) research study, (ix) audiovisual education, and (x) digital textbooks, with the content updated weekly. By May 11<sup>th</sup>, it had more than two billion views, and about 1.7 billion visitors. It was reported that parents and students found the online platform to be both of a high quality and user friendly, whilst offering a wide range of choice. In particular, the platform enabled rural students to access quality education resources.

Meanwhile, China Education Network Television (CETV) started broadcasting relevant courses for students at different levels on February 17<sup>th</sup>. It offered dedicated courses for students in Grades 9 and 12, focusing on arts, humanity history, and Chinese classics and civilization. CETV's “The Classroom in the Air” proved to be very popular – so popular that it was in the Top Ten in China's television ratings.

To facilitate student learning in rural and remote areas which had unreliable Internet connectivity, the MoE and NRTA (National Radio and Television Administration) mandated local radio and television administrations to ensure student access to educational television.

### **Higher Education: Developing Quality Online Education Resources Through MOOCs**

The MoE issued guidelines for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on February 4<sup>th</sup>, mandating local education authorities, universities and colleges to make tailored plans for online education. As of May 8<sup>th</sup>, a total of 1,454 HEIs had provided online education, 1.03 million teachers had

created 1.07 million courses (including theoretical and practical courses), and 17.75 million college students had received online learning. The online courses ranged from natural science to social science, and comprised of a dozen disciplines.

The MoE also secured resources from 37 online learning platforms which gave the public complimentary access to 41,000 courses. More than 100 private and university-based online platforms followed suit. Through the MoE's support, the main platforms upgraded their servers to ensure quality of service during peak times.

The MoE encouraged HEIs and the MOOC Alliance Joint Committee to recommend high-quality online courses, experimental platforms and digital textbooks for students. Meanwhile, before and as schools reopened, HEIs, the MOOC Alliance Joint Committee and other companies provided technological support for online teacher training.

HEIs were able to offer online courses using a variety of teaching methods, such as MOOCs, live streams and recorded lectures, as well as innovative teaching modes involving cross-university coordination, flipped classrooms, and video conference systems. In addition, online sports classes were also popular among students.

### **Professional Support to Online Education: Teacher Training**

This was the first time that China implemented online teaching at a national level. Because of this, special teacher training was urgently needed.

To meet this end, the MoE developed “Improving Online Teaching Capacity” – an action plan to help local education authorities train teachers for online teaching. The MoE, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, revised the annual national teacher training work plan. The former scaled up efforts for teacher training, including online seminars as well as video conferences for administrators responsible for teacher training.

The MoE's guidelines on online teaching comprised of 25 sections, which were disseminated through the social media platform, WeChat. Upon a request from the MoE, Nanjing Normal University developed guidelines on family-school collaborations. The MoE also requested several universities to develop guidelines on mental health awareness during the pandemic.

The MoE mobilized resources to develop a training resource kit for online teaching which was publicized via the China E-learning Academy for Education Leadership and Administration. The Ministry also asked organizations involved in the national teacher training program to provide open access to teacher training resources. Six organizations, including Higher Education Press, provided free online resources to teachers. The administration offices of the Teacher Training Project, Presidents Training Project and Capacity Improvement Project of Teachers in VET Institutions came together to establish an expert working group which would provide online consulting services for teachers.

As part of an initiative to establish a support community, the MoE mobilized experts from the

National Teacher Training Program and the National Teacher Development Committee of Experts to carry out research on online teaching. The Ministry produced two survey-based reports – one on online teaching amid COVID-19, and the other on online teaching in primary and secondary schools amid COVID-19. The MoE mobilized 85 leading experts to share their opinions on pandemic prevention and control – these were published in a special feature in the media.

The MoE also organized four video conferences on online teaching – in attendance were local education authorities, experts from HEIs, representatives from the National Training Program as well as presidents and faculties. They analyzed more than 250 cases of exemplary online teaching for future training purposes.

### **School Closures and Reopening**

To ensure campus safety and the well-being of the students and faculties, a prompt decision was made to postpone the commencement of the spring semester. Once the pandemic was under control, the MoE decided to reopen schools and resume classes. Education institutions at all levels were required to fully assess their preparedness for reopening, decide on a prudent timeline, and see to it that resumption was carried out in a tiered and orderly manner. Measures to ensure the health and safety of the students and faculties included keeping classes as small as possible and practicing social distancing.

### **Support for International Students**

The MoE leveraged resources from various sectors to provide overseas Chinese students with “health packages” and a digital advice platform, as well as webinars on COVID-19 prevention and control. Meanwhile, academic and psycho-socio support was also extended to international students and faculties in China.

Currently, the MoE is striving to make its education systems more robust and resilient, and to enhance its capacity in infrastructure, faculty, pedagogy and the use of emerging technologies. Chinese authorities say they will further their commitment to sharing best practices and lessons learned with the international community, and to promote dialogue and cooperation.

## **Indonesia: Education Response to COVID-19**

### **Education Policy During COVID-19**

#### ***Policies adjustment***

- Health protocol advisories to schools and internal ministry
- Series of education policy in the time of pandemic (study from home, national exam cancelation, school exam adjustment, distance learning implementation, and online approach for student's enrolment process)
- Adjustment of the utilization of school operational assistance to cater the school's needs during the pandemic, including the internet data package support for students in all levels, teachers, and lecturers
- The school and universities in red zones are remain closed until further notice. Students learn/study from home after holiday season. The school year still begins on mid-July 2020. The school in green zones can be opened after fulfilling a very strict requirements (source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-P9twRgPtSY>)
- Curriculum adjustment for all school levels to be applicable during crisis/special condition, e.g. COVID-19 pandemic, including learning modules for teachers, students, and parents in early-childhood and primary education (<http://litbang.kemdikbud.go.id/kurikulum>)

#### ***Resources reallocation***

- Voluntarism program of medicine and health students (more than 15,000 across Indonesia)
- Activating university's medical facilities across Indonesia as COVID-19 Test Centre (18 laboratories and 13 hospitals for patient treatment)
- Allocating ministry's training centre dormitories for quarantine across Indonesia
- Budget reallocation for COVID-19 handling

#### ***Learning from Home***

- Distance learning via online, offline, and combination. Government also collaborates with technology start-ups and communities
- Educational and cultural programme for students, parents, and teachers aired daily on national television – TVRI, consist of: Formal learning programme from early childhood up to high school, Parenting programme, Cultural/edutainment, National movies, Documentaries
- Public communications campaigns on character building amidst COVID-19 pandemic
- Online cultural programme: Provision of online cultural space for artists and cultural activists (e.g. online performance and online classes on YouTube BudayaSaya) and Virtual tour to national museums and heritage sites (e.g. National Museum, Borobudur Temple, etc.)
- Collaboration with relevant stakeholders in various area (i.e. infrastructure – Internet quota subsidy, free online educational platform, educational content, PSAs, etc.)

#### ***Learning from COVID-19***

- New normality is the ability to study / learn and work from anywhere



- Parents, teachers, and students to collaborate and make the most out of the available technology to optimize learning outcomes
- The situation redefines how we perceive health, environment, and humanity specifically on solidarity and collaboration (*gotong royong*)
- Cultivate innovation through experiments, and embrace critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration

### **Best Practices During COVID-19**

Ministry of Education and Culture presents a dedicated website for education policy during COVID-19 through <https://bersamahadapikورونا.kemdikbud.go.id> (Bahasa Indonesia only). The website consists of latest updates from COVID-19 in Indonesia as well as best practices and guidelines for all related stakeholders.

#### ***'Belajar dari Rumah' Programme and Online Application Start-ups Collaboration***

- Educational and cultural programme for students, parents, and teachers aired daily on national television – TVRI, consist of: Formal learning programme from early childhood up to high school, Parenting programme, Cultural/edutainment, National movies, Documentaries
- Engage educational online application to collaborate in helping students learning from home
- Further information <https://bersamahadapikورونا.kemdikbud.go.id/surveibdr/> and <https://bersamahadapikورونا.kemdikbud.go.id/category/aplikasi-pembelajaran/> (Bahasa Indonesia only)

#### ***Distance Learning Guideline***

- The document is prepared as a guideline for teachers and parents to help their students/children performing the distance learning
- The document is presented using the infographic
- This guideline can be accessed through <https://bersamahadapikورونا.kemdikbud.go.id/panduan-pembelajaran-jarak-jauh/> (Bahasa Indonesia only)

#### ***Daily Schedule Guideline***

- The document is prepared as a guideline for parents to help them to schedule children activities
- The document is presented using the infographic
- This guideline can be accessed through <https://bersamahadapikورونا.kemdikbud.go.id/panduan-menyusun-jadwal-harian/> (Bahasa Indonesia only)

***A Pocket Guide to Learning during COVID-19 Pandemic Period***

- The document is prepared as a guideline for education institutions managers/administrators to help them operate the education during pandemic
- This guideline can be accessed through <https://bersamahadapikورونا.kemdikbud.go.id/panduan-menyusun-jadwal-harian/> (Bahasa Indonesia only)

***'Rekam Pandemi' Video***

- Ministry of Education and Culture in collaboration with *Asosiasi Dokumenteris Nusantara* (an Indonesian Documentary Association) initiate the national programme called “Rekam Pandemi”.
- 300 documentaries throughout Indonesia, from Aceh to Papua simultaneously documenting social and cultural changes that occurred as a result of the largest global pandemic in the last century of human history, COVID-19.
- The stories of the people in adjusting themselves can be a mirror for us all as self-reflection for the future of the nation.

Further information <https://rekam Pandemi.kemdikbud.go.id/> (Bahasa Indonesia only)

## **Japan: Education Response to COVID-19**

As the fight against COVID-19 becomes a long-term battle, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) believes that it is of utmost importance to balance both the infection control measures with children's learning, and using all means possible, to ensure learning to the greatest extent possible without leaving any child behind.<sup>4</sup>

### **Temporary closure and resumption of school**

In Japan, about 98% of schools have reopened as of June 1. The final decision on reopening rests with the establisher of the school, but MEXT has prepared and published “**Guidelines for Sustainable School Management**” to be used as reference.

[Main content of the Guidelines]

- Thorough infection control measures such as hand washing and cough etiquette
- Guidance on thorough ventilation and use of masks to avoid closed, crowded and close contact settings.
- Handling of attendance and consideration for learning when children display cold symptoms
- Classes and supplementary studies to catch up on learning<sup>5</sup>

### **Ensuring children's learning**

The following efforts have been compiled and widely published as a Comprehensive Package for “Ensuring Children's Learning”.

- In Japan, the national government has been providing support so that each school will be able to use ICT and other means to carry out learning activities as much as possible while providing appropriate home learning even during the temporary closure.
- After the schools reopened, while giving due consideration to preventing the spread of infection, schools have been supporting children's learning through various measures such as implementing staggered school attendance, devising new timetables, and shortening long vacation periods.
- MEXT has established a portal site that introduces teaching materials and videos that children and parents are able to use at home, etc., and as well as aiming to improve it, has been striving to spread best examples which use tablets.
  
- In terms of maintaining the ICT environment, MEXT has commenced integrated maintenance of high-speed, large-capacity communication networks in schools and a device for each student,

---

4 Information on MEXT's responses regarding infection control measures in relation to COVID-19 (Japanese language version)

[https://www.mext.go.jp/a\\_menu/coronavirus/index.html](https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/coronavirus/index.html)

(English language version)

[https://www.mext.go.jp/en/mext\\_00006.html](https://www.mext.go.jp/en/mext_00006.html)

5 Guidelines: [https://www.mext.go.jp/a\\_menu/coronavirus/mext\\_00049.html](https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/coronavirus/mext_00049.html)

(Japanese language only)

and in order to handle this crisis, a budget (229.2 billion yen) was included in the supplementary budget to move up the schedule and accelerate and strengthen efforts. Specifically, this includes maintenance of the communication environment required for home/online learning, and maintenance of input/output support devices for students with disabilities.

- Since long-term responses to COVID-19 are required, after reaffirming the importance of conventional face-to-face instruction and interaction among children, MEXT summarizes the concepts of effective learning guidance balanced with new online methods, and has also been providing financial support for the development of the personnel structure and physical structure necessary to ensure learning in each school.

[Further Information]

- Comprehensive Package for “Ensuring Children’s Learning”

[https://www.mext.go.jp/en/content/20200716-mxt\\_kokusai-000005414\\_03.pdf](https://www.mext.go.jp/en/content/20200716-mxt_kokusai-000005414_03.pdf)

- Portal site for home study (Children's study support site Japanese language only)

[https://www.mext.go.jp/a\\_menu/ikusei/gakusyushien/index\\_00001.htm](https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/ikusei/gakusyushien/index_00001.htm)

- GIGA School Program

[https://www.mext.go.jp/en/content/20200716-mxt\\_kokusai-000005414\\_04.pdf](https://www.mext.go.jp/en/content/20200716-mxt_kokusai-000005414_04.pdf)

### **Children’s mental health**

- MEXT has requested all schools to maintain close contact with the children and their parents.

- In addition, MEXT has requested that school counselors provide support, etc. after the reopening of the schools to quickly ascertain the anxieties and worries of the children using stress checks and other methods.

[Further Information]

- Contact information for SOS consultation services for children (Japanese language only)

[https://www.mext.go.jp/a\\_menu/shotou/seitoshidou/06112210.htm](https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/seitoshidou/06112210.htm)

### **Higher education**

- As of June 1, 99.7% of the classes have been held, and 90.3% of them held distance learning through some method.

- MEXT provides emergency financial support to students who have been financially affected.

[Further Information]

- Approaches relating to higher education

[https://www.mext.go.jp/en/content/20200707-mxt\\_kokusai\\_000005414\\_02.pdf](https://www.mext.go.jp/en/content/20200707-mxt_kokusai_000005414_02.pdf)

### **Responses through emergency economic measures and the supplementary budget**

- Package of Emergency Economic Measures MEXT (April 2020)

[https://www.mext.go.jp/en/content/20200722\\_mxt\\_kanseisk01-000008961\\_1.pdf](https://www.mext.go.jp/en/content/20200722_mxt_kanseisk01-000008961_1.pdf)

- FY2020 First Supplementary Budget (April 2020)

[https://www.mext.go.jp/en/content/20200721-mxt\\_kokusai-000005414\\_1.pdf](https://www.mext.go.jp/en/content/20200721-mxt_kokusai-000005414_1.pdf)

- FY2020 Second Supplementary Budget (June 2020)

[https://www.mext.go.jp/en/content/20200720-mxt\\_kokusai-000005414\\_2.pdf](https://www.mext.go.jp/en/content/20200720-mxt_kokusai-000005414_2.pdf)

(Japanese language comprehensive page)

[https://www.mext.go.jp/a\\_menu/coronavirus/mext\\_00014.html](https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/coronavirus/mext_00014.html)

## **Republic of Korea: Education Response to COVID-19**

### **I. Efforts to Reopen Schools with Online Classes**

#### **1.1 Postponement of School Openings and Providing Online Classes**

- **Decision to postpone school opening:** After the infectious disease risk alert level was raised to "Serious" on February 23, education authorities decided to postpone the starting date of the new semester from March 2 to April 9 as a preemptive measure.
- **Decision to offer online classes:** The government decided to offer online classes to students as a means of ensuring continuity in learning and protecting the health and safety of all students. Consequently, as of April 9, 860,000 middle and high school students started taking online classes, and by April 20, all 5.34 million students of elementary, middle and high schools nationwide took online classes as part of the official curriculum.

#### **1.2 Systematic Preparation for Online Classes**

- **Expanding infrastructure:** The Korean government decided to use online classes as part of the official education curriculum and expanded necessary infrastructure and released guidelines to minimize confusion at schools. Two sets of the Learning Management System (LMS) platforms (KERIS e-Learning Site for elementary school students and EBS Online Class for middle and high school students) were established, each allowing the concurrent access of 3 million students. Considering that lower graders in elementary schools could have difficulties in accessing online classes, the Korea Educational Broadcasting System (EBS) increased the number of its TV channels from seven to 12.
- **Connecting and expanding online content:** Approximately 50,000 content materials (43,000 for EBS Online Class and 5,500 for the e-Learning Site) were secured to ensure diversity in online classes. Through public-private cooperation, content from the private sector was made available on public platforms free of charge.
- **Improving related systems:** Education authorities announced guidelines for online classes in elementary, middle, and high schools on March 27 and provided additional guidelines on managing attendance, evaluation, and school records on April 7 to ensure that the same administration, attendance, and achievement assessment rules apply to online classes.
- **Enhancing teachers' competency:** Before the initiation of online classes, education authorities shared best practices with 495 online class pilot schools; created a volunteer group consisting of 181 teachers named "Teacher-On"; provided support through the Community of 10,000 Representative Teachers and other teacher learning communities in order to help teachers improve their ICT competency.

#### **1.3 Measures to Narrow the Gap in Online Access**

- **Free rental devices and free Internet subscription fees for education:** To ensure no student is left behind in taking online classes as part of the official school curriculum, the Ministry of Education provided free smart device rental services and free Internet subscription fees for education in cooperation with the Ministry of Science and ICT; Statistics Korea; local governments; 17 city and provincial education offices; and private sector companies such as Samsung and LG.

- Providing customized support for disadvantaged students: For students that may have difficulty in taking regular online classes, education authorities provided customized online classes suited to the different situations of schools and students. Since lower graders in elementary school are still early in their development stage, classes were provided not via online but via EBS TV programs and learning packets. For students from multicultural families, interpretation and translation support and guidebooks in foreign languages were provided. In addition to expanding face-to-face education, support for learning packages, online learning equipment, and auxiliary engineering devices for disabled students, it supported customized online learning for each type of disability.
- (Emergency childcare service) The government provided support to ensure that the children who need to be put in emergency childcare during online classes due to their parents' working.

#### **1.4 High Quality Education to All Students During COVID-19**

- The government has worked hard to provide high-quality education to all students in a stable and non-discriminatory manner during school closures.
- First, two public online education platforms were expanded so each could accommodate the simultaneous access of 3 million users (total of 6 million) to provide quality education to students in a timely manner.
- Second, around 50,000 examples of educational content have been provided as part of quality online education, and even private content has been released to be used freely. In addition, more educational TV channels have been created, and teacher capacity-building programs have also been continuously operated.
- Third, to give equal opportunities in education to all students, Internet subscription fees and digital devices, and one-on-one home visit services have been provided to students from low-income families. Students have received not only learning support, but also emotional and psychological support through counseling, and emergency childcare services have been offered to reduce burden on parents.

Fourth, the government is tapping into public-private partnerships to provide available resources to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

## **II. Efforts to Reopen Schools**

### **2.1 Decision to Allow School Reopening**

- **(Deciding on the method and timeline of school reopening)** The safety and health of students was a top priority and the opinions of Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) officials and health experts were reflected as much as possible when the government was deciding when and how to reopen schools. Before making the final decision, the government sought the opinions of teachers, teachers' groups, education offices, and parents and carefully reviewed multiple return-to-school options.

- **(Staggered timeline for physical attendance)** In particular, 3<sup>rd</sup> graders in high school were allowed to return to school first as attending school is critical as they prepare for higher education. The return-to-school for preschoolers and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders of elementary school was decided after considering the fact that they have difficulty taking online classes and the gap among children in access to online education depending on parents' support as well as the burden of childcare on families.

Table 1. Outline of 2020 School Reopening

Phase	Timeline (plan)	Target		
		High	Middle	Elementary
Priority	May 20 (Wed.)	3 <sup>rd</sup>	-	-
Phase 1	May 27 (Wed.)	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> + preschoolers
Phase 2	June 3 (Wed.)	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup>
Phase 3	June 8 (Mon.)	-	1 <sup>st</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup>

Note: The same applies to special schools.

## 2.2 Preparation for School Reopening

- **(School reopening methods)** As the virus infection trend and the population size of school-aged children vary for each region and/or school, the Ministry of Education decided to allow autonomy to local governments and schools when deciding the specifics of managing staggered school start times by grade/class, operating online and offline classes in parallel, splitting each class into morning and afternoon groups, and implementing flexible school hours.
- **(Disinfection before school reopening)** In preparation for school reopening, the Ministry of Education issued IPC guidelines for schools and students to follow before coming to school, after school, and during school meals. The ministry also provided guidelines on how to deal with suspicious or confirmed cases to minimize confusion at schools in emergency situations. In accordance with the guidelines, schools carried out measures to thoroughly prepare for reopening by securing disease prevention supplies such as face masks and hand sanitizers and sanitizing surfaces that are frequently touched such as door knobs

## 2.3 School disinfection

- **(Disinfection after school reopening)** After school reopening, schools were advised to ventilate classrooms, have staggered break times, and disinfect surfaces and objects that are touched frequently such as desks and door knobs. Also, all students and teachers were required to wear face masks at all times and check their body temperature.
- **(Occurrence of confirmed case)** If a confirmed case occurs, the school needs to request all students, teachers, and staff members to go into self-quarantine, replace all classes with online classes, and carry out measures to identify suspected cases in cooperation with health authorities.
- **(Temperature check)** Upon arrival at school, students are tested for fever at the school playground or at the building entrance, and those with suspicious symptoms are sent to a special observation room before being sent to a screening station to receive treatment or, if necessary, a diagnostic test.

## 2.4 Support for School Reopening



- **(On-site support)** The Ministry of Education published guidelines to ease the additional workload on school staff caused by increased disinfection and administrative work and to minimize confusion surrounding school reopening. To ensure smooth operation of in-person school classes, the ministry created the Central Response Team for School Reopening for a swift, around-the-clock response to emergency situations at schools. The ministry also minimized or postponed its projects to avoid creating extra burden on school teachers and staff and secured 30,000 people as support staff for disinfection activities and for operating split classes.
- **(Emergency response)** As a preemptive action to prevent unexpected developments and mass infections in local communities after 3<sup>rd</sup> graders in high school return to school on May 20, the education authorities announced measures for minimizing density at schools on May 24 and enhanced measures for the Seoul metropolitan area on May 29. As there was a great risk of mass transmission in the Seoul metropolitan area, only two-thirds of students were allowed to come to school for high schools and one-third for kindergartens and elementary and middle schools.

[For more information]

1. RESPONDING TO COVID-19: ONLINE CLASSES IN KOREA

<http://english.moe.go.kr/boardCnts/view.do?boardID=282&boardSeq=80869&lev=0&searchType=null&statusYN=C&page=1&s=english&m=0303&opType=N>

2. All ABOUT KOREA'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

[http://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m\\_22742/list.do](http://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_22742/list.do)

3. Other Policy Responses

<http://english.moe.go.kr/boardCnts/list.do?boardID=265&m=0301&s=english>

## **Malaysia: Education Response to COVID-19**

### **INTRODUCTION**

COVID-19 is a public health issue and the urgency in controlling the outbreak to prevent the collapse of healthcare system has forced the Malaysian government to impose a more stringent action called the **Movement Control Order (MCO)** which started from March 18 2020. This stringent action under the MCO has resulted in the closure of about 10,713 schools affecting almost 5 million children and 440 teachers. This would mean that learning of millions for students who are enrolled in schools was instantly interrupted with the closure of schools in March. Teachers too have to adopt alternative modes of delivery to ensure continuity in learning.

### **RESPONSE ACTIONS**

**Online learning** – teachers were encouraged to switch to online delivery of lessons. The transition from the physical classroom to the remote classroom was facilitated by the Digital Educational Learning Initiatives Malaysia (DELIMa) which has been in place since 2019 to integrate digital tools to support online teaching and learning. This platform which offers free educational services and applications in one place was accessible to all schools, teachers and students.

**Alternative learning platforms** – Reaching out to children who are not equipped for online learning is critical and if their learning is not facilitated, equity gaps will widen and they will be left behind. To address this issue, other learning modes were also utilized, mainly the EduwebTV that hosts on-demand content for students from PreKindergarten to secondary school. MoE Malaysia also collaborated with broadcasting agencies, Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) and Malaysian Satellite TV Provider, ASTRO to broadcast Education TV program slots via selected channels to reach out to as many children as possible to minimize academic loss as a result of the closure of schools during the pandemic.

### **IMPACT – DESCRIPTION OF THE IMPACT, QUALITY OF DELIVERY AND GAINS ACHIEVED**

**Reach** – By the end of May 2020, 90% (approximately 376,000) teachers and 59% (2.824 million) students were actively utilizing the DELIMa platform. The Google Classroom is a prominent application of the digital learning platform. By mid -May, 491, 986 classes were created by 223, 127 teachers with active participation by 1, 268, 465 students. Besides the DELIMa platform, there are other online learning platforms by the MOE that also cater to on-demand content for students from pre-school to secondary school which are also being utilised by teachers and students.

**Quality** - Although efforts to minimize academic loss are continuously scaled-up, remote learning is not a comprehensive replacement for all aspects of school learning. Furthermore, not all subjects can be remotely taught at the same levels of effectiveness of quality. Although the numbers of teachers and students utilising the DELIMa platform looks encouraging, the quality of remote learning depends on students' ownership of current technological equipment, gadgets, and connectivity as well as suitable space and time for them to work from. Furthermore the varied instructional time received by the students on distance learning will contribute to the

quality of delivery on remote learning.

**Gains** - In measuring gains in education, assessment is critical. The COVID-19 pandemic has shifted teaching and learning to online platform. To date there has been no holistic measurement on gains achieved through online learning platform. With school closures development of alternative approaches to delivering the critical feedback function of learning assessment is necessary. While all types of assessment of student learning are important, the **need for formative assessment right now is particularly critical** since learning is taking place outside of the physical classroom, and teachers and parents-turned-teachers need to understand whether students are absorbing the content that is delivered to them in formats that differ from business-as-usual.

## **LESSONS LEARNT**

**Overall preparedness of the education sector** – COVID-19 took all economies by surprise because it created a situation that was unprecedented in modern times. Malaysia was at the height of progress in improving the quality of education, from pre-school to post-secondary levels, in line with the aspirations of *The Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013 – 2025*. However, the situation created by the pandemic has forced Malaysia to take a retrospective view of our education sector – our policies, initiatives and focus as gaps in school-operations and contingency planning begin to emerge as soon as the MCO which resulted in school closures, took effect in March 2020. The situation has given the opportunity for Malaysia to revisit our policies and priorities and find ways to create a more robust education sector that has the capacity to respond quickly to unforeseen circumstances in the future.

**Education sector emergency planning and preparedness** – The education sector was clearly not prepared to manage the impact of COVID-19. More concerted school-based and education sector contingency planning are crucial to ensure schools and the entire education sector are prepared for future uncertainties by developing guidelines and responses based on different crisis and outbreak scenarios to ensure immediate and appropriate responses at the onset of any potential crises. This is important to safeguard the interest of students, educators, parents and stakeholders.

**Teacher readiness & support system** – The requirement for teachers to almost immediately familiarise themselves with the digital platform and tools available to deliver online has caused some levels of anxiety and distress among teachers who had limited ICT skills. Experienced teachers suddenly found themselves relegated to the status of novices when it came to online delivery as they had to realign content and delivery to the online mode. This has brought to surface the importance of providing teachers with constant support and opportunities for professional development in particular on distance and remote learning.

**Student autonomy** – Students too had to adjust to a totally new learning paradigm and learn how to navigate the virtual classroom. More importantly, online learning has given students the autonomy to take charge of their own learning and explore new ideas and learning experiences. New areas of interest are bound to emerge for many students who had access to online learning, gadgets and the Internet. This is something positive that was brought out of the crisis.

**Gaps in digital access** – Due to long term school closures, many schools had attempted to shift to online lesson delivery. However, they were faced with a number of challenges which range from motivational and psychosocial well-being to infrastructure limitations of broadband networks. Over the years, the MoE of Malaysia has been focusing on strengthening ICT infrastructure in all schools to enable online learning and computer-based learning to complement classroom learning, based on the assumption that formal teaching and learning processes only take place within the vicinity of the school. It is only when we had to move classrooms online that we realized that not all students or families owned ICT gadgets or even had access to the Internet. Rebuilding education that has been disrupted due to the pandemic has to factor in issues related to connectivity and affordability of ICT gadgets especially among families in remote areas and the less affluent groups.

**Communication with families** – COVID-19 has reiterated the importance of constantly engaging with families and to include them in the educational process because parents have now become more involved in their children’s learning. Although schools have gradually reopened, we need to continue our engagement with parents so that they will be able to support their children’s learning especially if similar situations arise in the future.

**Importance of mental health** – The MCO has taught us the importance of maintaining mental health. The anxiety and stress that students were undergoing because of school closures and isolation are issues that we need to pay attention to. The past four months, in particular have been traumatic and turbulent and each student copes with the situation differently. To help students to overcome their fears and uncertainties, it is paramount for school counselors to play more supportive roles and provide avenues for students to talk about their emotions and fears. This is something that we need to think about for students as they return to school amidst the post-COVID-19 SOPs and readjust to the new school routines.

**The role of the community** – Malaysia is now undergoing the Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO). Under RMCO the government is relying on the community to play their role to ensure health and safety of the society. Each and every member of the community is responsible to adhere to the SOPs that have been introduced, especially the SOPs and guidelines that have been provided to the education sector. With the re-opening of schools which started on the 24th of June 2020, the safety and well-being of the school community is determined by the collective effort of all citizens of this nation. Although the Ministry of Education had provided guidelines prior to reopening of schools, the communities are best positioned to determine the level of mitigation required. The adoption of the new normal should be adopted in by everyone in the community so that so school will function as a safe space for our children to learn.

## **New Zealand: Education Response to COVID-19**

### **Impact on Online Learning and Related Student Well-being**

Data shows that because of existing equity issues in the education system some students were impacted by the pandemic more than others. Linked telecommunications data indicates that up to 20% of students did not have an Internet connection before the lockdown, making it difficult for these students to stay connected to learning and to friends and family outside their bubbles. An online student survey conducted during the lockdown (which presumably excludes many of the 20% without connectivity) found 15% of students had to share the device they use for learning with other learners in their household.

These barriers were particularly pronounced for some student groups. 21% of Māori and 28% of Pacific Island students reported having to share a device with others. More than half of senior secondary students living in the most disadvantaged areas reported that they were not enjoying learning at home (53%) or not coping with their schoolwork while learning at home (51%).

There was a large disruption to learning, particularly for secondary school students. Only 54% of Year 11-13 students agreed that they were coping well with their schoolwork while learning at home during the lockdown (compared to 85% of primary school students). About a third of all students reported they did not enjoy learning at home, including 45% of senior secondary students.

### **Policy Actions to Resolve Financial Implications**

In addition to policy measures for early learning, colleges and vocational learning, other actions have been put in place to resolve any financial issues within school property and school transport.

#### School Property

The Ministry is one of the largest buyers of construction services in the economy and is playing an important role in kick-starting the economy.

As soon as school construction sites were safely closed down for Alert Level 4, the Ministry's attention turned to how it could support construction suppliers to get school projects back up and running as quickly and as safely as possible. One of the key actions the Ministry took was to provide short-term cash flow relief to contractors by releasing the money the Ministry holds back to ensure they meet their obligations, and suspending the collection of this money until construction activities resumed.

Moving forward into the recovery phase, Ministry-led construction projects continue to create jobs to support people and businesses across the economy. These include:

- a \$160 million property improvement package to upgrade hundreds of small and remote schools,

- the \$400 million School Investment Package announced late last year. Indicative data shows there are around 850 approved school projects with an estimated value of \$85 million on the go.
- the Sustainability Contestable Fund, established to support schools to reduce their environmental impact and improve their operational efficiency
- Major redevelopment of Taita College in Wellington.

### School Transport

The Ministry took a similar approach with transport, which is critical to maintaining school attendance particularly in rural areas. With school transport off the road during Alert Level 4 many transport providers were also affected the demise of tourism and charters, but were still faced with overhead costs. The Ministry designed an appropriate support package to keep these businesses viable. This would allow them to keep their staff employed and ready to immediately resume services once schools reopened. The Ministry didn't want transport to become a barrier to education. As of June 5, services were fully up and running' with usage at 90% of normal volumes in most areas.

### Policy Solution for International Students

The biggest challenge New Zealand's tertiary education providers reported was related to the downturn in international students and, as a consequence, a significant drop in tuition fee earnings. Other challenges included ensuring that domestic and international students could continue learning following the disruption, supporting the international students still in New Zealand and developing a financial recovery strategy.

Before COVID-19, international education was New Zealand's fifth largest source of export revenue, and was estimated to have generated around NZD \$4.94 billion in value to the New Zealand economy in 2018. This included approximately NZD \$1.1 billion generated from students' tuition fees. It should be noted that international education also supports around 45,000 jobs across the economy.

International education contributes significantly to New Zealand's relationships with other economies and is a reliable way to reconnect with trading markets. International students make an invaluable cultural and social contribution to New Zealand's tertiary providers and society in general. These factors have been impacted by COVID-19 and the associated border restrictions, as well as the massive fall off in international travel.

International student tuition fee revenue helps to support New Zealand's tertiary education system. Providers forecast significant financial losses for 2020 and beyond if international students are not able to travel to New Zealand soon. The full impact of COVID-19 is not yet known, but it does include a significant reduction in student volumes and in the revenue generated from student fees in the short to medium term. These losses will have a range of implications across international education provider sub-sectors, as well as implications for the domestic education system.

The government is considering policy options to ensure the sector is rebuilt following the impacts of COVID-19 so as to enable New Zealand to welcome international students back as soon as practicable.

A number of additional supports were put in place to support all of New Zealand's students. A few interventions were limited to only domestic students, but most were available to international students as well.

For school-aged students without access to Internet or technology, the Government has provided devices and modems where possible. For students who could not be connected to online learning, the Government commissioned packets of hard-copy learning materials to be delivered to students' homes. These supports were given to both domestic and international school students.

For tertiary students, the national student loan provider doubled the amount available to borrow for course-related costs (from NZ\$1,000 annually, to NZ\$2,000). Students could use this to purchase digital devices or Internet plans. This was not available to international students, but Government established an international student hardship fund to address this. Tertiary institutions also had access to a NZ\$20 million Technology Access Fund to support their students' transition to online learning, and an additional \$20 million Hardship Fund for Learners was established to help tertiary education providers support their students with financial difficulties due to COVID-19.

State-funded education staff continued to be paid during the national lockdown, and funding for additional or relief staff is being provided to cover teachers who must remain at home for health reasons. Non-state-funded education providers are able to access a Government-funded wage-subsidy to help them retain staff.

The Ministry has been working to ensure that international students have access to online learning during this period, and are reinforcing New Zealand's online delivery networks. Restrictions around online learning were temporarily removed in response to COVID-19. This allowed all of New Zealand's sectors to offer instruction online to international students, but the Ministry is working to build on this capacity going forward and establish more permanent online delivery systems.

Once all education providers return to face-to-face delivery, the supports that providers offer international students will continue. These systems have been tested by COVID-19 and have proved adequate overall. New Zealand has been able to identify outlying gaps in existing supports and will be able to improve on these for future crises.

As part of the recovery plans, New Zealand will be reviewing the international education sector, to improve its resilience and sustainability going forward. This work was underway before COVID-19, but New Zealand now has a renewed opportunity to further this work.

## **Adjustments to Learning Assessments During COVID-19**

The Minister of Education announced a number of adjustments to this year's National Certificate of Education Achievement (NCEA) and University Entrance (UE) to mitigate against lost learning and assessment time. These include:

- Extend the submission date for externally assessed achievement standards for 2020.
- Postpone the 2020 examination date by ten days to provide more teaching and learning time.
- Develop a process whereby students can earn supplementary credits to help them gain an NCEA in 2020.
- Work with universities and the New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA) to lower the number of credits required for University Entrance by two credits: from 14 to 12 for 2021 enrolments.

Provide daily bulletins to schools, updating them on the Ministry's policy decisions and actions and providing advice on how to communicate with their communities.

## **Progressive Reopening of Colleges and Universities**

New Zealand's COVID-19 response has been managed within a framework of Four Alert Levels. While in Alert Level Four, tertiary providers were required to close their physical teaching sites and deliver all teaching remotely (where this was possible). Under Alert Level Three, limited class sizes of up to 10 people were permitted to return to face-to-face models only where it was not possible to teach online (for example, labs and workshops).

At Alert Level 2, all on-site activities at tertiary education facilities could resume, such as classes, lectures, labs, workshops, tutorials, and meetings, as long as appropriate public health control measures were in place (such as contact tracing and physical distancing). However, tertiary providers had to maintain their ability to deliver courses remotely, and needed to be in a position to transition to fully remote learning (if required).

## **Adjusted Reform of Vocational Education**

The challenges New Zealand faces recovering from the economic shock of COVID-19 highlight many of the issues RoVE seeks to address. This includes fragmentation of the polytechnic network, silos and competition between on-the-job and provider-based training, and inequitable access to education and training opportunities across different regions and population groups. To meet these challenges, the New Zealand government is accelerating key aspects of RoVE including:

- Earlier establishment of Workforce Development Councils (industry-governed bodies which will give industry greater leadership across vocational education) to strengthen the voice of employer and industry;
- Mechanisms to support transitional Industry Training Organisations (industry-owned bodies that arrange training for employees in the workplace) and tertiary providers including NZIST working together sooner; and



The government also supported TEIs by guaranteeing their 2020 tuition funding, meaning no 2020 funding will be returned to the government due to adverse impacts on enrolments and key performance indicators resulting from COVID-19.

## **Peru: Education Response to COVID-19**

### **Mandates for Secondary Schools**

The strategy of “Aprendo en casa” indicates what teaching teams need to organize remotely through different means – i.e. WhatsApp, text messages, videos, etc – to guarantee student learning.

- Maintain quality of learning, minimize dropouts, and attract students to attend (virtual) classrooms
- Carry out an evaluation process that leads to adequate and timely feedback and the improvement of teaching and learning
- Maintain links of interest and satisfaction with the students from the learning being provided
- Develop socio-emotional and civic skills from their life experiences.
- Involve families in distance education, which can accompany and guide students
- Analyze the risks associated with returning to the traditional school setting
- Reopen closed private educational institutions
- Assessing learning proposals that takes into account the resources used during the pandemic.
- Decrease learning gaps

### **Policy Measures to Support Peruvian Students Abroad**

In Peru, each student has an Emergency / Urgency Action Card COVID-19 with their personal data, such information as medical insurance details, student services of their universities, close friendships, as well as data from the PRONABEC specialist who accompanies him and data from a relative in Peru and data from the Chancellor at his study headquarters. It can be accessed in an emergency situation.

Inter-institutional and international cooperation has been arranged through collaborations between the ministries of education and foreign affairs, as well as various embassies / consulates, to ensure the protection of all the scholarship holders who are studying abroad. This involves sharing students’ location and contact details to manage direct actions with them. This arrangement has been updated three times since the start of the pandemic, with official documents being sent in February, May and June.

## **The Philippines: Activities on Child Protection**

Looking to ensure that all children have equal opportunities in areas such as protection, education, and health and nutrition amid COVID-19, the DRRMS (Disaster - Risk Reduction and Management Service), in collaboration with the Office of the Undersecretary for Legal Affairs (OULA) and Youth Formation Division (YFD), have carried out the following activities with respect to Child Protection:

- The DRRMS reinforced lessons on Child Protection and launched “Online Kuwentuhan: DRRMS Booklatan”, through a pilot episode in May 2020. This weekly program aimed to provide an online learning platform for all elementary learners through a weekly-themed story session until August 2020. It showcased narratives on the rights of children, risks of abuse, and what they could do to protect themselves while they are staying at home due to community quarantine.
- The second online learning activity organized by DRRMS was the OKKK Tambayan. It featured arts-based activities intended for secondary learners. The first episode was broadcast via Facebook Live on May 21<sup>st</sup>. As a weekly online program, it offered various arts-based activities that promoted the well-being, development, participation and protection of children.
- Plans and Policies: disseminate existing policies, guidelines, and protocols on child protection via email blasts and other social media platforms (e.g. joint memorandum of CWC and DILG re Reiteration of Protocols for Children in conflict with the law during ECQ)
- Reporting, Coordination, and Monitoring: promote existing helplines/hotlines for children experiencing abuse at home while awaiting resumption of classes (e.g. Bantay Bata – finalizing referral pathway); monitor and track the status (displaced, missing, injured, sick and deceased) of personnel and students of schools.
- IEC and Advocacy: create a repository of IEC and advocacy materials for different regions and divisions; develop and disseminate IEC materials on child rights and child protection – including child trafficking, child labour, prostitution, domestic and sexual abuse – as well as helplines/hotlines where such cases can be reported [e.g. dissemination of IEC materials on 3Ws (What, When, Where) to report cases of child abuse], IPED, SPED and/or learners with disabilities via mainstream media – e.g. television, radio and online platforms; and promote Parenting during Home Quarantine through dissemination of IEC materials via mainstream media – e.g. television, radio and online platforms
- Online Learning Activities on Child Protection for Elementary and Secondary: blend Online Story Telling Sessions, Online Arts-Based Activities, and the dissemination of IEC materials. Discussions have been held with Save the Children Philippines (SCP) to provide resource personnel for Child Protection in light of COVID-19.

## **Russia: Adjustments to High Stake Assessments**

The Unified State Exam in 2020 has been rescheduled from June 8 to a later period (USE) considering the pandemic situation in Russia.

All terms have been approved by the Russian Parliament.

The format of the Year 11 exam has been adjusted: for students who do not plan to enter higher education institutions, grades based on the results over the year are being recorded in the certificate.

For the remaining categories of graduates, mandatory examinations in the Russian language and mathematics are not planned.

The examination campaign was held in a uniform time frame in accordance with the requirements of the sanitary-hygienic regime: number of students in the exam all shall be reduced, premises shall be disinfected. The regions shall receive detailed recommendations containing an exhaustive list of measures to protect the health of participants and examiners.

After consultations with teachers, regions, and representatives of educational communities and parent communities, the All-Russian Verification Works (VPR) is postponed from the end of this school year to autumn 2020 (that is, the beginning of the next school year).

The results of these works will not be a formal certification for the students, before their level of knowledge is assessed. After carrying out, Schools and teachers shall follow diagnostic procedures and carry out further work according to the relevant guidelines.

The final stage of the All-Russian Olympiad for School Students in 2020 is not going ahead as planned.

In accordance with the order of the Russian Ministry of Education, participants in the regional stage of the Olympiad of the current academic year who completed their studies in 2020 and scored a passing grade (set by the Ministry to participate in the final stage of the Olympiad) are recognized as winners of the Olympiad.

Thus, the students can take advantage of being an Olympiad winner when applying for universities.

The remaining participants of the regional stage of the Olympiad of the current school year with a “passing grade” shall continue the educational programs of basic general and secondary general education next year, receive the right to participate in the final stage of the Olympiad for 2020/21 without mandatory participation in school, municipal and regional stages.

The completed diplomas for the Olympiad winners in June 2020 will be sent to the jurisdictions of the Russian Federation where the winners took part in the regional stage of the Olympiad.

## **Singapore: Education Response to COVID-19**

Singapore's broad approach has been to keep schools and education institutions open safely as far as possible, and to put in place alternative arrangements to keep learning going. We have also sought to support fresh graduates amidst a pandemic-hit job market. Details of some of our education responses are as follows:

### **For Schools**

- 1) We put in place Safe Management Measures (SMMs) to keep schools safe for our students.
  - We started with temperature checks, personal hygiene education and wipe-down routines. Students living in the same household as recent overseas travellers, or who had family members on home quarantine, were also asked to stay at home.
  - We suspended mass activities and inter-school activities.
  - We made it a requirement for students and staff to wear masks or face shields.
  - We introduced a hygiene campaign to heighten students' awareness on steps they could take to keep themselves safe, such as regular handwashing. We also increased the frequency of cleaning and disinfection of school premises.
  
- 2) We leveraged technology to facilitate learning when schools were closed and made additional provisions to support students from vulnerable backgrounds.
  - We closed schools and shifted to full Home-Based Learning (HBL) for a month in April, as part of broader national efforts to limit virus transmission.
  - HBL was a mix of synchronous lessons via video-conferencing platforms, asynchronous lessons on our common digital learning platform (Singapore Student Learning Space, rolled out in 2018) and assigned work from students' textbooks, workbooks and hardcopy assignments.
  - Schools loaned devices and internet dongles to students who needed them.
  - During HBL and the month-long holiday that followed, schools were kept open to students from vulnerable backgrounds as well as those whose parents worked in essential services and had no child-care support.
  - Teachers were on-hand to supervise their learning. They also conducted activities such as non-contact sports, baking and dance to keep them engaged.
  - Primary and secondary students from low-income families continued to have access to subsidised meals during the month of HBL and school holidays.
  - To support a blended model of schooling going forward, we will be equipping all students in secondary schools with their own personal device for learning by 2021, seven years ahead of our original plan.

### **For Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs)**

3) We put in place alternative learning arrangements.

- To support prospective Singaporean undergraduates who were planning to enrol in overseas universities, but who now preferred to study locally, more places were set aside in our autonomous universities (AUs) in AY2020. The application window was also extended by two months.
- Singaporean students who were already studying in an overseas university but wished to switch to studying locally could apply directly to the AUs for a transfer, with their applications assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- Singaporean students who were midway through their studies at overseas universities but preferred to wait in Singapore before resuming their studies could also sign up for Continuing Education and Training (CET) modular courses offered by the AUs and other training providers.
- Students in local IHLs who were expected to go on overseas programmes (e.g. overseas exchanges and internships) were offered credit-bearing modules during the summer semester or local internship placements instead. No additional costs were imposed on students for these alternative arrangements.

4) We provided support to fresh graduates.

- We rolled out an SGUnited Traineeship Programme to provide recent and new graduates with opportunities to develop industry-relevant skills and build professional networks amidst a pandemic-hit job market.
- Under this programme, employers could bring in fresh graduates as trainees to support their business needs and also tap on Government support in the form of co-funding of the training allowance for trainees, during the traineeship period.

In response to the severe worldwide pandemic of COVID-19, and in order to enhance epidemic prevention and ensure the safety of schools and education institutions, Chinese Taipei has put in place several measures as following.

### **Schools**

Before entering any school, preschool to university, students have their temperature taken and are provided free alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Students and faculty are required to wear face masks in the classroom at all times.

In college and university, some classes are only available online (especially courses with an enrollment of >100 students), which force some students to alter their normal social lives and learning process. In addition, since some economies have closed their borders, our students are currently not permitted to participate in overseas exchange programs. The restricted travel has some potential impact on graduate students and research-based faculty as many students and faculty were planning for going abroad for field work, exchange programs, conferences, etc.

Colleges and universities are encouraged and supported to provide online classes via new technology, such as setting up online groups, which is regarded as part of their efforts to help students in self-isolation or self-quarantine. The group chat will allow the students to interact with their class to raise concerns or discuss issues they are facing. Schools are also offering counseling to ensure the physical and emotional well-being of the student as well.

### **Technology and Innovation**

Technology has been playing an important role in our education system; faculty employs various digital tools for teaching, learning, and assessment. During COVID-19, in particular, educators have been making important use of these technologies and problem-solving how to best provide online/distance learning. This has led to important innovations and creative teaching methods that continue to improve education and blended learning.

Here are some innovative education strategies:

- All colleges and universities have their own MOOC (Massive Open Online Course).
- Encouraging teachers to redesign their curriculum: Students have a limited attention span and therefore teaching methods and materials have to change accordingly. Classes must now be shorter and taught at a faster pace while at the same time maintaining high levels of interaction with students.
- Remote learning means the inclusion of more technologies. Courses and ratings can also benefit from the assistance of digital tools. The simultaneous, real-time education model of “1-to-many” allows us to even host meaningful P.E. and art classes.

### **Aid for Foreign Students affected by Covid-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the drastic reduction in part-time job opportunities causing some foreign and overseas Chinese students to face severe financial difficulties. The Ministry of Education (MOE) worked together with private sector to find the most appropriate way to help such students continue their studies and complete their programs.

The MOE also has taken measures to assist students to reduce their financial burdens and complete their studies. Each university and college is mandated to take the initiative to be aware of the personal circumstances of its foreign students, and in case any foreign students have found themselves facing serious difficulties, to implement emergency aid mechanisms to provide those students timely assistance, so that they can continue their studies. The MOE also asked each university and college to submit a report on the personal circumstances of such students and the corresponding counseling measures that were taken.

The MOE is committed to helping foreign students overcome the difficulties caused by the pandemic and attend their classes and continuing to assist universities and colleges create a friendly learning environment and take care of foreign students.