



SDG-Education 2030 Webinar Series for Latin America and the Caribbean: Leaving no one behind in times of the COVID-19 pandemic

Friday 3 July 2020

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/95885626736>

11:00 (-4 UCT)

Password: 223508

Background

The global pandemic of COVID-19 has brought about an unprecedented crisis on all fronts. In the area of education, this resulted in massive closures of educational institutions in more than 190 countries around the world in order to prevent the spread of virus and mitigate its impact. According to UNESCO¹, as of late June 2020, 1,089,749,858 learners are affected worldwide by COVID-19 related school closure. Of these, more than 166,552,325 were students from Latin America and the Caribbean².

This situation has provoked an acute emergency for national education systems. The governments of the region, led by the Ministries of Education, have rapidly implemented distance learning modalities, supporting educational staff and mobilizing parents, caregivers and communities, with a view to ensuring the continuity of learning as an immediate response.

At the regional level, multiple instances of technical and political dialogue have been convened, which clearly demonstrated strong commitment and corresponding action by Governments with the support of international, regional and national organizations. The various dialogues held during the first month of pandemic then highlighted three common central themes that require immediate and longer-term political and programmatic support:

- (1) Important advances and innovation in the area of distance education have been made through the use of technologies in recent weeks more than at any other time. However, there are still important challenges to guarantee equity and inclusion, considering the most vulnerable and marginalized population groups;
- (2) There is need to move towards flexible educational systems, with a focus on preparedness; and
- (3) A new mentality and paradigm shift towards interdisciplinarity and intersectorality is required beyond education sector-focused planning and implementation. Cooperation and collaboration across different sectors and actors is paramount.

In other words, this crisis presents itself an unprecedented opportunity to transform national education systems into one of resilience, making the SDG-Education 2030 Agenda more relevant and necessary than ever.

Regional Webinar Series

It is against this background that in collaboration with the Regional Education Group for Latin America and the Caribbean, UNESCO launched on 17 April, a biweekly series of knowledge and information exchange, and of policy dialogue, in order to respond to the pandemic, focusing on the four pillars of SDG-Education 2030: *equity, inclusion, quality and lifelong learning*.

¹ <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-emergencies/coronavirus-school-closures>

² <https://es.unesco.org/fieldoffice/santiago/covid-19-education-alc>

The objective of this initiative is to support the Ministries of Education and the different educational actors for the development, management and dissemination of relevant evidence and to inform the immediate response as well as the medium and long-term actions towards the 2030 goal. In addition, considering the need for interdisciplinary response, the dimension of culture, health and other areas will also be touched upon during the series.

Considering the specific contexts of each sub-region, Latin America and the Caribbean, two parallel schedules are implemented.

Each webinar will be recorded and made available with presentations and reference materials on UNESCO's portal dedicated to COVID-19 (<https://es.unesco.org/fieldoffice/santiago/covid-19-education-alc>). At the same time, for each webinar, in-depth country experiences will be further explored and documented both in Spanish and English with a view to promoting sustainable knowledge exchange and policy dialogue with regional public goods across the region and to contributing to the same at the global level.

The Caribbean webinar series is organized in partnership with CARICOM Secretariat and the Regional Education Group Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Caribbean Webinar Series n°5. Social-emotional support in crisis contexts for learners, parents and education personnel

Since the beginning of its outbreak worldwide, the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated restriction on movement, disruption of routines, curtailment of social interactions and deprivation of traditional learning methods, which has been provoking strong negative emotional responses such as panic, stress, anxiety, anger and fear among all stakeholders in the education field.

Young learners are concerned about their education as national examinations are cancelled and are grappling with the insecurity of isolation and uncertainty. Teachers are having to rapidly adapt to new and untested teaching methods. Parents and adult care-givers are struggling to meet the challenges of home schooling while juggling work and community obligations, caring for family members and maintaining individual well-being.³

To address and counter the social anxiety, emotional upheaval and fearful insecurity unleashed by COVID-19, it is urgent and necessary that families and education communities build vital coping skills and emotional resilience. Social-emotional support thus must be provided to learners, parents and education personnel, in order to ensure their wellbeing as well as the continuity and quality of learning during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Social and emotional skills are well established, evidence-based practices, that can be adapted to help equip children, young people, parents and teachers with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors needed to stay healthy and positive, navigate emotions, practice mindful engagement, exhibit pro-social behavior and cope with daily challenges.⁴

It is important to provide social-emotional support to all stakeholders of education, because on the one hand, fear and stress have a detrimental impact on the ability to learn⁵. For all learners at all ages, only when the brain is socially connected and emotionally secure, can it focus on academic content and engage in learning. On the other hand, social-emotional support helps education planners and

³ UNESCO COVID-19 Education Response: Education Sector issue note n 1.2 – April 2020: Nurturing the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people during crises

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Immordino-Yang, M. H., & Damasio, A. (2007). We feel, therefore we learn: The relevance of affective and social neuroscience to education. *Mind, brain, and education*, 1(1), 3-10.

practitioners to address emergency situations with calm and emotionally regulated responses and strengthen their critical thinking to permit more informed decision making and action⁶.

The COVID-19 crisis has caused massive school closure in the Caribbean region. With schools starting to plan for reopening strategies, the future of education have been widely debated and reflected on. There is a growing sense on humanity as all human beings are facing this crisis together, and that besides a material, technological, response to school closures, there should be a more humanistic response, sustaining the health and socio-emotional well-being of students, teachers, parents, and others⁷.

It is against this background that the fifth episode of the Caribbean webinar series focuses on providing social-emotional support to all stakeholders of education communities. The following questions will be addressed:

- What are some of the social emotional needs and challenges encountered by learners, parents and teachers in the context of extended school closures, and how can they be addressed?
- What efforts are Caribbean governments making to ensure the social-emotional wellbeing of learners, parents and teachers during school closures and physical confinement?
- Why are social emotional skills important for learners, parents and teachers during and after the COVID-19 crisis? What are the implications of social emotional learning for the future of education?

Objectives:

- To address the social emotional needs of learners, parents and teachers during the COVID-19 related school closure and confinement.
- To share Caribbean experiences on how to provide social emotional support to learners, parents and teachers during and after COVID-19 crisis.

Agenda:

Friday, 3 July 2020	
Facilitator: Dr Laurette Bristol, Programme Manager, Human Resource Department, CARICOM Secretariat	
11:00 – 11:05	Welcome and introduction: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr Laurette Bristol, Programme Manager, Human Resource Department, CARICOM Secretariat
11:05 – 11:15	Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms Mary Guinn Delaney, Regional Advisor on Education for Health and Well-Being, OREALC/UNESCO Santiago Office
11:15 – 11:45	Presentations (10 minutes each) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms Judy Joseph Mc Sween, Secretary, The Center for Emotional Intelligence and Human Relations Skills, UWI

⁶ Arslan, S., & Demirtas, Z. (2016). Social emotional learning and critical thinking disposition. *Studia Psychologica*, 58(4), 276.

⁷ Holmes, Keith. "Sustaining learning communities through and beyond COVID-19". UNESCO Futures of Education Ideas LAB. 27 April 2020, <https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/holmes-sustaining-learning-communities-COVID-19>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hon Minister Michael S. Browne, Ministry of Education, Antigua and Barbuda• Suriname (tbc)
11:45 – 11:50	Youth Perspective: Mr. Kevie Frederick, St. Vincent and the Grenadines
11:50 – 12:25	Q&A and Discussion
12:25 – 12:30	Summary, Key Messages and Closing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr Laurette Bristol, CARICOM Secretariat