

School Teachers' Perceptions of Intersectoral Working with Health in the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the challenge for school staff to integrate protective health measures into their academic daily responsibilities.

The WHO Technical Advisory Group on Safe Schooling during the COVID-19 Pandemic recommended that “countries should ensure optimal collaboration between teaching staff and health and social workers within a resilience plan”.¹

The aim of this abstract, within a wider study of safe school re-opening, is to analyse how school teachers' views on intersectoral collaboration with health professionals during COVID-19 vary by country, seeking insights for future directions.



Results

- There were 1,046 survey responses from school teachers in 6 countries/territories
- Twenty-one follow-up teacher interviews were included in the analysis
- 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%)
- Collaborations were rated most negatively (poor or no collaboration) in Morocco (48%) and France (81%)
- Taipei respondents cited the key role of school nurses as a positive factor; others also cited clear national guidelines and local protocols
- Negative ratings related to health professionals' rare visits or absence

... Just before the start of the recovery, we had a nurse whose face we had never seen before come in for an hour, to actually sabotage everything that we had put in place on our own accord... To create spaces for each child and in fact, she came to tell us that it wasn't right, that it was too far from the toilets, that this, that... And that's it, she left, never came to check if we had applied her advice. (Teacher, France, FR46)

Apart from the environmental disinfection and epidemic investigation, other than that, because the schools are no longer in school... there is not much cooperation in this project... Instead, school nurses and school health professionals are seconded to support the local government and health centres. (Head teacher, Taipei, TPE03)

Main Messages

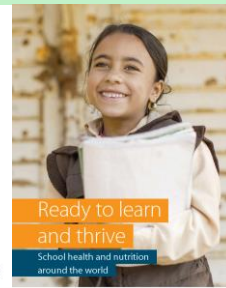
1. This abstract highlights the importance of understanding contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of intersectoral working in implementing protective health measures in schools
2. Policy support and the presence of dedicated health personnel within schools play a pivotal role in ensuring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

Methods

- An online survey with some free-text answers and semi-structured online qualitative interviews were conducted in 6 languages (Arabic, English, French, Mandarin, Portuguese, Spanish) with health and education professionals, exploring their experience of the re-opening of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic
- The interview guide included the following topics: (i) effect of the pandemic on schools, pupils and teachers; (ii) reorganisation of schools (iii) experience of implementing infection control measures in schools; (iv) intersectoral working; (v) important resources for keeping schools open
- Statistical analysis of a survey question led to directed content analysis of the resulting combined dataset was used to seek information relating to intersectoral working in schools

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What can we do about it?

To transform education and the lives of children and adolescents, this publication urges governments and development partners to put learners' health and well-being at the core of the education agenda and to improve the quality and reach of school health and nutrition programmes.

We need comprehensive policies and programmes that address *all* learners' needs holistically, are relevant and responsive to contexts and evolving needs, coordinated across sectors and sustained by increased policy and financial commitments.