

Can't see this message? [View in a browser](#)



Issue 4 | December 3, 2020

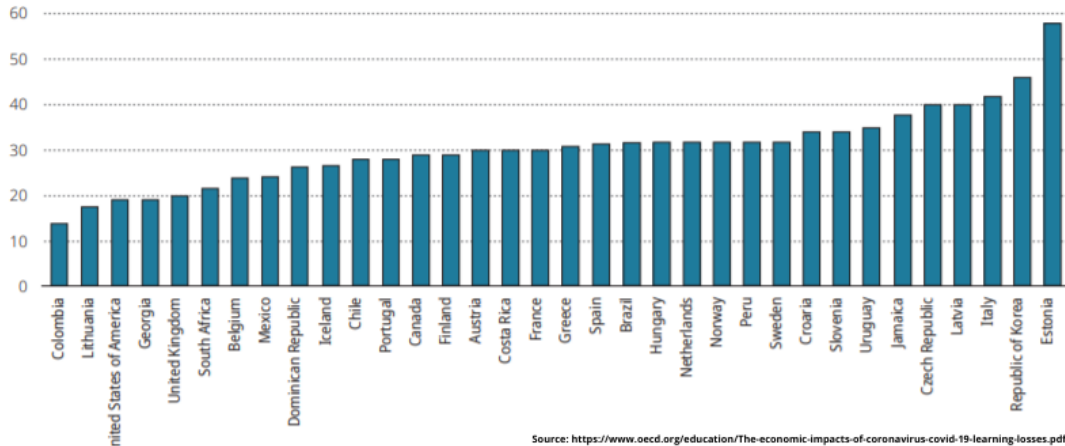
"The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the largest disruption of education ever. Education budgets need to be protected and increased. And it is critical that education is at the heart of international solidarity efforts, from debt management and stimulus packages to global humanitarian appeals and official development assistance."

- UN Secretary-General António Guterres

Economic Impact of Learning Losses due to COVID-19.

As a result of the schools being closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, classes were disrupted for months in the first half of 2020. The larger effect of closure of schools was seen on children from lower-income families, which amplified the already existing disparities in the learning outcomes. According to a survey conducted by "India Welfare Trust" in the first week of May 2020, about 89% of the surveyed parents believe that their children's learning will be affected due to the [national wide lockdown](#). Little is known about the effectiveness of learning at home for the entire student population and what this means for the development of skills. However, there are indications from multiple countries that many children had little effective instruction. A survey of school-going children's parents in Germany showed that the time children spent on school-related activities per day were halved during the COVID-19 school-closure period. In contrast, the time spent on TV, computers and mobile games [increased significantly](#).

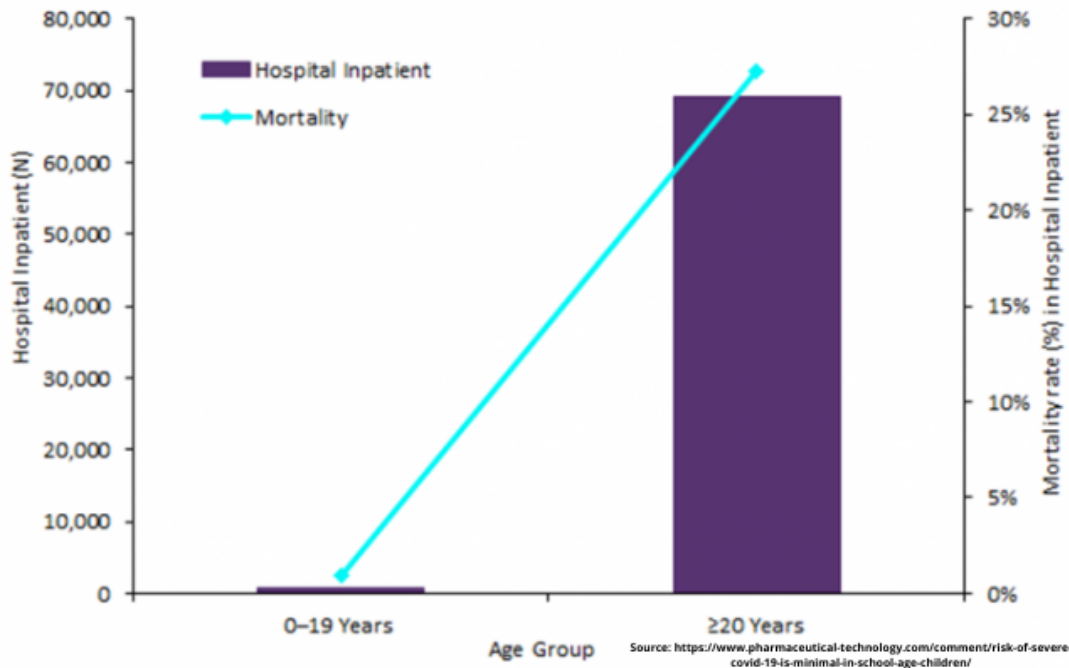
To understand the impact of COVID-19 on higher education, a [study](#) surveyed 1500 students at one of the largest public institutions in US. Due to the pandemic, about 13% of graduate students have delayed their graduation, around 40% have lost a job or job offer or internship, and 29% of them are expecting to earn less. The costs of school closure and the associated learning losses go beyond their means. A less skilled workforce also implies lower rates of national economic growth. A loss of one-third of a year of ineffective learning for just the students affected by the closures of early 2020 will, by historical data, lower a country's GDP by an average of 1.5% over the [remainder of the century](#).



Are Schools Super-Spreaders?

The schools in US began to reopen in early August, however, the reopening pace was slowed down or canceled with several reports saying school infections would inflate and spread outward to the broader community. A [survey](#) consisting of almost 200,000 students across 47 states, revealed an infection rate of only 0.13% among the students, and the numbers were similar even in the high-risk areas. This was further supported by another [report](#) which says the risk of severe Covid-19 is minimal in school-age children. Till August 2020, the proportion of children (up to 19 years old) admitted to hospital in UK were less than 1% of all cases. On the other hand, the reopening of schools in Israel created an opposite scenario. Ten days after the schools were reopened, the outbreak in a school at Jerusalem displayed a mass transmission with an infection rate of 13.2% amongst the students and 16.6% amongst the [school staff](#).

COVID-19 Hospitalization Number and Mortality Rate, UK, March 1–July 3



Role of Teacher Unions.

[Teachers' unions](#) across the world clash with governments over school reopening plans without appropriate safety guidelines. In countries with “a history of lack of dialogue and consultation with the

continuous talks with policymakers over when and how to reopen schools.

Evidence from Taiwan and other Precautionary Guidelines.

Unlike other countries where the schools were shut down completely, Taiwan has largely suppressed the virus and kept [schools open](#). Looking at the school reopening strategies across countries from South Africa to Finland to Israel, some encouraging patterns emerged, viz., keeping student groups small and requiring masks, and some social distancing helps keep schools and communities safe, given that younger children rarely spread the virus to one another or bring it home. The reopening strategies also include a limit in full-time schooling and scattered attendance. [UNESCO's](#) COVID-19 education response provides evidence of good practices, practical tips, and external links for important references to mitigate the short and long-term impact of school closures.

Covid-19 and Students' Performance in Higher Education.

[Results](#) from an experiment consisting of 458 students from Spain, showed that there is a significant positive effect of the COVID-19 confinement on students' performance. This effect is also significant in activities that did not change their format when performed after the confinement. The study groups were divided into two groups - the control group corresponds to students from academic years 2017-18 and 2018-19, and the experimental group corresponds to students from 2019-20 whose face-to-face activities were interrupted because of the confinement.

Response of College Campuses Worldwide.

Reopening of colleges lead to a surge in the coronavirus infections, endangering students, faculty, staff, and local communities. The graveness of the situation could be assessed from the striking [estimate](#) that around 130,000 college-related cases have been reported as of October 1, 2020, across more than 1300 schools. A university in the South-East region of the U.S. experienced a widespread outbreak of [laboratory-confirmed](#) SARS-COV-2 infection. Even after adhering to the norms put forward by the CDC, like extensive testing, and contact tracing strategies, college administrations are not able to limit the rising infection rate. However, the ramifications of this transmission extend well beyond the borders of the campuses. Multiple stakeholders, like people living in the vicinity of the campus area, have requested universities to not only compile and share the infections data in the form of the campus dashboards but also to list the preventive measures that are being undertaken by the institutions. A recent [study](#) ranked 100 U.S. colleges on their public reporting of the infections data and the steps that they have taken to combat the virus. Only 16 universities received an A or A- among themselves, where the grades ranged from A++ (perfect score) to F (no dashboard), which is a stark indicator describing the lax attitude of schools toward dissemination of public information. The study concludes by saying that COVID-19 dashboards offer the first step for public health experts and community to hold high policy standards in their policy decisions.

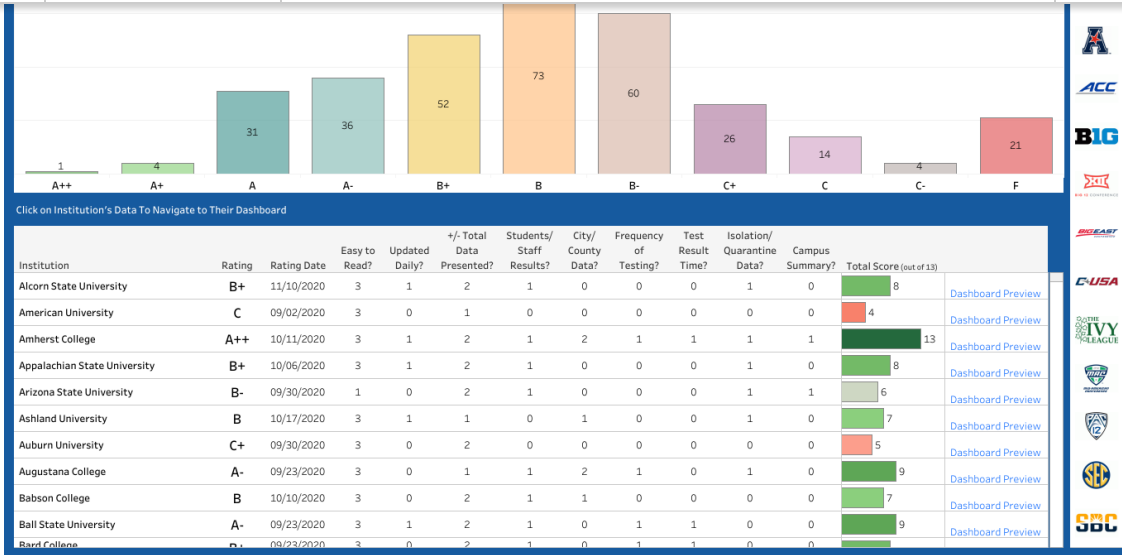
IIM Ahmedabad has been among the first campuses in India to set up a COVID-19 dashboard. It's [covid dashboard](#) is one way forward in dealing with the virus on the campus. GoCoronaGo (GCG), an app created by the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) for contact tracing alerts the secondary- and third-level contacts of a COVID-19 infected person. Contact tracing apps, however, come with privacy concerns. Unlike other apps, GCG's [design choices attempt to balance the privacy of individuals](#) with the safety of the community in performing rapid multi-hop contact tracing.

On the other hand, some schools have outperformed their expectations. One such classic example is [Cornell](#), where it witnessed only 200 on-campus coronavirus infections- one-sixth of the 1,200 projected in the university's model. Their success mainly stems from the unique strategies they followed to suppress the spread of infections like- frequent and rapid testing, adaptive testing, pooled testing, deploying anterior nasal swabs instead of nasopharyngeal swabs.

Subscribe

Past Issues

Translate ▾



Pandemic and High-Stakes Exam.

Pandemic has disrupted the education of close to [1.5 billion people](#) since the start of the year. And one of the most serious decisions that the governments are deliberating is whether to conduct important exams. The main challenge would be to arrange for the proper logistics to avoid turning them into a super-spreader event. Different countries have undertaken different paths; for instance: China and Korea ploughed ahead with their essential matriculating exams while taking appropriate precautionary measures like mandatory masking, social distancing, and setting quarantine spaces in the event of students displaying symptoms during an ongoing exam. Similarly, India [instead of dismissing the JEE and NEET examinations](#) for admission to undergraduate engineering and medical courses respectively, only postponed them to September due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The exams were earlier scheduled in the second half of July. Not only were students more prone to virus infection, but also faced severe [mental health issues](#). Other countries like the USA, have responded differently, where many colleges have scrapped the requirement of SAT's which, coupled with the overall academic performance in their high school is the main criterion for college-applications. In an unusual move, the [Kenyan government](#) has entirely scrapped a full school-year to fulfill twin purposes of safeguarding teachers and students from the virus, and at the same time to address the glaring issue of inequality that arose when schools were suspended in March. The latter issue erupted primarily because some students had the technology to access remote learning. Others didn't. These mixed responses show that there's no unique answer to the above question, and it largely depends on the will and assessment of the local governments- whether to continue in the traditional style or to bring on much needed reforms in the wake of the pandemic.

Policy Prescriptions.

In order to design a suitable response strategy to combat the virus while reopening schools and colleges, it is essential to first recognize the transmission mechanism in that context, which according to many experts is very complex. Transmission could occur in college classroom settings especially if there is no mandatory use of face masks, insufficient physical distancing, or inadequate hand hygiene, but social and residential neighbourhoods outside of classrooms are likely pose a significant risk as shown by several outbreaks tied to social events linked to campuses. COVID-19 dangers to college students, the staff, and their surrounding communities are inevitably intertwined. A rapid testing strategy both within and across the surroundings of the campus would trump the strategy of completely shutting down the residence dorms, and dining spaces, especially when it minimally affects the transmission rate (due to factors like the majority of students living off-campus, crowded indoor social settings, etc.), while some students who belong to the lower socio-economic background getting disproportionately affected by it. Both universities, and communities living in the vicinity of the university premises, should join forces to deliver a model response to the ongoing pandemic. In addition to that, setting up quarantine facilities on or near the campus when a COVID-19 outbreak occurs might help prevent further transmission to family members and other communities.

In an ideal world, universities need to be cautious about reopening academic campuses. Otherwise, they

The Taiwan Case Study One More Time.

[Taiwan](#) presents itself as a perfect case study to design an ideal response strategy for reopening schools and colleges in particular, and the entire economy in general. As of December 3 2020, there have been very few cases in six Taiwanese universities since the start of the pandemic. This success is not limited to the territories of schools and colleges; instead, Taiwan is inflicted with only 686 confirmed cases, seven deaths, and no domestic deaths for more than 230 days as of December 3, 2020. This commendable statistics are the result of the early-planning, hard work, and strict adherence to the norms, and the rules set by the higher authorities. Some of the vital early measures worth taking a note include:

- creating of a task force at each university;
- school-based risk screening based on travel history, occupation, contacts, and clusters;
- measures on self-management of health and quarantine;
- general hygiene measures (including wearing mask indoors);
- principles on ventilation and sanitization;
- regulations on school assemblies;
- a process for reporting suspected cases;
- and policies on closing of schools and conducting of makeup classes.

To minimize the risk of community transmission, in-person classes were suspended if one student or staff member tested positive and a policy was adopted that a school should be closed for 14 days if it had two or more confirmed cases. Although, the measures taken by them seem hard and painstaking, Taiwan's experience suggests that safely reopening colleges and universities may be feasible with a combination of strategies listed above.



Mental Wellness and Virtual Education.

As higher education adapts to teaching and learning virtually, the workload and the learning load of adopting a new delivery mode is taking a huge toll on the lives of students, staff, and faculty members. The radical change in lifestyle can [feed loneliness, anxiety, and even lead to depression](#). A study revealed that over two thirds of students believe that COVID-19 has had a [negative impact on their mental health](#)

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

poses real and serious risk for mental health challenges of unprecedented scope." As the world continues to battle the coronavirus, higher education must step up to meet its duty of care to its students, staff and faculty.



Tweet



Forward

Copyright © IIMA-CMHS 2020, All rights reserved.

Our mailing address is:

Centre for Management of Health Services (CMHS)
Main Campus, Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad
Vastrapur, Ahmedabad - 380 015, Gujarat (India)

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

[Subscribe](#)

[Past Issues](#)

[Translate](#) ▼

This email was sent to seminarnb@iima.ac.in

[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

Centre for Management of Health Services · Main Campus, Vastrapur · Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad · Ahmedabad 380001 · India

