How to Recover Learning Losses from COVID-19 School Closures in the Pacific

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A generation of students faces the risk of lower future incomes and fewer opportunities due to education interruptions caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. This generation of students is at risk of having lower productivity for the rest of their lives because of missed schooling. Globally, it is estimated that over 2 trillion hours of face-to-face learning have been lost.

While the Pacific region had the least number of in-person school days closed due to COVID-19, each of the 14 Pacific small island developing states that are members of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has had a unique experience since the pandemic began.[1] The length of school closures differed, and so did the ability to use distance learning effectively to stem losses.

These differences affected education systems that already varied widely in their learning effectiveness before schools were closed for extended periods.

The youngest children and more marginalised learners, including children with disabilities and those living in remote and rural areas, have been hit the hardest by the pandemic. Students from the poorest families have not had access to effective remote learning due to limited connectivity, insufficient hardware and software, as well as capacity constraints among school leaders and teachers. Even today, two in five learners continue to experience significant disruptions to their education due to the lingering effects of the pandemic. Efforts to strengthen early childhood and primary education are, therefore, more important than ever.

Two examples of ADB's work addressing these challenges include

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ADB Pacific developing member countries school closures
(16 January 2020 - 30 March 2022, 117 weeks)

Country	Weeks partially open	Weeks fully closed	Distance learning modalities
the Cook Islands	0	4	None
Fiji	10	38	Online + Radio
Kiribati	0	3	Online
the Marshall Islands	1	1	None
Micronesia (the Federated States of)	13	11	None
Nauru	0	0	None
Niue	0	1	None
Palau	0	12	None
Papua New Guinea	0	6	None
Samoa	0	4	TV + Online + Radio
Solomon Islands	3	13	Online + Radio
Tonga	2	8	None
Tuvalu	7	5	None
Vanuatu	1	7	Online + Radio

Source: UNESCO map on school closures (https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse) and UIS, March 2022 (http://data.uis.unesco.org)

"As COVID-19 becomes part of everyday life, we must make sure children return to school."

improving the quality of basic education in the North Pacific through a regional project and strengthening early childhood development, student learning outcomes, and well-being under the Pacific Regional Education Framework through regional technical assistance.[2]

A recent ADB brief provided recommendations on how to recover learning losses from COVID-19 school closures.[3]

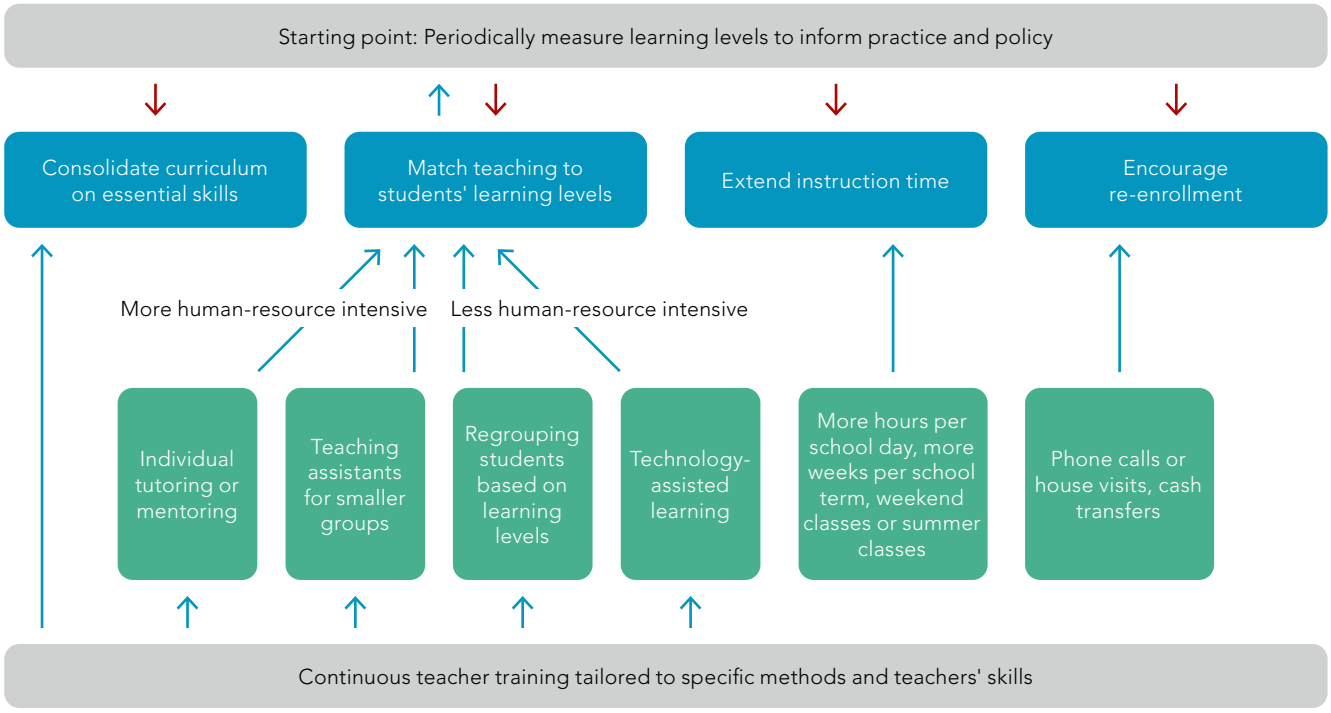
First, with schools reopened, it is critical to get children learning in person again. The longer the students remain out of school, the harder it will be to get them back. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were already over 100 million out-of-school youth in Asia and the Pacific; now, the numbers are even higher.

As COVID-19 becomes part of everyday life, we must make sure children return to school. There should be public back-to-school campaigns and systemic monitoring of attendance, especially with children having lower COVID-19 risks compared to adults.

Second, it is important to measure the extent of learning losses as soon as students return to classrooms. Nationally representative surveys and tests can help to inform policymakers about the learning levels across the country, regions, and localities, and across groups defined by socioeconomic status and gender. The Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment is one good example of regional collaboration to measure learning outcomes and improve learning. The results of surveys and tests will help countries allocate better resources for education and training.

In addition, teachers should conduct regular learning check-ups or formative assessments. These classroom assessments enable teachers to track students' progress,

How to Recover Learning Losses



Source: ADB. 2022. How to Recover Learning Losses from COVID-19 School Closures in Asia and the Pacific. Manila.

make adjustments to ensure they are teaching appropriate material, support lagging students, and evaluate the effectiveness of different catch-up strategies.

Third, teaching must be tailored to the learning levels of students. The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified disparities in learning levels among students. Tailoring instruction to each student's level can help lift the performance of students at all learning levels.

The specific approach to teaching at the right level depends on the local context. One method is to divide the classroom into groups based on students' level of knowledge and provide customised lessons to each group with the support of teaching assistants or other teachers. If it is not feasible to hire more teaching personnel, students can be regrouped according to learning levels, and existing teachers can be reassigned to these groups.

Another method is to use education technology (EdTech) programmes with embedded feedback loops that assess a student's individual learning level and provide lessons appropriate for that level. ADB's work with the Government of Fiji for improved Open Distance Flexible Learning is putting these opportunities in place.

Finally, tutoring (or mentoring) provides individualised attention and customises lessons based on the student's rate of progress.

Fourth, the curriculum should focus on the critical foundational skills and give teachers the flexibility to adjust in response to student needs. This involves setting priorities and making decisions on which lessons are most essential for each class. Teachers should be provided with the autonomy to make further adjustments for the benefit of their students. To enable this change, school priorities must shift away from administration and towards empowering teachers to apply flexibility in adjusting instruction based on the student's progress.

Fifth, learning hours can be extended and academic breaks reduced to increase learning time. Additional classroom time can give students the opportunity to cover material missed during school closures. This can take the form of hours added to the school day (where feasible), weekend classes, and reducing the breaks between academic years and terms.

Additional support may be needed for children from lower-income households. Given the macroeconomic and socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19, a larger percentage of children returning to school will likely be coming from such households and be vulnerable to other challenges, such as food insecurity. Children from these households can be supported with, for example, free lunches, which will help augment food and nutrition security, as well as provide further incentives to attend school.[4]

Sixth, teacher competencies need to be improved so that they will be able to introduce teaching methods suitable to the student's level, conduct formative assessments, and adjust teaching content appropriately. Empowerment of teachers is critical to support learning recovery by students. It also includes following up with teachers to ensure that new skills are employed. These actions will require additional financial resources for improved continuous professional development of teachers and pre-service training, as well as investments in better learning environments and pedagogical tools.

School reopening is an opportunity for taking stock and ensuring that education systems are reformed to address both learning losses that occurred when schools were closed and the causes of learning crises that predated the pandemic. The key challenges for governments include finding effective ways to organise, coordinate, and scale up these strategies while securing the necessary funding. ■

1. ADB's Pacific developing member countries are the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

2. ADB. Regional: Improving the Quality of Basic Education in the North Pacific; and ADB. Regional: Strengthening Education in the Pacific Region. The technical assistance support implementation of the Pacific Regional Education Framework (https://pacref.org).

3. ADB. 2022. How to Recover Learning Losses from COVID-19 School Closures in Asia and the Pacific. Manila.

4. N. Gounder and J. Narayan. 2021. Strategies for education recovery in Fiji. Canberra.

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UNIVERSITY JOSÉ EDUARDO DOS SANTOS

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The UJES intends, in the next 5 (five) years, to focus its actions on quality management, aimed at the implementation, consolidation and expansion of a contemporary Higher Education Institution, based on principles of sustainability. It is articulated in four fundamental axes, namely: Teaching, Research, Innovation and Postgraduation; University Extension and Administrative Management. Thus, establishing itself (and have a place if merit) in the regional (SADC) and international context as an innovative university.

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iii) Tolerance and respect;
iv) Scientificity;
v) Creativity and honesty.

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- Technological incorporation in scientific actions and encouragement to the handling of scientific research equipment and software.
- Modernisation and confirmation of the academic-pedagogical instruments.
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- To receive students from the Southern African region through the delivery of a master's course in GIS and Earth Observation. Working language: bilingual (English and Portuguese).
- Improve scientific publishing services through the dynamisation of the multidisciplinary scientific journal and university repository.
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2009
START OF ACTIVITIES

07
ORGANIC UNITS
(6 Faculties and 1

Faculties & Courses 2022/2023

Faculty of Agricultural Sciences

BA DEGREE
- Agricultural Management Teaching
- Agro-livestock Production Teaching

Teaching Food Technologies

DEGREE COURSE
- Agronomic Engineering
- Forest Engineering

MASTER'S DEGREE
- Agronomy and Natural Resources
- Food Production and Technology
- Forest and Environmental Sciences (newly created course)

DOCTORAL PROGRAMME
- Agro-food Technology (newly created course)

Faculty of Law

DEGREE COURSE
- Law

MASTER'S DEGREE
- Law

Faculty of Economics

DEGREE COURSE
- Economics

MASTER'S DEGREE
- Business Sciences
- Accounting, Taxes and Corporate Finance

Faculty of Medicine

DEGREE COURSE
- Medicine

Faculty of Veterinary Medicine

DEGREE COURSE
- Aquaculture
- Veterinary Medicine

SPECIALISATION
- Production and Nutrition of Small Ruminants (newly created course)

MASTER'S DEGREE
- Veterinary Medicine - Animal Production and Health

Polytechnic Institute

DEGREE COURSE
- Architecture
- Electromedicine
- Nursing

Electronic Engineering and Telecommunications
- Construction Engineering
- Hydraulic Engineering
- Informatics Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering
- Clinical Laboratory

SPECIALIZATION
- New Technologies Applied to Health (newly created course)

MASTER'S DEGREE
- Obstetrics and Neonatal Nursing Science (newly created course)

UJES in Numbers

343
TEACHERS 2023

172 PERMANENT STAFF
(34 Graduates, 100 Masters & 38 Doctors)

90 CONTRACT STAFF
(69 Graduates, 18 Masters & 3 Doctors)

81 EXPATRIATE
(17 Graduates, 44 Masters & 20 Doctors)

257
ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF
211 PERMANENT STAFF
46 HIRED PERSONS

29
COURSES

3
BACHELOR COURSES

16
UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

2
SPECIALIZATION

8
MASTER'S DEGREE COURSES

1
DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

7.964
ENROLLED 2022/2023
(2.650 Female and 5.314 Male)

61
BACHAREL
(12 Female and 49 Male)

7.708
GRADUATE (2.589 Female & 5.119 Male)

195
MASTERS (49 Female & 146 Male)

9.902
STUDENTS GRADUATING BY 2022

9.746
DEGREE

156
MASTER'S
(34 Female and 116 Male)