

Chapter 3

For Children in and out of Class During a Pandemic: Newly-Created Open-Shared Learning Resources on the Social Web for F2F, Blended, and Online Learning

ABSTRACT

In a pandemic, when schools have either closed, gone “blended” or “hybrid” (part-in-person and part-online), or gone fully online, teachers have to master online teaching quickly. At these moments, various online and published resources are referred to and used as guides. Some are willing to offer open-shared learning resources on the Social Web. This work involves an environmental scan of open-shared learning resources for pre-K12 and K12 on (1) an online teaching repository/referatory, (2) slideshow-sharing site, and (3) a social video sharing site. This includes bottom-up thematic coding of the journalistic literature (of COVID-19 and children), a review of the available recent open learning resources, and analytical observations about how to improve the available contents.

INTRODUCTION

With the sudden emergence of SARS-CoV-2 from Wuhan, China, in late 2019, and the novel pathogen’s fast spread around the world, humanity was caught by surprise. While people waited to see what the impact of this novel coronavirus would be, a virus against which people did not have a natural defense, it did not take long to realize that it was potentially lethal for the more severe cases of COVID-19. And over time, it became clear that the infection could affect all organ systems of the body, with long-term and potentially permanent effects. Wisely, many government leaders around the world initially closed borders against travel and shut down, in order to protect lives. The shutdowns were to de-densify humanity, so they would have fewer opportunities to interact and potentially spread the virus through airborne

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-6496-7.ch003

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particles and aerosolized droplets and fomite transfer. People were asked to stay at home and avoid people except for essential endeavors: work, grocery-shopping, and healthcare.

Over time, the public health community came out with a set of guidelines for safer human behaviors:

- People were also asked to wear facial masks while in public [optimally N95 or KN95 masks or three-tiered surgical masks...vs. simple cloth ones (Bernabe & Messer, Aug. 11, 2020)], and so stem the spread by airborne particles and aerosolized droplets. “Cotton and polyester masks” were often not particularly protective, and having more cloth layers was better than fewer; avoiding gaps in the mask also mattered (Bernabe & Messer, Aug. 11, 2020). Bandanas “don’t provide much protection” (Bernabe & Messer, Aug. 11, 2020). Neck gaiters were found to be potentially more harmful than helpful. Many suggest the wearing of eye coverings (goggles or glasses, face shields) and hair coverings as well.
- People should not touch their face (and especially not the eyes, the nose, or the mouth) with their hands. They should practice hand hygiene continuously.
- People should avoid crowds. They should not come within six feet of another individual. Social distancing refers to “actions to reduce the number and duration of contacts and increase the physical distance between individuals to slow the spread of a communicable disease (Qualls et al., 2017, as cited in Faherty, Schwartz, Ahmed, Zheteyeva, Uzicanin, & Uscher-Pines, 2019, p. 1).
- Cough droplets have been found to travel “beyond six feet” (Howard, Nov. 6, 2020), with simulation studies aligning with observed in-world cases. They should avoid indoor congregate settings since there have been cases of viral spread through the air in such rooms, so that the distancing is not particularly effective (since air moves around the room). They should try to increase ventilation in closed spaces.

In the initial wave of shutdowns in the U.S. (late March to about mid-May, 2020), schools were also closed and shifted to online learning. This change was an especial challenge for nursery3, pre-K, and K-12 schools (elementary, middle, and high schools) given the long-standing practice of teaching face-to-face (F2F). Higher education, with a longer history of online learning options and the common prevalence of laptops/tablets and wireless fidelity (wifi) from home for many students, apparently made the shift somewhat easier. Some reopened their respective countries and states, with varying levels of (in)caution. There needs to be sufficient amounts of knowledge and functional fear to adhere to pandemic guidelines (Harper, Satchell, Fido, & Latzman, 2020). In the Fall of 2020, various school reopenings occurred in full face-to-face (F2F), blended / hybrid (part F2F, part online), or fully online.

This work reviews some of the mainstream journalistic research related to children and the pandemic; these include some 2,500 reviewed articles captured from 2020. It then includes a study of online learning resources shared on the Social Web in the past year from three mainline sources: a learning object repository/referatory, a slideshow-sharing site, and a social video sharing site. This is not to say that there are not other sources of contents to shifting to online teaching and learning, such as published books, more dedicated K-12 sites, digital libraries with children’s sections, and others, but the three chosen channels are mainline ones and should give a sense of some of the more timely concerns in this critical year. Their inventory may be suggestive of how much online sharing is occurring around this space, the quality of the learning resources, and potential gaps that may be filled. Perhaps these resource may be suggestive of a year of child regressions (Hui, Nov. 10, 2020), learning decay, lost learning,

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