The World Bank Education Global Practice
Rapid Response Guidance Note: Educational Television & COVID-19
(Updated: April 17, 2020)

OVERVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic has driven more than 85% of countries around the world to close schools entirely or partially leaving more than 1.6 billion students out-of-school (as of April 10, 2020). Countries have responded by adopting remote learning approaches with many deploying online learning solutions. However, online learning has exposed deep digital divides between and within countries, including high-income countries. A survey of school principals across 82 countries participating in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) revealed huge disparities in students attending schools with effective online learning platforms with the range being between 35% to 70%. This is telling of the ability of schools to support online learning during school closures. The situation is far worse for lower resource environments in middle- and- low-income countries with Internet penetration rates typically less than 50% and a large share of students without devices to enable online learning at home. Countries are therefore turning to education programs on lower-technology options like television and radio to dramatically increase access to remote learning.

Many low- and middle-income countries have used educational television programming for decades, including Brazil, China, Ethiopia, India and Ghana. One prominent example is from Mexico. Telesecundaria, is the oldest example of educational television in Latin America dating back to 1968 and led to the formation of its education television network Televisión Educativa. It has been used to impart secondary education through television broadcasts in rural or hard-to-reach areas of Mexico. There are rigorous evaluations of its effectiveness on learning as an educational television program for out-of-school children tracked between 1968 to 2019. Telesecundaria shows a strong impact on increased enrollment into formal education for children out-of-school, improvement in learning as well as improved labor market outcomes and earnings of participants. This is not an isolated example.

This note provides guidance on using educational television programming as a form of remote learning to respond to school closures. It is corroborated by more than 40 examples of how countries are currently using television in response to COVID-19.

FIVE THINGS TO DO

1. Work on developing and/or curating content.
Consider the different types of programs that can be used for educational television. Three main types of programs are possible: live broadcasts, pre-recorded broadcasts, and edutainment programs.

- *Live broadcasts***:** These involve recording a teacher teaching a live lesson in a staged classroom setting and broadcasting the recorded lesson on television (e.g. Morocco, Spain, South Africa). These lessons are typically aligned to the curriculum. Pedagogically strong teachers or master teachers must be identified to deliver these lessons. These can be low-cost rapid productions.

- *Pre-recorded broadcasts***:** Many countries have existing video content from past educational television programs or from online education providers that can be accessed 'on-demand' through their websites or YouTube. Countries should capitalise on existing content from private and non-profit organisations (e.g. Khan Academy) by curating it to be programmed into television schedules for broadcasting. Such pre-recorded content can be used in creative ways. For instance, the television teacher can play the role of an anchor who introduces different videos and strings them together into a lesson aligned to the curriculum (e.g. China, Croatia). Some things to consider would be video quality when using existing online videos for television programs (as videos are typically compressed when hosting online) as well as licensing and copyright issues.

- *Edutainment programs*: Edutainment programs are used to provide education in the form of entertainment and are typically extremely engaging. Many countries have an existing expansive array of private organisations including non-profits providing forms of edutainment (e.g. Sesame Street in [150 countries](), Ubongo in [33 African countries]()). In the immediate short term, creation of such programs is not advised given its time and cost intensiveness. Instead, consider sourcing, curating and obtaining intellectual property rights for existing edutainment content from local, regional or international providers.

2. Identify channels for broadcasting educational television programs.

Some countries have dedicated education television networks, while some are using other government owned television broadcasters with wide reach. Private television channels can also be leveraged. If students across grade levels are to be served within the same day, more than one channel is useful for airing multiple educational television programs simultaneously.

- *Start with government television channels.* The easiest way to broadcast education television programs is via national or state level broadcasting channels. Consider also redirecting government owned channels dedicated to other themes. [Morocco]()'s television channel dedicated to sports is now being used to broadcast educational television as well.

- *Work with private broadcasters.* If the reach of private providers is greater, consider negotiating with them for airtime. To increase access to this educational programming, it is imperative to broadcast programming on multiple channels (e.g. [Mexico]()). Consider leveraging broadcast licenses if they include national emergency mandates or mandatory public service requirements for airtime.

- *Rebroadcast television programs on other channels and mediums.* Rebroadcasting can be simultaneous live broadcasting on mutliple channels or making the program available as on-demand content. This will amplify its reach and increase uptake. For example, programming can be rebroadcast through the education ministry website; its YouTube channel (eg. [Kenya]()); its mobile app (eg. Morocco); national television network website; [radio](); or NRENs. Most countries are currently streaming their television programs on their national education television websites or a related platforms (e.g. [China]()). These are typically easily accessible from education ministry websites. Ubongo provides its programs in [8 different ways]() across 33 African countries. Sesame Street broadcasts its educational programs on television as well as radio across [150 countries]().

3. Create schedules for educational television programming.

Developing simple schedules for when, where and for whom (grade level, subject) this programming will be broadcast is critical to programming success. Some countries are providing student-friendly daily and weekly schedules on their education ministry website (e.g. [Mongolia]()), some on their education television network websites (e.g. [India]()) and some on institutional websites (e.g. [Kenya]()).

4. Develop a communication strategy.

A robust communication strategy is pivotal to the success of this programming. Communication is required before the programming commences and must continue during programming to continuously increase its reach. Communication is also required to continuously share updated schedules of programming with beneficiaries like students, parents/caregivers and educators.

- *Communicate before launching programs:* Communicate with beneficiaries that this programming is upcoming and build excitement around it (eg. [Brazil]()). Clearly communicate who, when and where these programs can be accessed (e.g. television channels, education ministry YouTube channel, national education television website).

- *Communicate schedules continuously and widely:* Consider that this communication needs to reach people with varying levels of access to the Internet, television and/or radio - most importantly, those with limited or no access. To amplify awareness of schedules, communicate schedules continuously and widely using every available media (eg. [West Bank and Gaza]()) including television, radio, mobile phone via text messages or WhatsApp (e.g. [Peru]()), social media like Facebook (e.g. [Rwanda]()) and websites of education ministries and education television networks (e.g. [Korea]()).

- o *Organise all resources in one place*: Organising all programming related resources in one place (known as a 'landing page') makes it easier to access them and increases uptake. This must be categorised by grades, subjects and medium of access (e.g. television channels, websites, mobile applications). This will facilitate less digitally literate caregivers, students or educators to easily access information (eg., Brazil, India, Nigeria). Khan Academy provides detailed schedules that organises all resources required for students for the week in one place.

5. Provide support for students, parents and teachers.

Throughout this programming, provide support to students, parents/caregivers and educators and enable two-way communication and feedback to make the programming impactful. Ministries should offer different types of support, including through a help desk which can be provisioned virtually through cloud services. Ministries can partner with private telecom companies that have well developed support and help desk infrastructure. Consider offering the following types of support:

- o *Technical and Pedagogical support*: A toll-free helpline and where possible, email address and/or chatbots can be set up to provide technical assistance to those experiencing challenges or questions regarding non-education related aspects of the programs. For support with the educational content, teachers can be leveraged to support students (eg. China). Education television can be made more interactive by answering questions during lessons. Questions can be collected by phone calls, text messages, email or social media, and answered during live lesson recordings. Another way to make programming interactive is to have teachers ask questions during lessons requiring students to respond in real time. An SMS short code can be set up to provided automated responses to students in real time.

- o *Feedback*: To be able to understand effectiveness in real-time as well as continuously improve the effectiveness of this programming and increase its uptake, it is important to enable two-way communication and receive (continuous) feedback and insights from users (eg. China, Russia).

- o *Socio-emotional support*: The transition to learning entirely through educational television will be difficult for most students, caregivers and educators alike. Providing socio-emotional support for them through this tough time will ease the transition. Jamaica has dedicated 36 helplines to support parents. In Spain, the education minister shared a letter of encouragement to teachers, parents and students.

FIVE THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. Consider practises and insights from other countries.

Connect with other countries that have a history of using educational television programming (eg. Brazil, China, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mexico) or with longer experiences in using television to respond to COVID-19 (eg. Korea). This will facilitate additional learnings from experiences and pragmatic insights of countries, especially around what to be wary of and what not to do.

2. Consider using content developed during COVID-19 beyond the short term.

A key advantage of educational television programs is that it can be reused by students multiples times on-demand, by teachers when school reopens and by ministries to reach out-of-school students. Ministries must thus develop medium to long term plans as well to use this programming. Archive all education television programming on online platforms (e.g. education television websites, YouTube channels) so they can be easily reused. Other actions to increase the effectiveness of this programming beyond the short term could include - developing short and modular content so that it can be reused across different modules (e.g. different topics, grade levels or subjects) at different points in time; developing content that is specifically geared for viewing on mobile phones as more users are likely to access this through via mobile phones (this has been Mexico's experience); guidance and incentives for educators to integrate education broadcasting into lesson plans once schools reopen; and documenting and sharing how students and teachers are being supported under the current conditions (e.g. learnings during Ebola are being used during COVID-19).

3. Consider expanded access to the Internet and devices.

Expanding access to the Internet and devices can amplify the reach, impact and effectiveness of this television programming as well as related communication including, programming schedules and support. This is possible even with limited Internet connectivity (e.g. text messages, WhatsApp) and simple devices. Consider zero-rating access to digital platforms that host this programming, including supporting online resources (e.g. mobile applications, education ministry websites). This will allow users to access resources free of any charges (including data fees to be paid to mobile operators). Another option is to partner with Internet service providers to allow free internet access to online learning platforms (e.g. Kenya, Rwanda, Nigeria). Negotiate with Internet service providers or provide subsidies for wireless or landline telephone services, broadband or bundled services. Ministries and schools can also consider loaning out devices to students (e.g. Saudi Arabia).

4. Consider supplementary actions like print material and text messages.

Consider improving the effectiveness of television programming by supplementing it with print material. Bangladesh assigns homework to students as part of their education television programming and expects students to submit this to teachers once school reopen which will form a part of their continuous assessment grades. Argentina and Spain have developed workbooks for students and families with no access to television. Such material can also be used to enhance effectiveness of television programming. In addition, text-messages can be used as simple and cost-effective ways to share schedules/reminders with beneficiaries and to 'nudge' them to use this programming or share feedback. It should be noted that 'too much nudging' can have a negative impact as well.

5. Consider diversity, equity and inclusion.

Planning the programming to be diverse and inclusive can improve effectiveness and equitable access to it. Widening the scope of the kind of 'teachers' who present or support lessons is one way to increase diversity and inclusion. Varied expertise can add diversity, by (for example) bringing in musicians, healthcare workers, or photographers to support teachers in providing real-life lessons to students (e.g. Argentina). Inclusiveness can be achieved through lesson presenters being women as well as men, teachers with handicaps, and people from different ethnic or cultural groups. By providing subtitles in languages used in a country, this programming can be made more accessible and equitable.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The World Bank is actively working with Ministries of Education to support their efforts to provide remote learning opportunities for students while schools are closed, including the use of educational television. In support of this work, the World Bank is cataloguing emerging approaches, which captures how education systems are responding around the world. For the most recent version of this document, as well as a number of related resources, please visit the World Bank's dedicated Remote Learning, EdTech & COVID-19 web site. This includes a resource list on remote learning during COVID19 documenting almost 30 existing examples of countries using education television.

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