



Mitigating COVID-19 impacts: lessons learned and getting education systems up and running again

The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented educational disruption in the Caribbean. The impact of COVID 19 has had dramatic impacts across assessments, certification, teaching and learning. As restrictions across education gradually start to get lifted, many providers will need to plan a mix of online classes. However, due to the focus of TVET training, which is primarily on practical skills and work readiness, many aspects of online learning are particularly challenging, and remote learning would be a weak substitute. Therefore, centres must also look at the possibility of some face to face delivery.

Teachers and students have been thrown into a big distance-learning experiment—in some cases in a matter of days or weeks.

So, with the challenges of COVID 19, what do educators need to do? In this article I will be looking at steps that managers need to take and what teachers need to think about when going back into class.

The [World Health Organisation](#) are clear in their recommendations for schools which include:

Staggering the beginning and end of the school day

Cancelling assemblies, sports games and other events that create crowded conditions

When possible, create space for children's desks to be at least one metre apart

Teach and model creating space and avoiding unnecessary touching

Continue home learning and plan staffing

It is also important to remember that not every trainee will be able to attend. Trainees who are clinically deemed extremely vulnerable, or living with someone who is in this group, should not come back to and should continue home learning. Therefore, it is important to ensure that centres continue to plan a home learning curriculum for those who do not attend.

Also planning your staffing will be important. A recent poll showed that 17% of teachers are in a household that they feel needs to isolate.

How will partial reopening affect teachers and their ability to deliver the curriculum?

Due to the restrictions and issues caused by COVID-19, particular consideration has been given to if an activity is possible with social distancing in place.

Each activity should be risk assessed and should not be run unless the risks can be mitigated. Each subject will need to be considered carefully and therefore, some aspects of the curriculum will not be



able to be delivered where this is the case tutors will need to consider if alternative modules can be completed.

What lessons can we learn from other countries and what can teachers and managers do now to mitigate the effects of the situation?

TVET training has been affected across the world with several approaches and actions taken.

Managers must make plans for blended learning from September and into the next academic year, with all trainees having both remote learning and face-to-face contact when it is safe to do so. These plans also need to be in place in case of a second spike. Opening your training centres poses some challenges with the need for physical distancing and increased hygiene procedures.

How can we do this? is the question for many managers now and in the future. It can be possible to reduce class size by creating subgroups and reducing the hours or days that trainees attend. However, to do this effectively, managers will need support from teachers in understanding who or why trainees need to attend.

An opportunity to re-energise learning (Tackling the COVID-19 slump)

For teachers going back into the classroom, reopening's can provide us with an opportunity to reintegrate learners back into learning.

It can give us time to assess and celebrate the non-academic achievements of trainees whilst they've been at home, during closures, and gives us an opportunity to spend some time reviewing their progress.

Evidence shows that online learning can be problematic where students do not easily have access to it, and a return to face to face delivery is needed. Research by [Carlsson et al. \(2015\)](#) showed that even just ten days of extra schooling significantly raises scores on tests of the use of knowledge by 1%. As an extremely rough measure of the impact of the current school closures, if we were to simply extrapolate those numbers, twelve weeks less schooling (i.e. 60 school days) implies a loss of 6% of learning.

For teachers and trainers planning is key. As educators we need to identify what we can do remotely and what needs to be done face to face. We know that practical skills are developed through learning-by-doing. It is important for trainers and teachers to identify which practicals cannot be done with existing materials in the home or through augmented reality or virtual experiences.

So how is this working in other countries? In their TVET systems response note on May 14 2020, The Work Bank Group identifies that in Kazakhstan, over 2,000 TVET online lessons have been developed. Practical activities for TVET programmes are being carried out around the house, particularly for programmes related to catering and hospitality, childcare and horticulture.



As teachers and trainers, the following must be considered: where will you deliver remote or online learning; what work will you do to support your trainees, in understanding and developing the skills needed to be independent learners; and how will you teach learners to stay safe on campus.

One of the recommendations from The Danish Health Authority is for as much teaching to be conducted outdoors as possible, as it helps to social distance between students. So when the weather permits why not move your classroom outside? This can limit transmission and more easily allow for social distancing.

#Stay Safe, Stay Learning.