

Editorial Note

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The *Journal on Education in Emergencies (JEiE)* publishes groundbreaking and outstanding scholarly and practitioner work on education in emergencies (EiE), defined broadly as quality learning opportunities for all ages in situations of crisis, including early childhood development, primary, secondary, non-formal, technical, vocation, higher and adult education.

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EDITORIAL NOTE

EMILY DUNLOP AND MARK GINSBURG

Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This [coronavirus] one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. (Roy 2020)

This special issue of the *Journal on Education in Emergencies (JEiE)* is focused on education during pandemics. While the choice of topic for this issue was prompted by the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, history has been plagued by a long list of pandemics (see Table 1). Studies from around the world have shown the effects a health crisis can have on education. A recent example is the Ebola crisis in West Africa, which resulted in schools being closed for seven to nine months; the impact on school enrollment and dropout rates as the schools reopened was devastating. Recent evidence, including that provided in this special issue, suggests that COVID-19-related school closures have already left their mark. Not only have they exacerbated preexisting inequalities—for example, students from the poorest and most marginalized communities have had the least access to remote learning technology—but the isolation caused by the closures has resulted in psychological trauma that will likely take years if not decades to overcome. The importance of these effects is reflected in the fact that at least four other journals have published special issues on education during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹

Table 1: A Century of Pandemics

Name	Year(s)	Number of Deaths
Antonine Plague	165-180	5 million
Plague of Justinian	541-542	30-50 million
Japanese Smallpox Epidemic	735-737	1 million
Black Death (Bubonic Plague)	1347-1351	200 million
Smallpox	1520	56 million
17th-Century Great Plagues	1600-1699	3 million
18th-Century Great Plagues	1700-1799	600 million
Cholera Outbreaks	1817-1923	1 million
The Third Plague	1855	12 million
Russian Flu	1889-1890	1 million

¹ Current Issues in Comparative Education (2022, Vol. 24), *Journal of Comparative and International Higher Education* (2022, Summer), NORRAG (2021, Special Issue No. 6), and *Prospects* (2020, Vol. 49).

Table 1: A Century of Pandemics (cont.)

Name	Year(s)	Number of Deaths
Yellow Fever	Late-1800s	100-150 thousand
Spanish Flu	1918-1919	40-100 million
Asian Flu	1957-1958	1.1 million
Hong Kong Flu	1968-1970	1 million
HIV/AIDS	1981-present	25-35 million
SARS CoV-1	2002-2003	770
Swine Flu	2009-2010	200 thousand
MERS CoV (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome)	2012-present	850
Ebola	2014-2016	11,300
COVID-19 (SARS CoV-2)	2020-present	6,545,561 ²

Source: Adapted from LePan (2020), Loyola University-Chicago and St. Edward's School (2020), and Open Society Foundations Education Program (2020).

Differences in government and corporate (in)action resulted in the impact of COVID-19 differing significantly across countries (Silva-Ayçaguer and Ponzogómez 2021). Moreover, the health-related effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have not been uniform within societies, in large part because of inequalities in health, housing, nutrition, and access to health care across racial groups and social classes (Accioly and Macedo 2021; CDC 2022). Indeed, during pandemics, “many people...perish not solely because of the virus, but because countries don’t have the resources or public health infrastructure to handle it” (Taylor and Adler 2020, 149), and “choices were made, decisions were taken, lies were told [by government officials and corporate executives] that cost not a few lives, but hundreds and hundreds of thousands of lives that did not need to be lost” (Nichols 2022, 8).

The COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on health worldwide, coupled with the negative economic effects (Quaglietti and Wheeler 2022; Yeyati and Filippini 2021), has seriously affected education access and outcomes, as was the case during the 1918-1919 Spanish Flu pandemic (Arnold 2018; Stern, Cetron, and Markel 2009). Indeed, when COVID-19 hit, early childhood education centers, schools, and higher education institutions were closed, leaving 90 percent of children and youth around the world without ready access to education (UNESCO, UNICEF, and World Bank 2020). As reported in a study released in January 2021, “98% of countries have implemented full or partial closures due to COVID-19...[and there were] 199 billion closed days of school in 2020” (Grob-Zakhary et al. 2021, 4; see

² As of October 17, 2022 (WHO 2022).

also Meinck, Fraillon, and Strietholt 2022). One of the lessons learned from the education response to the COVID-19 pandemic was that “the response of national education systems was fragile and inconsistent. Ministers and public authorities were dependent on platforms and content made available by private companies and were not even able to ensure digital access for all students” (Nóvoa and Alvim 2020, 37). Despite various mitigation strategies, the closure of education institutions has been estimated or found to cause significant learning loss, which has the potential to affect future adults’ economic productivity and earnings (Kuhfeld et al. 2020; UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2022; Azevedo et al. 2020).

Like COVID-19’s impact on health and economics, its impact on education has varied across countries and among groups within countries (e.g., gender, rural/urban, social class, and racial/ethnic groups) (UNESCO 2022). As Russo, Magnan, and Soares (2020, 2) comment, “the existing educational inequalities have been significantly increased through measures [or lack thereof] to contain the spread of the virus.” According to the World Bank (2020, 5), “the crisis was not equally distributed: the most disadvantaged children and youth had the worst access to schooling, highest dropout rates, and the largest learning deficits.”

The unequal effect on education arose both within countries and across countries. For example, a study conducted between December 2020 and July 2021 in Burkina Faso, Denmark, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, the Russian Federation, Rwanda, Slovenia, the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, and Uzbekistan (Meinck et al. 2022, xvii) found that “the periods of school closure varied within and across countries” and that “there were also differences in the participation of students in schooling and the modes, media, and teaching methods used in these periods.” Menashy and Zakharia (2022, 309) state further that “the pandemic...impacted...those most vulnerable in the global order with greatest force,” calling particular attention to “the world’s 79.5 million people forcibly displaced by conflict and persecution—86 percent of whom reside in low and lower-middle income countries.”

During the pandemic, countries, schools, teachers, students, and their families engaged in various strategies to continue teaching and learning, referred to in these pages as distance education or remote learning (Crompton et al. 2021; Inal 2022; Saini 2022). The differences in education access and outcomes within and across countries stemmed from the particular strategies used. For example, UNESCO et al. (2020, 6) report that, “as schools closed around the world to limit the spread of COVID-19, governments moved quickly to offer remote learning options, including through online platforms, television, radio and paper-based take-home packages.”

The research articles and field notes included in this *JEiE* special issue reinforce Arundhati Roy's (2020) notion that a pandemic can be considered "a portal, a gateway between one world and the next." The authors who contributed to this special issue offer insights into how education systems, students, teachers, and parents experienced the COVID-19 pandemic; how they confronted the challenges they faced; and how, in some cases, they began to conceive of a different and better future for education across the world after passing through the pandemic's portal. Reimers and Opertti (2021, 39) likewise observe in their introductory chapter of *Learning to Build Back Better Futures for Education* that,

in response to [the COVID-19 pandemic], many stakeholders collaborated to create novel ways of sustaining education at times when this was very challenging. These efforts are important not just because of what they did at a time of great need, but because of what they show about what is possible in reimagining education. There is much to be learned from studying these [31] innovations, particularly when it comes to supporting the necessary transformation of schools and school systems around the world.³

This special issue reflects an enormous and unprecedented undertaking by the *Journal on Education in Emergencies*. Our call for papers resulted in more than 200 abstract submissions and, subsequently, we received 69 theoretical and empirical research manuscripts or field notes. After a process of double-anonymous peer review, we selected six research articles and four field notes for this special issue and commissioned three book reviews. The global nature of the COVID-19 pandemic is reflected in the scale and scope of these contributions from 37 authors in a wide range of countries. We decided to publish this special issue in French as well as English, given that major pandemics (e.g., Ebola and HIV/AIDS) occurring prior to COVID-19 impacted education and society in francophone Africa. Moreover, given the global nature of the pandemic, it was important that we expand the reach of the evidence presented in this issue beyond an English-speaking audience. We hope that, by publishing this special issue in French, we will encourage scholars in francophone countries to broadcast lessons from the fieldwork and research findings on pandemics found within this issue to their home contexts.

³ Reimers and Opertti (2021) group the 31 innovations examined in their edited volume in terms of the areas these innovations supported: (1) student-centered learning, (2) deeper learning, (3) socioemotional development and wellbeing, (4) teacher and principal professional development, and (5) family engagement.

Several themes run through this special issue of *JEiE*, many of them in line with what we outline above. In “Educating during a Health Emergency: An Integrative Review of the Literature from 1990 to 2020,” Kathlyn E. Elliott, Katie A. Mathew, Yiyun Fan, and David Mattson put education responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in historic perspective. Their integrative literature review of education responses to health crises such as SARS, MERS, Ebola, and HIV/AIDS shows that themes common in the COVID-19 education literature—the foundational role of context and community support, access to equitable education in the digital age, teachers’ and students’ social-emotional wellbeing, teachers’ role in adapting curriculum and pedagogy, the need for additional training and support for teachers, and the opportunity for a creative shift in education practices and policies—find parallels in previous pandemic responses.

Taking up these important themes, Jean-Benoît Falisse, Cyril Brandt, Jean Mukengere Basengezi, Sweta Gupta, Dieudonné Kanyerhera, Pierre Marion, Pacifique Nyabagaza, Ibrahim Safari Nyandinda, Gauthier Marchais, and Samuel Matabishi, in their article “La Mise en Œuvre de la Gratuité de l’Enseignement Primaire en Contexte de Crise : COVID-19 et Réforme de l’Enseignement au Sud Kivu, République Démocratique du Congo” (translated as “Implementing Free Primary Education in a Crisis Context: COVID-19 and Education Reform in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo”), discuss the need to support teachers and the fact that COVID-19 compounded many preexisting crises. This article is uniquely situated as an original French-language piece in this bilingual special issue. The authors’ data-rich mixed-methods study of teachers shows that, in Democratic Republic of the Congo’s South Kivu province, the pandemic did not adversely affect teacher-parent relations. However, preexisting teaching conditions, including precarious contracts, made continuing in the profession untenable for many teachers in the area. The authors conclude that, while free education may be an important step, it is not a panacea for promoting increased access to schooling, and that, to be successful in crisis situations, education reform requires a sustained effort.

The next three pieces highlight the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on marginalized groups in already marginalized contexts by focusing on disabled learners, Qur’anic school students, and pregnant adolescents and teenage mothers. In “Home Learning for Children in Low-Income Contexts during a Pandemic: An Analysis of 2020 Survey Results from Syria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo,” Su Lyn Corcoran, Helen Pinnock, and Rachel Twigg look at programs that support learners with disabilities and at developing inclusive education practices during the pandemic in Syria and Democratic Republic of the Congo. They note

the importance of localized approaches to inclusive education that depend on community networks and point to teachers and parents as the key mechanisms for supporting learners with disabilities. In “Scapegoating the Usual Suspects? Pandemic Control and the Securitization of Qur’anic Education in Northern Nigeria,” Hannah Hoechner and Sadiyu Idris Salisu showcase the devastating effects school closures had on those attending Qur’anic schools in Northern Nigeria. The authors note specifically that the school closures allowed myths about the students who attend these schools to be perpetuated throughout the country, which in turn reinforced and legitimized the perceived appropriateness of drastic measures (e.g., forced school clearance and student deportations) as a form of control and securitization. In “The 2020 Pandemic in South Sudan: An Exploration of Teenage Mothers’ and Pregnant Adolescent Girls’ Resilience and Educational Continuity,” Anne Corwith and Fatimah Ali highlight the effects the pandemic had on teenage mothers and pregnant girls in South Sudan, who received minimal support and experienced persistent gender-based violence and negative stereotyping. However, the authors found that many of these girls exhibited great resilience and maintained their hope of returning to school and becoming financially independent.

We conclude the research articles section with “School Leaders’ and Teachers’ Preparedness to Support Education in Rwanda during the COVID-19 Emergency,” by Emma Carter, Artemio Arturo Cortez Ochoa, Philip Leonard, Samuel Nzaramba, and Pauline Rose. These authors shed light on the different responses the Rwandan government had to differing teaching conditions. They report, for example, that male teachers generally had better access to resources during the pandemic, as did teachers from better resourced schools. They also state that teachers believed that students from low-income families and communities were the least likely to benefit from remote learning. Unfortunately, this research echoes studies from around the world that have found that the school closures and reliance on remote learning exacerbated preexisting inequalities.

This special issue also presents four field notes that showcase important programs that were put in place to ameliorate many of the issues presented in the research articles. For example, in “Improving Social-Emotional Health: Expansion of Teacher and Student Wellbeing during the COVID-19 Crisis in Honduras,” Craig Davis and Gustavo Páyan-Luna explore how USAID’s *Asegurando la Educación* project transitioned to providing virtual social-emotional learning. They describe interventions that contributed to the country’s lowest national

dropout rate in five years and note that the schools receiving the interventions had higher enrollment rates than the national average. They conclude by offering insights into the importance of social-emotional learning to good mental health and student retention in crisis situations.

In “The Sandbox Model: A Novel Approach to Iterating while Implementing an Emergency Education Program in Lebanon during the COVID-19 Pandemic,” Michèle Boujikian, Alice Carter, and Katy Jordan extend these ideas to a program that supported refugee learning in Syria. The authors highlight how important using WhatsApp was to ensuring that children in Lebanon were able to keep learning as schools closed during the pandemic. They also offer a novel “sandbox” model that they used to rapidly test and iterate cycles of the program to ensure that it met the intended goals. They argue that this approach has the potential to be useful across many different contexts.

In “Remote Family Engagement through Virtual Tutoring: An Emergency Response to Support Children, Families, and Students,” Carmen Sherry Brown explores the importance of virtual tutoring during the pandemic and its effects on families and children, and on fieldwork interns who were attending a United States-based school of education. She also offers lessons for those implementing virtual tutoring programs. Finally, in “Project-Based Learning as an Innovative COVID-19 Response,” Leena Zahir and Janhvi Maheshwari-Kanoria offer insights into project-based learning as an important pedagogical approach to reach those who are digitally marginalized. Project-based learning could serve as a valuable strategy to be employed in many contexts in response to crises. These four field notes offer important programmatic responses to crises and are likely both scalable and adaptable across many contexts.

In addition to the six research articles and four field notes, this special issue of *JEiE* includes three book reviews. In the first, Noah Kippley-Ogman discusses Michael A. Peters and Tina Besley’s coauthored book, *Pandemic Education and Viral Politics*. In the second, Deepa Srikantaiah provides an overview and comments on Inny Accioly and Donald Macedo’s coedited volume, *Education, Equality and Justice in the New Normal: Global Responses to the Pandemic*. Finally, in the third book review, Changha Lee examines Daniel A. Wagner, Nathan M. Castillo, and Suzanne Grant Lewis’s coedited volume, *Learning, Marginalization, and Improving the Quality of Education in Low-income Countries*.

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