

Chapter 15

Understanding the Lived Experiences of Lower School Students in Virtual Education During the COVID–19 Pandemic: Implications for PreK–12 Schooling in a Post–Pandemic World

Raymond John Schmidt

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4766-2303>

Escuela Internacional Sampedrana, Honduras

ABSTRACT

This chapter is an original summary of the qualitative research results investigating the closing of on-campus schooling due to the COVID-19 pandemic which led to the need for lower schools to implement virtual education. The critical issue investigated was the negative impacts on student learning that resulted from lower school students learning virtually. The phenomenon in this investigation was the lower school virtual education lived experiences caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter focuses on the experience itself and how experiencing something is transformed into consciousness. This study is particularly important because the implementation of virtual education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic swiftly and radically altered the field of mainstream PreK-12 schooling in 2020 and still does today. The results of this investigation provide global trend guidance to school leaders and other stakeholders who are considering virtual education as an option for lower school students.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-8795-2.ch015

INTRODUCTION: ESTABLISHING CONTEXT

The general critical issue was that the closing of on-campus schooling due to the COVID-19 pandemic led to the need for lower schools to implement virtual education (Griffy-Brown, 2021), and virtual education may continue to be the response to a future crisis that requires on-campus closures. The specific critical issue that was the focus of this phenomenological study was that there were negative impacts on student learning that occurred as a result of lower school students learning virtually (Acal et al., 2021; Barrios et al., 2021). Although rapid development and expansion of technology in the 21st century, including the virtual education experience, have been pursued and welcomed by educational systems, teachers, and students, not all of the impacts have proven to be favorable (Bulger et al., 2015; McCollough, 2021). While some students may appear to have benefitted from potentially tailored virtual education instruction, others manifested social-emotional setbacks and ongoing struggles (Alvarez, 2020; Amponsah et al., 2021).

Moreover, recent findings have indicated that virtual education might cause more significant concerns than in-person education regarding child and parental mental and emotional health (Barrios et al., 2021; CDC, 2021). Students and parents have also expressed a need for additional support to effectively manage the negative social impacts of virtual education (CDC, 2021; Higgins-Dunn & Miao, 2021). These negative social impacts include but are not limited to social withdrawal, social aggression, and unprovoked social friction (Alvarez, 2020; Amponsah et al., 2021; CDC, 2021). Nonetheless, technology has become a critical platform and useful tool intricately embedded throughout the daily teaching and learning experience across most educational systems and sites (McCollough, 2021). Therefore, additional research studies encompassing investigations around the appropriateness of technological impacts during virtual education for lower school students are more important now than ever before (Acal et al., 2021; Strauss, 2020).

Currently, there are many diverse and even conflicting conjectures worldwide as to whether virtual education in a mainstream PreK-12 setting is the way of the future and should continue well after the pandemic (Acal et al., 2021; Amponsah et al., 2021; Barrios et al., 2021; Berkovich, 2021; Dorn et al., 2021). Therefore, critical decisions, based on ongoing research outcomes, that profoundly impact students and schools now and into the future need to be accomplished regarding potential virtual education platform options for lower school, middle school, and even high school students alike (Backman et al., 2019; Carey, 2020). Research addressing both the short-term and long-term impacts of virtual education for mainstream PreK-12 students, especially lower school students, is essential for making healthy, student-centered decisions appropriately (Barrios et al., 2021; Loeb, 2020; Strauss, 2020).

The objectives of this chapter are to share the results, impacts, and global trend recommendations from a phenomenological research investigation that purposefully solicited the perceptions of the appropriateness of virtual education for lower school students based on international lower school educators' lived experiences (Acal et al., 2021; Dorn et al., 2021; Strauss, 2020). For the purpose of establishing a common understanding, lower school in this study incorporates PreK students as young as age 2 through grade 5 or even grade 6 students. Some schools separate lower school into two sections that are frequently referred to as early childhood and elementary school. Early childhood typically is the youngest grade through kindergarten or grade 1, whereas elementary is typically grade 1 or grade 2 through grade 5 or grade 6. Regardless of the minor subsection differences amongst schools, lower school in this study indicates the youngest grade in the school through grade 5 or grade 6. Moreover, for the purpose of establishing a common understanding, international schools in this study are educational

28 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/understanding-the-lived-experiences-of-lower-school-students-in-virtual-education-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/334325

Related Content

Narrating Deputy Principals and Heads of Departments' Experiences of Assessment Practices in Curriculum Delivery

Micheal M. van Wyk (2021). *Investigating the Roles of School Management Teams in Curriculum Delivery* (pp. 78-94).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/narrating-deputy-principals-and-heads-of-departments-experiences-of-assessment-practices-in-curriculum-delivery/285752

Navigating Unfamiliar Terrain to J.D./Ph.D.

Christina S. Walker (2024). *Autoethnographic Tactics to Closing the Gap on Educational Attainment* (pp. 35-56).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/navigating-unfamiliar-terrain-to-jdphd/340837

E-Learning Ecosystem in Higher Education Institutions: Trends and Practices

Amrik Singhand Prashant Kumar (2024). *Preparing Students for the Future Educational Paradigm* (pp. 1-18).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/e-learning-ecosystem-in-higher-education-institutions/339114

Did Smart Specialization Approach Universities and Firms?: The Role of Technological Regimes and the Innovative Processes

Joana Costa, Catarina Costaand Aurora A. C. Teixeira (2021). *University-Industry Collaboration Strategies in the Digital Era* (pp. 130-154).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/did-smart-specialization-approach-universities-and-firms/271529

When to Exist Is to Resist: Need a Two-Eyed Philosophy

(2024). *History and Educational Philosophy for Social Justice and Human Rights* (pp. 138-162).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/when-to-exist-is-to-resist/342632