

School teachers' perceptions of intersectoral working with health in the COVID-19 pandemic

Authors : **Nicola J Gray**¹, Shraddha Manandhar², Catherine Chabot³, Min-Chien Tsai¹, Didier Jourdan³

N.J.Gray@hud.ac.uk

1 : UNESCO Chair 'Global Health & Education', University of Huddersfield, United Kingdom

2 : School of Human and Health Sciences, University of Huddersfield, United Kingdom

3 : UNESCO Chair 'Global Health & Education', Université Clermont Auvergne, France

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the challenge for teachers to integrate protective health measures into their academic daily responsibilities. The aim of this abstract is to analyse how school teachers' views on intersectoral collaboration with health professionals during COVID-19 vary by country, seeking insights for future directions.

Methods

In 2021, an online survey was conducted in 6 languages with education and health professionals, followed by optional online semi-structured interviews. We explored the: 1-effect of the pandemic on schools/pupils/teachers; 2-reorganisation of schools; 3-experience of implementing infection control measures in schools; 4-intersectoral working; 5-important resources for keeping schools open.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and translated into English. Analysis of a survey question seeking professionals' rating of intersectoral working led to a directed content analysis of transcripts and free-text survey responses regarding intersectoral working experiences.

Results

Data were analysed from 1046 school teacher survey responses from 6 countries/territories and 21 follow-up interviews. Ratings varied considerably across countries. A large majority of teachers in Taipei (83%) reported excellent or good collaboration with health professionals, about half in China (53%) and Portugal (51%), and far fewer in Brazil (38%), Morocco (29%) and France (15%). Taipei respondents cited the key role of school nurses as a positive factor; others added clear national guidelines and local protocols. Negative ratings related to health professionals' rare visits or absence.

Conclusion

The direct support of health professionals in schools was offered as explanation for teachers' positive ratings of intersectoral working in the pandemic. Policy and practice varied geographically; thus, understanding contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of intersectoral working in schools is crucial to orient future public health strategies.

Main messages

1. This highlights the importance of understanding contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of intersectoral working in implementing protective health measures in schools.
2. This suggests that policy support and the presence of dedicated health personnel within schools play a pivotal role in ensuring effective collaboration between the education and health sectors.