

Editorial Introduction

Teaching and Learning During The COVID-19 Pandemic: Challenges and Opportunities Amidst Educational Inequalities

Marcella Winter

Teachers College, Columbia University

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic. Different countries adopted measures to stop the virus's spread and support the various sectors impacted by the emergency, including public and private schooling. Whereas the pandemic presented a significant disruption to teaching and learning, the government's strategies directly affected school system structures, highlighting various inequalities in education provision across the globe. The pandemic has also impacted students, teachers, and families differently. From experiencing the virus or the illness of a loved one and feeling anxiety or fear, to abrupt school shutdowns and food insecurity, school communities felt dire consequences in the new context marked by COVID-19. Moreover, the emergency introduced further educational challenges, such as the abrupt movement of school practices to virtual platforms and unequal access to Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) for learning purposes.

Unexpected times called for creative problem-solving: educators, caregivers, and policymakers started developing solutions to tackle the inequalities faced by students, schools, teachers, and families and alleviate the hurdles associated with the pandemic. Considering a world of disruption and possibilities, *Current Issues in Comparative Education* welcomed submissions on the challenges and opportunities faced by the school community during the COVID-19 and amidst educational inequalities. The 2022 Special Issue assesses how the pandemic has affected schooling and how different individuals, governments, and organizations have responded to the crisis since 2020.

The Special Issue is organized into three major sections. In the first one, authors present articles that discuss various perspectives on how the pandemic has affected learning and working from home, graduate students' mental health, and distance and inclusive learning. The discussions also highlight that the disruption resulting from COVID-19 evinced weaknesses already existing in schooling systems and, at the same time, signified an opportunity to reimagine teaching and learning practices.

Offering an analysis based on quantitative and qualitative approaches, **Frank O. Ely, Fallon R. Mitchell, Katherine E. Hirsch, Michael Diana, Krista J. Munroe-Chandler, Paula M. van Wyk** and **Cheri L. McGowan** discuss how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted graduate students' mental health. Their findings suggest that graduate students in Canada have experienced mental health challenges and dissatisfaction with how online learning was conducted. The authors offer some insightful recommendations to inform university administrators on how to deal with the issues faced by graduate students during the pandemic.

Junjian Gao, Brittany Kenyon, Yanghwan Choi, Isaely Echavarria, Ling Qiu, and Hope Jensen Leichter analyze how the social disruptions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in changes within the family and home, impacting learning and

working. Through semi-structured interviews with families around the globe, the authors suggest that there were fundamental shifts in the way individuals balance their personal and professional lives. Working and learning in the home during the pandemic has blurred the boundaries that in the past delimited time, space, and human relationships within each family's household.

Sandrine Simon and **Lucimar Santos** highlight the lessons learned at the Interdisciplinary Center for Research on Education and Development (CeIED). The researchers attended the meeting in Lisbon to delve into an emerging area of research called Citizen Science and how it will impact learning on digital platforms. In the article, the authors question how Citizen Science will influence education in a world marked by the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Inspired by their experiences as leaders and educators of a small urban elementary school in Harlem (NYC), **Dawn Brooks DeCosta**, **Danica Goyens Ward**, and **Michael Cornell** describe how the staff, families, and children in the community came together to face the multiple posed by the pandemic. Their account suggests a collective approach to reimagine the learning experience and emphasizes the importance of a united school community to ensure students' education and mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

Man-Ho Adrian Lam writes the last article in this issue. Analyzing the teaching and learning practices adopted by Hong Kong during the COVID-19 pandemic, the author shows how the education system swiftly transitioned to a "new normal." Lam concludes that the crisis was an opportunity to shift education paradigms and transform teaching and learning perspectives.

Three essays compose the Special Issues' second section and present the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to correct the inequities that have long challenged educational institutions. Using her experience teaching throughout the pandemic, **Samantha Harrienger** argues that schools must reform the curriculum, allowing space for culturally relevant pedagogy so that students and teachers can interact with materials connected to their classroom and society. Also considering culturally relevant pedagogy, **Kevin Cataldo** revisits and critically analyzes the three tenets of CRP, suggesting that such an assessment is needed in schools today more than ever before. Lastly, **Jon Nordmeyer** and **Esther Bettney** explain how a global network of schools and scholars created a robust community to learn from and contribute to a dialogue about equity for multilingual learners during the pandemic.

Reports on Latin American education systems' challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic compose the Special Issues' last section. Under the guidance of Romina Quezada Morales as the Principal Investigator and Marcella Winter as Co-Principal Investigator, a group of Teachers College students analyzed how digital education strategies adopted by national and local governments have impacted teaching and learning, the quality of education, and the already existing socioeconomic gaps in the region. The exploratory studies were based on semi-structured interviews with teachers, policymakers, and other actors involved in the digital strategies implemented by Latin American countries in 2020 and 2021. **Marcella Winter** analyzes how the digital strategies adopted by Brazil's three largest schooling districts impacted education and the lives of students, teachers, and families. In three different reports, **Romina Quezada Morales** presents her analyses on Chile, Mexico, and Uruguay. The author looks at how the digital strategies adopted relate to each country's education system's issues and how the policies

impacted private and public school leaderships. Considering the Dominican Republic, **Katia Diaz** argues that although the country's education reforms have underpinned technology and online learning to improve quality education, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the strategies achieved little success. **Hannah Stinson** discusses how the pandemic highlighted a significant digital divide in Ecuador, particularly between rural and urban areas and families with high and low incomes. Lastly, **Judith Pineda Munguia** examines accessibility and quality of education for students of various socioeconomic statuses during the pandemic and possible concerns for a society emerging from limited access to quality education in Honduras. All the reports were reviewed by a team of guest editors interested in the topics related to digital divides and education in Latin America. CICE thanks Gabriela Chacon Ugarte, Kevin Henderson, and Romina Quezada Morales for their careful reading and insightful comments.

This editorial introduction is also an opportunity to celebrate CICE's team's remarkable work for the last two years. When I was appointed as the journal's editor-in-chief for 2020-2021, it was clear that this would be a fantastic experience, given the publication's prestige and standing in the International and Comparative Education academic community. However, I could not imagine that all the work would be done in the middle of a pandemic. Aside from the disruption in the team's personal and professional lives, as it happened with everyone else in the world, we had to create the bonds and the trust necessary to make CICE go forward by distance. It was a daunting task, but we did it. Despite a challenging context, we also dared to make different changes that have made our journal an even better publication.

One of the main inspirations for my term as CICE's editor-in-chief was emphasizing diversity and the "international" in international and comparative education. Therefore, we invited scholars from diverse academic backgrounds, experiences, and geographical locations to compose our International Advisory Board. They helped us foster cutting-edge debates in ICED, promoted the publication to their networks, and offered different perspectives on the work we have been doing since the journal was established in 1998. CICE also expanded the languages in which it accepts submissions to make the process more inclusive to Portuguese and Spanish speakers around the globe. In the 2021 Special Issue, we had the pleasure of publishing our first article in Portuguese. I hope the journal can receive manuscripts in even more languages in the future and make scholarly work more accessible for those who do not speak English or have it as their first language. Also inspired by diversity, we welcomed more masters and doctoral students at Teachers College to compose CICE's editorial board, expanding the number of editors and adding copy editors to our team. It was a pleasure to see how this remarkable group helped improve the quality of the journal's work, offering thoughtful insights and considering that our job is to present the finest publication, respecting authors' different ways of seeing education and doing research. The 2020-22 cohort left its mark in CICE, and I am grateful for all the lessons we learned together in the last two years. All these transformations would not be possible without the guidance of our faculty advisor, Professor Regina Cortina, to whom we are very grateful.

On the more practical side, we also spearheaded relevant changes. In partnership with Columbia Libraries, we launched CICE's automatic submissions system to make it easier for authors and reviewers to move along the publication process. Our journal's logo and visual communication also changed, preserving its colors and the quality we want to convey to readers, scholars, and practitioners in every published issue. Team

Editorial Introduction

development meetings also became more frequent to encourage collegiality and hear different voices in decision-making. Many of the crucial decisions taken, such as the new logo and the topic for our special issues, were defined collectively by the team. We also had the opportunity to collaborate with our friends at TC who founded “CICE: The podcast” and are doing a great job fostering debates in our field and beyond.

For all the great work in the past two years, I thank the CICE Team, Professor Cortina, the International Advisory Board, the external reviewers, the authors, and everyone who contributed to our journal’s growth and expansion. With limited resources and much will to make it work, we could promote significant transformations that, hopefully, will have a long-lasting impact on CICE and the ICEd community.

Marcella Winter is a doctoral fellow in the International and Comparative Education program at Teachers College, Columbia University, and the editor-in-chief of *Current Issues in Comparative Education (CICE)* (2020-2022). Email: md3809@tc.columbia.edu
For CICE-related matters, please contact cice@tc.columbia.edu