

## **International Comparative Study: Students' Experience of Uncertain Times: Mental Health and Virtual Learning in Class and in Extended Education**

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In reaction to the large impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the education sector worldwide, Gil Noam, Marianne Schüpbach and Sang Hoon Bae decided to launch an international comparative study together with researchers from within our IRN Extended Education.

Due to lockdown measures, billions of students worldwide were out of school and had to learn from home. Millions of teachers had to master distance learning platforms and had to teach online without much preparation. This experience is constantly changing depending on the current developments of the pandemic: in some countries, students re-entered schools before summer vacation (e.g. Germany and South Korea), but in other countries school closures continue until fall (many states in the U.S). In several countries, students are expected to come back to school after the summer break. It's possible that this will change any time. Worldwide, students have to deal with uncertainty whether distance learning or classroom instruction will be taking place at school.

The organizing committee therefore developed a questionnaire and coordinated a call for researchers within our IRN Extended Education. Responding to this call, 12 teams from within our IRN Extended Education are conducting the study in 11 countries: USA, Germany, South Korea, Sweden, Australia, Turkey, Iceland, Russia, Israel, Switzerland, Georgia.

What unites all these participating countries is the "uncertainty" of the current situation. The process of reopening society and schools is fragile, students, teachers, administrators and parents continuously have to adjust to new circumstances like wearing masks, sitting six feet apart, possible new closures due to new cases of infection and older teachers or those with preconditions need to use technology in order to protect themselves from what could be a deadly infection.

The international comparative study aims to answer the following research questions: How do students assess their own social and emotional development and mental health? How do they evaluate the quality of education that they received? What kind of learning experiences did the students have during their school closure and was there any engagement in extended education during that time? What form did such activities take and what did the students miss about extended education activities? All these questions will be answered in retrospective concerning the times before, during and after their school closure. Moreover, we want to analyse similarities and differences across the countries regarding the experiences of the students and the effect of the isolation on their self-perception.