

Summary report – 18 June 2020



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Virtual knowledge-sharing workshop on distance education programmes using radio and television

Context and objectives

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused education disruptions in most countries around the world. Nationwide and localized school closures have impacted more than 90% of the world's student population. In the Latin America and Caribbean region, this corresponds to 160 million students at all levels.

Many countries suddenly had to establish online distance education to ensure continuity of education. However, some 826 million students (50%) who are kept out of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic,

do not have access to a computer, about 706 million (43%) lack Internet access and 56 million live in areas not covered by mobile networks. According to UNCTAD, in Latin America, about two-thirds of people have internet access, but that figure masks a vast imbalance between and within countries ranging from Nicaragua, where 25% of people have internet access, to 80% in Chile. For many teachers, [the use of digital tools is also a challenge](#). Many do not have the skills required or digital equipment, while others lack connectivity due to insufficient financial means and/or lack of local supply.

In light of the technological divide that exists, almost all countries have already set up or wish to develop educational broadcasts on mass media such as television and radio, in order to reach a greater number of learners, especially the most vulnerable. These “traditional” media channels enjoy wide coverage and have taken advantage of the digital revolution of the past decade to increase their power and reach. Moreover, they can provide opportunities for intergenerational learning and psychosocial support, including in local languages, to out-of-school children, youth and illiterate adults.

It is against this background that [UNESCO](#) and the [European Broadcasting Union](#) (EBU) organized this [series](#) of virtual workshops on distance education programmes using radio and television. The objectives of this virtual workshop are to facilitate knowledge sharing on good practices in the development of educational audiovisuals and, in doing so, to strengthen collaboration between educational content developers and audiovisual specialists, with a focus on the Latin America and Caribbean region.

Participation

The virtual workshop, conducted in both Spanish and English, attracted more than 600 participants from 50 countries, the majority of which from Latin America and the Caribbean. The recording of the workshop has been played on YouTube for more than 3,100 times.

The panelists, from Spain, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Jamaica, are experts in public service radio and television with wide experience in the development and dissemination of educational content through radio and television in diverse contexts, as well as representatives from Ministries of Education.

UNESCO Rapid Need Assessment Result

Mr. Borhene Chakroun, Director, Division of Education Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, UNESCO HQ

The COVID-19 related school closure has impacted millions of learners worldwide. While the connectivity to internet varies among and within countries, many governments have aimed to ensure the continuity of learning through a mixed strategy.

Approaches adopted by countries include: adapting education content using different technologies; partnership between education and radio/TV communities; teacher training in delivering educational content through radio/TV; leveraging community media to broadcast educational content; and support parents to facilitate radio/TV education for children.

According to the UNESCO rapid need assessment, 92 countries out of 195 worldwide are having TV or radio-based education programmes, 14 out of which are LAC countries. Globally, 41% of countries have TV-based programs, and 22% have radio-based ones; the figures for the LAC region are 36% and 15% respectively. TV is more used than radio across all regions, while Africa is the most active region in using both technologies and combining the two in education delivery.

Despite of advantages of radio/TV education such as quicker set-up, availability and affordability, constraints remain, which include lack of interaction and response to diverse learning needs, difficulty

to monitor, and inaccessibility to all. In order to address these constraints, UNESCO created the Global Education Coalition, to mobilize partners from different sectors and synergize intersectoral efforts, where EBU is a key partner.

Educational Radio and TV programmes: Experiences, lessons learned and challenges from Europe

Ms. Madiana Asseraf, Manager of Business Development & Young Audiences, EBU

Mr. Yago Fandiño Lousa, RTVE, Spanish Public Service Media

Mr. Carlos Medina, Ministry of Education, Spain

In Europe, public broadcasters have supported children using social media (in Ireland, Portugal and France) as well as entertaining materials such as online games to help them remain active and understand what is going on during the pandemic.

As a large number of children do not have easy access to internet, many countries have prioritized TV and radio, and developed audio-visual materials to support students. Several members of EBU have launched official educational programmes on both TV and radio, other members (such as Spain) have launched new programmes and added timeframes based on the age of children. Cultural programmes such as museums visits were also developed.

According to EBU data, 70% of European children have accessed TV and radio programmes, and 6.5 million have accessed content of European countries from abroad.

In the case of Spain, a blended strategy was adopted in providing education during school closure. The aim was to bring a paradigm shift and to ensure that TV education is functional and useful, with a problem-solving approach. A strong coordination was quickly established among education publishers, teachers, communities and the Ministry of Education.

Regarding online education, the Ministry of Education started with creating virtual classrooms for teachers in specific courses. Different subjects were covered through various resources, including YouTube videos, with the help of key education communities and teachers who have rich experiences in using YouTube. Educational contents were generated within days; curricula were elaborated taking into account the digital gap in Spain.

In Spain, 93% of households have access to internet, however when all members of a family are connected, there is not enough bandwidth. Public broadcasters thus started supplementing by providing education content since the beginning of school closures. Educational contents were defined by professionals and experts, and designed to be attractive for children to stay focused.

With many elements being adjusted and improved along the way, the result of distance education programme in Spain turns out to be successful. 5 hours of educational content daily are broadcasted from Monday to Friday. Thousands of YouTube videos were put together and quality checked, and a high number of followers is reached.

Moving forward, the Ministry of Education is rethinking education on broadcasting channels, in order to be prepared to continue supporting families.

Education radio and TV programmes: Experiences, lessons learned and challenges from Latin American and Caribbean countries

Mrs. Isabel Maldonado, Vice Minister of Education, Ecuador

In Ecuador, 4.5 million students were affected by school closure resulted by COVID-19 and had to learn from home. Bearing in mind that only 26.9% of families have computers at home and 93% has access to tv and radio, a process of producing pedagogical materials was initiated, which covers the development, correction, authorization and publication of the materials and the adaption of the materials for TV and radio.

The digital portal developed by Ministry of Education in Ecuador (<https://recursos2.educacion.gob.ec>) provides rich resources for teachers, guidelines for students and families, directives and protocols as well as weekly schedules. Up till today, the portal has had 1.2 million active users and 14.66 millions views. Assessment for students, teachers and online learning is under planning.

In addition, a radio education programme is scheduled every day from Monday to Sunday, with three time slots (20 minutes each) for different students age groups. Educational contents are broadcasted on the national TV channel for one hour daily without cuts, and programmes such as “Educa Contigo” and “Aprender la Tele” offer teaching as well as life skills learning and social emotional support for children and families.

Mr. Héctor Cermeño, Vice Minister of Education, Guatemala

In Guatemala, there are about 4 million students in primary school level (including from private schools).

At the initiation of distance education due to COVID-19, the Ministry of Education reacted immediately to generate educational materials on pandemic prevention, to provide emotional and psychological support for both families and students, to modify and adapt curricula for learning at home, and to establish the collaboration with TV channels to secure time slots for broadcasting educational programmes.

Strong supports are gained at both national and international level. A technical team was set up in the Ministry for the curricula adaptation, and the educational programmes were designed by teachers. The programmes have been on air for over 60 days.

Challenges are encountered, such as the complexity of educational content provision. Guatemala has 25 languages which makes it difficult to align curricula and adapt programmes with local culture.

Partnership and coordination are the most important lessons learned. Support from libraries enabled abundant information resources and the modernization of Ministry’s website. Agreement with mobile companies contributed to the dissemination of self-protection knowledge. With the support of educational foundations, programmes and trainings are made available via internet, radio and TV. This positive experience pushed the Ministry to rethink education systematically.

Currently, the Ministry of Education is assessing the reopening of schools with technical recommendations from the Ministry of Public Health. Meanwhile, a self-guidance for students to assess their learning outcomes has been prepared.

Ms. Nadine Simms, Assistant Chief Education Officer, Media Services Unit, Ministry of Education, Youth and Information, Jamaica

In Jamaica, the Ministry of Education entered education in emergency mode upon school closure, by providing psychosocial support, delivering learning materials, compiling digital learning resources, as well as engaging 11 radio stations and 3 TV stations to deliver distance education.

Within the framework of ICT in Education Policy and the Master Plan developed jointly with UNESCO, new partnerships have been forged with media houses, curriculum officers, teachers, presenters and media specialists to develop quality education programmes.

Experiences on how to make audio-visual programmes more attractive are shared, drawing on the popular TV programme “Schools Not Out” and radio programme “The Adventures of Thomas the Inventor”. Technics adopted include storytelling, open ended questions and listeners call-in to engage learners. In addition, the programmes are posted and moderated live on social media by engaging presenters who respond to learners’ questions during the sessions.

Efforts are also made in monitoring viewers’ feedback via weekly meetings with broadcasters to assess challenges and difficulties, social media and online surveys. Enhancements to TV and radio programme are made based on the feedback of learners, such as expanding the range of content broadcasted.

In order to monitor learning outcomes, survey and other diagnostic tools are used. Learning objectives provide standards for assessing programme facilitation, while Curriculum Officers closely monitor and communicate students’ learning progresses in weekly and monthly reports.

Suggestions on Ministry of Education’s capacity building include using appraisal system to identify needs, offering media and communication training in partnership with universities, fostering partnership with other ministries (including ministry of culture) and engaging staff in resources development.

Discussions

Have the different contents developed for TV and radio changed audiences’ preferences?

Among the European countries, during the first couple of weeks of school closure, children consumed a lot educational content on TV and radio, followed by a decline in this respect, and an increase of consumption of social media and other virtual platforms.

At the moment, it is too early to know about the change of audiences’ preferences, as the priority should be given to allow children to go out in nature under safety measures. However, it is learned that family content worked out very well during and after confinement, which should be further developed in the future.

How to develop early childhood education materials in this emergency modality?

Drawing on the Ecuadoran strategy, TV and radio educational content for younger children should prioritize their daily activities, focusing on objects they can easily access at home, and encourage them to play. Besides, psychological contents for pre-school children should be combined with the educational ones.

It is important to engage teachers who are capable and experienced in adapting pedagogies for different age groups, especially in early childhood education. Meanwhile, Jamaican experience suggests that guidelines on detailed daily schedule should be provided to parents, considering the different ages of learners and potential capacities of parents.

Regarding assessment and feedback strategy, have other types of technologies been used, such as online survey, cell phones, etc?

In Europe, there is not an effective assessment system yet. Future cooperation with Ministries of Education is needed to dig deeper for qualitative and quantitative data, for example to learn from teachers about what programmes are more useful and should be continued.

EBU suggests that in order to enhance the feedback process, there are some digital platforms where students can upload their corrections and feedback, and better explanation to their questions can be provided by teachers.

Key messages and way forward

Ms. Yayoi Segi-Vltchek, Chief, Education 2030 and Education in Emergencies, OREALC/UNESCO Santiago

1. Responding to the unprecedented emergency, many countries around the world have developed immediate emergency education response in order to ensure continuity of learning, which includes the use of radio and television due to its vast nation-wide coverage, outreach, affordability, readiness and traditional role as in intergenerational and educational/cultural learning. From the perspectives of education sector, however, challenges remain including attention to diverse learners' needs, assessment of learning, quality of contents, and teacher support
2. There has been very long history, tradition, use and partnerships in the use of radio and television across Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe. Following the outbreak of the pandemic, the importance and relevance of radio and television has amplified including through a blended approach using digital means and social media. Many countries have managed to quickly deploy and have continually expanded the use of radio and television programming to support learners at different levels of education. Some issues have emerged from both within audiovisual and education professions after more than three months of intensive work, such as concept of quality from different perspectives, capacity enhancement, and partnership.
3. From the perspective of national education system, an integrated and system approach from strategies, policies and programmes underpinned by strong leadership is key. Full alignment to curriculum objectives and provision of complementary and supplementary materials is critical. Monitoring learning outcomes is a challenge but possible using different methods such as survey.
4. Recognizing significant advancement and progress made, yet acknowledging that more needs to be done, countries consider that this is an important opportunity to further improve the use of radio and television with the aim of transforming national education systems to provide quality learning for all.

Ms. Nicola Frank, Head of Institutional and International Relations, European Broadcasting Union

EBU is a member of the Global Education Coalition launched by UNESCO to address the impact of COVID 19 on learning. Education is indeed a key value for EBU and its public service media members from 56 countries. In reaction to the COVID-19 crisis, EBU members have launched various educational programmes for TV and radio, and are ready to share experiences and solutions, in the spirit of solidarity.

Supporting distance education will have a long-term impact for the future, and radio and TV will remain crucial especially when connectivity is not guaranteed. The crisis should be seen as an opportunity that provides fundamental reflection. Therefore, EBU is committed to continue to be a liaison between UNESCO and its members, to provide expertise and develop quality educational content and other broadcasting activities. Future support may follow up in specific countries or case studies; EBU is open for proposals.

Stay in touch

UNESCO's COVID-19 Education Response



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<https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>



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