FUNDACIÓ BOFILL

Educació per canviar-ho tot

Let's Open Education!

Shock Mesures and Education Priority Reforms in Face of Covid 19

Let's Open Education!

LET'S OPEN EDUCATION!

SHOCK MESURES AND PRIORITY REFORMS IN THE FACE OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS

The outbreak and spread of the coronavirus in our society is having a series of negative consequences that we are experiencing at present and that will continue to have direct and indirect impacts in the future. Negative consequences in the field of healthcare (infection and death rate due to COVID-19 and physical and mental illnesses and disorders associated with the lockdown period), in the economy and employment (unemployment, lack of work in the short or long term, loss of income, not being paid, poverty affecting housing and energy supplies), in the social sphere (caused by social isolation measures) and also in education.

In the field of education, the coronavirus crisis forced schools to close on 13 March. The last term of the 2019-2020 school year will be completed via remote teaching and it is very probable that children and young people will not step back into classrooms until the start of the 2020-2021 school year. Added together with the summer holidays, this means six months without school.

This fact alone is a major risk for education and its role in creating equal opportunities, with consequences that are being observed in the immediate term and which, if not remedied, will have lasting effects over the coming years. Indeed, absence from classrooms accentuates various social and educational divides.

We are seeing the large digital divide between different families being accentuated. It can be split into two distinct levels: 1) "Objective" inequality, with regards to the availability of computers and connectivity; 2) "Subjective" inequality, in the possibility of enjoying an environment orientated towards how to use these technologies and resources effectively and independently. These inequalities clearly correspond to the socio-economic and cultural status of families.

In terms of education centres, not all of them are in the same situation and not all of them have the same capacity when it comes to meeting the new teaching and supervision challenges imposed when the schools closed, nor the hurdles when it comes to recovery and the resilience that will be required in embarking on the 2020-2021 school year.

However, the education crisis brought about by coronavirus does not boil down to the negative consequences of missed classes alone. We are talking here about a period of school separation experienced at a critical time for families, in which many will have suffered financial, employment and health difficulties. For children and teenagers, the

lack of routine in their learning will very probably be added to by situations of stress, anxiety and frustration. Moreover, it is to be expected that this critical context and situation will drag on once the immediate health alarm has passed.

In summary, the outlook for the coronavirus crisis on education and its role in terms of creating equity and equal opportunities is extremely worrying.

This is why we need to act and to do so through a more courageous and committed educational policy than ever before. In its approach, this policy should combine short-term measures aimed at containing the shock of the crisis, looking to the medium and long term to design the scaffolding of what the recovery of education over the coming years will need to look like.

This document proposes a set of measures in two action plans. In the first block, we list 10 packages of "shock measures" aimed at containing the unequalising consequences of missed classes and the summer holidays. There are a total of 30 measures arranged according to three periods and application goals: a) end of the 2019-2020 school year; b) summer period; c) start and continuation of the 2020-2021 school year.

The second block poses a set of challenges and reforms explaining the current risks and degree of urgency, which we believe is essential to tackle at the same time as the more immediate shock measures. These 10 priority reform areas (20 measures) should be firmly established from the start of the 2020-2021 school year in order to turn the next three-year period into a time of genuine momentum and equity in education.

Our aim is to use this set of proposals and measures to spark an open and informed public debate about the content of this document, its suitability and its feasibility. A debate that is already urgent and must start to reach compromises and cement the educational policy responses we need now and for the future.

SHOCK MEASURES
2019-2020 and 2020-2021
Resilience and containing the crisis

SHOCK MEASURES, 2019-2020 AND 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEARS: RESILIENCE AND CONTAINING THE CRISIS

We need to quickly and courageously decide upon a set of measures that will help curb the unequal effects of missing classes, allowing us to end this school year and start the next one with guarantees of equity and learning opportunities for all.

We propose 10 packages of urgent containment measures for which there can be no delay or migration of efforts and which demand the commitment of not only the administration, but also of local stakeholders and the schools themselves.

Ending the 2019-2020 school year as best we can

1. School linking measures: no pupil left disconnected

We know that there is a digital divide between homes, which means that pupils from less advantaged social and cultural backgrounds find it much more difficult than others to continue their studies remotely. This divide can be split into two levels: 1) 'Material' inequality, in the availability of computers and connectivity; 2) 'Subjective' inequality, in the possibility of enjoying an environment orientated towards how to use these technologies and resources effectively and independently.

Responding to the "digital divide" will first of all mean guaranteeing that all pupils have connectivity to be able to continue the school year remotely. To ensure this connectivity in more vulnerable homes, we will need to:

m1	Reach agreements between public administrations (Department of Education and local councils) and mobile operators to **purchase data packages** to reach families with no connectivity.

m2	Provide **free Wi-Fi in particularly disadvantaged urban areas** through agreements between local organisations and operators.

Secondly, it is urgent that all homes have the minimum number of devices to allow school-age children to continue the school year remotely. This will mean:

m3	Through the Department of Education and the editorial world, working to adjust educational content to the mobile devices available.

m4	**Free distribution of mobile devices** to homes that do not have any or where the devices they have are markedly inadequate.

This distribution will need to be run by the Department of Education and local organisations and will mean having a record of devices per home. Education centres would need to be involved to update this record.

In terms of **responding to the "subjective divide"**, we need to ensure that all pupils receive the educational guidance and attention they need to continue their studies remotely in the best way for them. Ensuring this link between schools and more vulnerable pupils will require:

m5	Schools to have a **reliable record** of the pupils with least access to digital resources or those who show the most difficulty in following tasks online (pupils with specific digital education support needs, (hereinafter, **NESED from its Catalan initials**).

m6	Schools to provide **additional supervision and teaching for pupils with NESEDs**, making use not just of the digital resources available, but also phone calls (to pupils and families) as a support mechanism.

This specific contact between tutors or teaching staff and pupils with NESEDs should include the following components:

➕ **Checking on** the pupil and their family situation: on a personal, emotional and motivational level, in terms of home relationships, infrastructure for study, etc.

➕ **Guidance** and support socially, emotionally and in a regulatory sense: motivation and guidance in maintaining attitudes of resilience and regulation capacity, avoiding controlling or supervisory attitudes.

➕ **Connecting** pupils to other teachers or guidance counsellors.

This additional measure should be part of the tutoring action plans and strategies for school diversity and social inclusion.

2. *Measures to assist families in encouraging their children's education*

Anything that parents can to do encourage and facilitate their children's learning at home can have a huge impact on their education. Talking to them about school matters, creating surroundings and routines for study, projecting positive expectations on school and learning or shared reading have a huge impact on the learning progress of children and teenagers. We know that not all families have the same socio-cultural resources to be able to offer these educational stimuli. At a time when young people are missing classes, the educational role of families becomes even more relevant and the educational inequalities between some pupils and others become more evident.

In order to **guarantee that missing classes does not accentuate the differences between more disadvantaged families**:

m7	Schools need a reliable record of **more socially vulnerable families** (families of pupils with specific educational support needs - (NESE in its Catalan initials) or NESEDs, immigrant families, those who receive welfare benefits, those with experiencing varying degrees of unemployment, single-parent families, etc.).

m8	Education centres need to perform **specific actions for educational linking and assistance** with more vulnerable families through contact persons (tutors or other liaison officers) and maintain regular telephone contact.

This specific contact between professionals and vulnerable families should include the following components:

✚ **Checking on** the family situation: circumstances and relationships within the home, attitudes and daily practices, social and emotional state of members of the household, financial and employment situation, etc.

✚ Social and emotional **support**, and guidance to assist children in their education: establishing trusting relationships, transmitting a sense of security, tips and guidelines for daily organisation, proposing activities and games for educational interaction with children, etc.

✚ **Connecting** the family with other guidance and liaison officers within and outside the school (parent-teacher association, family mediation, social services, etc.).

m9	Through the social and educational services of the municipalities, establish or strengthen **plans for detection, monitoring and contact with vulnerable families**, which include facilitating links with the school; for example, by reinforcing family mediation figures.

3. Measures to ensure assessment for learning without having to repeat a school year

Repeating a school year should always be an exceptional measure, only justifiable based on the results of continuous, progress and personalised assessment. Even so, empirical evidence shows that, in the vast majority of cases, **repeating a school year does not improve** pupils' **educational progress** and may even damage it. In a situation like the current one, with the impossibility of "standardised" assessment practices, the conditions that could justify the application of this measure to any student cannot be met.

With this in mind, we would suggest:

m10	**Automatic graduation** of the school year (stop pupils having to repeat) at primary and secondary level (compulsory and post-compulsory).

In the case of **4th ESO (compulsory secondary education)**, as a general rule, the automatic obtaining of a school certificate will be facilitated. In cases in which the inputs from ordinary assessment (from the first and second terms) and remote assessment (from the third term) so advise, it will be possible to evaluate the passing of an extraordinary test at the beginning of September to obtain this certificate.

This proposal should be **accompanied by a whole series of measures**:

m11	Teaching teams and tutors, should **integrate all the assessment inputs** collected during the first two terms and link them to monitoring and evaluation activities, as well as remote teaching (third term).

All this assessment should give teaching staff access to the best possible knowledge about the personal situation and educational progress of each pupil and thus:

+ **Better guide** the type of attention and educational monitoring that the pupil will require at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year.

+ Provide students and their families with **overall feedback** on their progress, accompanied by truly personalised plans or dossiers for the summer, including entertaining and meaningful educational guides, activities and games.

m12	Preparation by the Department, in collaboration with experts, of a **catalogue of remote tools for skills assessment**, with guides and resources for training feedback, self-evaluation or co-evaluation.

m13	**Curriculum, initial assessment and diversity measures** in the 2020-2021 school year (detailed below), mainly:

➕ Strengthen and extend the initial assessment that most schools conduct with pupils during the first few weeks of the school year, redefining their model.

➕ Conduct a quick review and adaptation of learning content at all levels (primary and secondary)

➕ Increase and adjust the "extra" mechanisms and measures (Personalised school support (SEP in Catalan), intensive improvement programme (PIM in Catalan), extra school support, language reception and support classrooms, specialised tutors...) and "intensive" mechanisms and measures (intensive inclusive school support (SIEI in Catalan), intensive listening and language support (SIAL in Catalan, shared school units (UEC in Catalan)...) within the framework of the inclusive school decree.

➕ Strengthen mentoring and guidance systems within the school and in collaboration with the environment, mainly in disadvantaged schools.

4. *Measures for effective and equitable guidance*

Even under "normal" circumstances, many students lose their way when it comes to their education and end up leaving school, either through resistance to school or disaffection, or as a result of ill-founded choices after compulsory secondary education. The data shows that the most vulnerable students are twice as likely to drop out of school as students who are not disadvantaged.

Educational guidance plans and actions aim to ensure that all students have the knowledge, skills and tools necessary to make the best decisions throughout their education, especially in times of transition between educational stages or in moving from the world of education to the professional world. Evidence shows that good guidance can make a difference.

In a context such as the current one, with the loss of direct contact with the school and all that entails, **the level of disorientation of those students who face important decisions in their educational choices may increase**. Especially among students from backgrounds with fewer social and cultural resources to give them effective guidance.

It may therefore become necessary to:

m14	**Ensure that guidance is offered (remote and telephone)** that tutors, teaching coordinators and school liaison officers are able to do with pupils completing **school years prior to major educational transitions** (sixth year of primary school, fourth year of compulsory secondary education, completion of secondary education).

This task will need to bring together the aforementioned set of evaluation inputs and be based on an individual guidance plan.

m15	Make a special effort to ensure that guidance reaches less advantaged pupils and families, defining **clear contact persons** within schools and using all available communication channels.

Enrich summer educational opportunities

5. Measures for a quality educational summer for all: Summer Schools

We know that getting out of the routine of learning for children and teenagers during the summer (known as summer loss) mainly affects more vulnerable groups. Disconnected from school, the children of families with a lot of financial and socio-cultural capital do not stop receiving cognitive stimuli and opportunities for educational enrichment within their domestic and social lives, which families with comparatively less capital find it harder to offer.

The unequal effects of the summer now need to be added to those caused by schools closing during the school year as well as the social isolation. In a context in which pupils may spend up to six months out of the classroom, the social, cultural and digital divide between families will be bigger than ever before. We need to **compensate for the effects of this divide by creating a quality "educational summer" for all**.

Therefore, we propose:

m16	**Guaranteeing an offer of summer programmes across the region, extending over the months of June (end of the month), July and throughout the weeks before the start of the 2020-2021 school year.**

This offer should allow for a **daily programme of activities, with a full-time option** (morning and afternoon sessions) as required.

The development of summer programmes will need to be adapted to the social characteristics of each neighbourhood or municipality, as well as the network of programmes of social and educational attention in place in each case. In some contexts, summer programmes will involve reinforcing the *Casals d'Estiu* (summer camps) already offered. In other circumstances, it will involve formulating a new strategy to make the summer educational offer more consistent and complete.

The summer programmes initiative should be promoted within the framework of agreements on co-responsibility and co-funding between the Department of Education and local organisations.

m17	Particularly in the first few weeks of summer, there will need to be various programming scenarios adjusted to possible **post-lockdown measures**, which will affect the working opportunities of larger or smaller groups of people in certain spaces.

We therefore need to:

✚ Prioritise activities in **small groups**, which can be flexible and which are based on the proposed learning targets and leisure activities.

✚ Provide a **large number of centres, facilities** and spaces to deliver activities. This would entail:

a) Opening public and private primary and secondary schools during the summer holidays. This action will call for agreements to be established between school management, councils and the corresponding owners.

b) Councils will need to assign municipal spaces and resources for activities (libraries, civic centres, sports or cultural spaces, etc.).

m18	Summer programmes will be open to the entire compulsory school-age population, but the **participation of children and teenagers from more vulnerable families and backgrounds** will be prioritised through:

✚ **Grants covering 100%** of the cost of activities for the most disadvantaged families and subsidies to cover transport costs, where necessary. The receipt of these grants and subsidies would be conditional on passing a rapid means test.

✚ **Additional services**. For the full-time option, summer programmes will offer a breakfast and lunch service, which would be free for more vulnerable families.

✚ For other families, the application of a social charging system for paying for additional services could be considered.

✚ **Informative and liaison actions** with more vulnerable families conducted within the framework of school guidance plans, as well as through municipal social services.

m19 Summer programmes should combine **three activity types**, adaptable to the circumstances and to the children and teenagers present:

➕ **Education support activities**. To work on instrumental learning, based on workshops and experiential and collaborative activities, based in centres of interests and the use of digital resources. All with clear learning outcomes, which include independence and regulation skills.

➕ **Social and emotional support activities**. Individual or small-group tutoring spaces aimed at working on aspects such as uncertainty, fear, sadness, anger, interpersonal relationships with peers and adults, etc. In this case, it will be important for each participant to establish a **guidance figure** or **mentor** who acts as their tutor and liaison officer through the participation period.

➕ **Cultural and leisure activities**. Discovering the environment, sports, free play and spaces for families and community leaders to participate.

m20 In terms of the **professionals involved**, the programming and running of the various summer programme activities should include the participation of, for example:

➕ Social educators, psychologists, social integration officers or cultural engagement officers, leisure instructors or university students.

➕ Volunteer teachers, who can be recognised for their certifiable merits.

m21 Programme and participant **evaluation**:

➕ **Participant evaluation**. A system will need to be established that allows the learning and skills gained through programme participation to be evaluated, providing meaningful feedback to participants and their families. This evaluation should include validated learning assessment tools (questionnaires, rubrics, co-assessment, etc.) and ideally form part of a personal portfolio that can be transferred to tutor teams in schools, so that pupils' return to school can be better planned.

➕ **Programme evaluation**. A programme evaluation plan will need to be designed, which will account for its implementation in each region and its impact on the learning and trajectories of participants in the short and medium term.

Return to school:
for a 2020-2021 school year with guarantees of equity

To a large extent, how equitable the start of the 2020-2021 school year is (students starting out more or less unequally in terms of learning) will depend on the quality educational opportunities offered and taken advantage of during the summer.

We must work to design a return to school that is as enjoyable as possible for all pupils and at the same time provides the mechanisms and supports that will be needed to redress the educational inequalities that have accumulated over the course of six months' absence from classes. The measures proposed in this block point to general actions (across all pupils) and focused actions (more vulnerable pupils and backgrounds), which should be guaranteed from the beginning to the end of the school year. A large part of these measures, however, should remain in place beyond the 2020-2021 school year.

6.   Measures to facilitate the return to school: reception and meeting up again

We should expect that the coronavirus crisis, the social emergency it generates (with measures to close schools, lockdown and gradual post-lockdown measures) and its health, economic and social consequences, will all have a significant psychological and emotional impact on children and teenagers. After the abrupt end to the school year and the six months away from classrooms and normal contact with teachers and tutors, resources and measures will need to be brought in to help ease a calm and genuine welcome back to school, allowing **gradual adaptation of pupils to the school environment, their teachers and classmates, taking care at all times to ensure their social and emotional well-being**.

Teaching staff, after several months of urgently altering and rethinking teaching strategies and dynamics, will also need time and resources to adapt to the normal school context.

Finally, for families, it will be a process of reconnecting with an institution and teaching figures with whom they have long since lost direct contact. Some of these families will have more difficulty than others in providing effective educational support for their children. At the same time, many of them will have experienced first-hand or will be experiencing at the beginning of the school year the consequences of the crisis (financial difficulties, unemployment, illness, etc.). A bond of trust between them and the institution in charge of their children's education will need to be rebuilt.

What will be needed here is:

m22	Each school to have a **post-crisis reception plan** covering measures and mechanisms aimed at facilitating the return to school of pupils, teachers and families.

In collaboration with experts, the Department of Education should design the main lines and core resources of these plans (e.g. strengthening of the counselling teams (EAPs in Catalan), which should then be adapted by schools according to their needs and the specific school context.

Generally, post-crisis reception plans should include:

a) **For students** (especially during the first few weeks):

➕ An increase in tutoring spaces, both in small groups and individually (enhancing interventions such as the *Escolta'm* [Listen to Me] programme).

➕ Social, emotional and behavioural work spaces, which include activities such as modelling, role-playing, social situation analysis, relaxation and introspection.

➕ Where the crisis has had or is having a greater emotional impact, the availability of contact spaces with specialist professionals outside schools.

b) **For teachers** (especially during the first few weeks):

➕ An increase in spaces dedicated to contact and shared reflection between teaching staff. These spaces should generate team security and cohesion to be built, encouraging processes of reflective practice.

➕ Spaces for social and emotional work and guidance, with the collaboration of specialist professionals from within or outside the school.

c) **For families** (especially during the first few weeks):

➕ With the participation of the Parent-teacher Associations, the establishment of spaces for contact and shared reflection between families, with the aim of generating security and school bonding.

➕ Contact and reception actions by tutors, with the aim of establishing a bond of trust with the school and the schooling of children.

➕ These actions will need to be intensified in the case of the families who need it most.

7. Initial evaluation measures and revising the curriculum

From the very beginning and in a context of a standardised pedagogical relationship, it will be necessary to update and validate the evaluations and feedback that each student obtained during the previous school year and, potentially, in the Summer School. Finding out **the level of learning the students have when starting the new school year and their emotional state and level of motivation** will also be essential following the crisis.

In this regard, it will be necessary to:

m23	**Strengthen and expand the initial evaluations** that most schools give their students during the first few weeks of the year, redefining their model.

These evaluations will need to be authentic, comprehensive and include qualitative components that enable the students' emotional state to be evaluated.

The model for these initial evaluations will need to be designed by a committee of professionals and experts in the field of education, in the framework of a process led and validated by the Department of Education.

At the same time, we know that delivering the curriculum based on skills, prioritising know-how (abilities, skills in various areas of knowledge and in the socio-emotional field) above memory-based teaching and closed knowledge, is still limited and unequal between schools and educational stages. This focus will now be more essential than ever, given that lots of the curricular content planned for the previous school year could not be taught and that **it is skills-based work that will enable abilities to be recovered and opportunities to be made equal**.

Therefore, we propose:

m24	Carrying out a **rapid review of the learning content** of all school years, based on dual criteria:

✚ Making the learning content requirement for all years more flexible, reviewing how learning is prioritised and reducing the syllabus where necessary.

✚ Applying a logic based on essential skills and knowledge, designed in terms of the cycle or stage.

This urgent curricular review should be led by the Department of Education and must include input from a committee of professionals and experts in the field of education.

8. Measures to guarantee that education is free

Universal and obligatory education being free of charge has traditionally been a carefully watched topic. In addition to the school fees charged to families by *centres concertats* (private schools that receive at least some public funding), we must highlight that there are other services and activities that are not free. In addition to basic schooling, these could become high-quality educational resources for all students: additional activities, trips and camps, mobile devices, etc. This situation applies both to public schools as well as the *centres concertats*.

Education that aims to provide quality and equality cannot allow the maintenance of economic barriers to educational opportunities and resources, which is even more true after the damage that these months without classes may have caused for students from families with less economic and cultural capital.

For this reason, it is necessary to:

m25	In general, **guarantee that all additional activities are free**, as well as the work materials for obligatory education at public schools and *centres concertats*.

m26	In the case of **schools with the most complex needs** and the most disadvantaged students, this **free status must be extended to**:

➕ The school's **programme of extra-curricular activities** organised in the local area, that may take place in the context of personalised education plans and distributed learning.

➕ **Food and transport services**, if necessary.

9. Measures for enhancing prioritisation

As we know that the long period without school will have had especially negative consequences on the learning process of students from the most vulnerable families and backgrounds, it will be necessary to give an **immediate response to the intensive support needs** of these groups.

In this regard, we propose:

| m27 | For the 2020-2021 school year, designing a real **supplementary resource plan for the schools with the most complex needs**, which includes: |

➕ A significant increase in the allocation of teaching staff, guaranteeing the option of working in flexible and smaller groups.

➕ A significant increase in non-teaching staff (social integration technicians, social educators, psychologists, mediators etc.), enabling work on welcoming and monitoring students and families who require more intensive social and emotional support.

➕ Making the allocation of digital resources at the school sufficient and guaranteeing the availability of mobile devices for all students.

➕ Guaranteeing all the support from the Decree on inclusive education that the school considers necessary, making use of its independence and in relation to local entities: "additional" support (SEP, PIM, extra school support, welcome classes and linguistic support classes, specialised tutors etc.) and "intensive" support (SIEL , SIAL, UECs etc.)

The Department of Education should design the general guidelines and the basic resources of these emergency plans (staff allocation, inclusive school support, digital resources), which will need to be specified based on the schools' needs. The Department will be mainly responsible for funding the plans, with a contribution from local authorities in the form of non-teaching staff allocation.

| m28 | Enhance the supplementary activities for disadvantaged students in all schools, in the context of the **additional and intensive measures of the Decree on inclusive education**. |

| m29 | Establish agreements between schools, local governments and local organisations that implement **personalised education plans with regard to disadvantaged neighbourhoods and students**. |

This means creating quality education circuits that connect learning within and outside school and guaranteeing that these reach the students that need them most. The Local Educational Plans may provide interesting models in this regard.

Local authorities will be mainly responsible for funding these plans.

10. Measures against academic alienation: focus on the fight against absenteeism

School absenteeism has direct negative consequences on the educational and social opportunities of children and adolescents. Students who are often absent have a much higher probability than those who attend school of obtaining worse academic results and dropping out of education. Ultimately, absenteeism is associated with engaging in risky or criminal behaviour and with higher rates of unemployment. As we also know, absenteeism mainly affects students from socially underprivileged backgrounds.

It must be taken into account that **the long period of absence from classes will probably accentuate a feeling of academic disconnect in some young people** that may lead them to not restart the academic process after summer or to do so in an intermittent manner with episodes of absenteeism. We must prevent this scenario and work to detect at-risk cases, prevent them and act immediately when these episodes occur, using measures such as:

m30	Strengthening and implementing **local plans for preventing and combating absenteeism**.

Led by local governments, these plans must include efficient circuits for identifying and treating at-risk cases, with support networks with the participation of schools (mentors and counsellors), inspection and municipal services (education, social services, youth, economic promotion, health etc.).

CHALLENGES AND PRIORITY REFORMS

2020/2021 – 2022/2023

Momentum and equality in education

CHALLENGES AND PRIORITY REFORMS 2020/2021 - 2022/2023: MOMENTUM AND EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

The challenges and types of emergencies that the COVID-19 crisis has caused in the field of education, as well as the type of immediate response that these situations demand, are linked very directly to the most serious challenges and areas for reform of our educational system.

We are referring to areas for reform that affect education's role regarding equal opportunities in the short and medium term and that, therefore, must be tackled in parallel with the emergency measures that we are now implementing to contain the most immediate risks and emergencies, making use of what we learn from the responses that we are now giving to the educational crisis resulting from the coronavirus.

We are referring to 10 priority reform areas, which must take place from the outset of the 2020-2021 academic year in order to make the next three years a period of genuine momentum and equality in education.

1. *Digital culture in education*

The COVID-19 crisis has uncovered the inequality as regards the penetration of digital practice and culture among the different schools and, within each school, among the teachers themselves. This circumstance has been shown through the unequal response that, especially during the first few weeks after classes were closed, schools gave when reprogramming the school year using remote methods.

Speaking of the digitalisation of education means not only introducing the "digital act" into the design and application of the content, teaching methodologies and evaluation (during teaching hours and as a tool for monitoring students), but also in the manner in which schools relate to each other, with the educational community (especially families) and with the government.

From this point of view, a **digitalisation policy that creates capabilities** (mainly between teachers and students) is necessary, as well as **resources** (digital infrastructure at the schools), **educational materials and content** (adapted to the new devices; offering programs such as "Mobil.edu") and **models** to make use of digital technologies both in the context of the classroom as well as in personalisation and distributed learning.

Two measures that stand out from this policy would be:

m1	Agreements between Education Faculties and the Education Science Institutes (ICE in its Catalan initials) at universities, and the Department of Education on including digital technologies as a basic and key content of recognised **initial training** programmes and as a key part of the **professional development** of teaching staff (ongoing training and accreditations of teaching merit).

m2	Regarding the Department of Education, funding and defining the **criteria for the technological needs of schools**, to avoid inequality among schools and students when accessing these resources.

This involves working with the technology sector to meet these needs, for example, in terms of interoperability and updates.

2. Teacher training in the new ecology of learning and personalisation

Studies show that, as well as the infrastructures, materials, curriculum and student-teacher ratio, the academic factor with the most impact on students' educational opportunities is the quality of the teacher. Teaching quality depends on the initial training of teachers (university degree and masters studies), the practical training of new teachers when initially joining a school (known as the teaching induction) and their ongoing training.

At the same time, we know that **educational opportunities depend on the interconnection between learning contexts which are constantly changing**. This implies new challenges for the act of teaching, which affect both the definition of their role as well as their skills in a context of the essential personalisation of learning. It is necessary to qualify teachers in these new roles and skills so that their activity can be relevant and have a significant and sustained educational impact even in long periods of absence from class.

Therefore, we propose:

m3	During the 2020-2021 school year, opening a process of **debate on teacher training** with the participation of the Education Faculties and the ICEs of the Catalan universities, as well as the Department of Education, which results in:

+ A proposal for defining new teacher roles and skills in a context of personalisation of learning.

✚ A proposal for activities and content to qualify them in these new roles and skills in the initial training programmes, induction programmes and ongoing training of teaching staff.

3. Review and strengthen schools' mentoring and counselling role

The long period of absence from classes during the academic year has demonstrated the need for the students to have clear mentors and counsellors. These are reference points who offer students and their families a guide and personalised academic support, with regular monitoring of the progress of each student. We know that, under "normal" circumstances, these counselling and advice roles are crucial for students' academic progress and well-being. We also know that these tasks increase the academic opportunities of the most vulnerable students and result in the reduction of phenomena such as absenteeism and dropping out of education.

Therefore, it is necessary to review the figures and roles of mentoring and counselling activities within schools, strengthening them at all educational stages and **emphasising the role that mentors and counsellors must play in the students' personalised education as a means of support**. More specifically:

With regards the **mentoring** role:

m4	**Increasing the hours** assigned to the training, preparation and implementation of **mentoring activities** by mentors, in their range of applications: mentoring in groups, small groups and with individuals; with deliberative and behavioural methodologies; with the support of external agents; mentoring sessions with families, etc.

With regards the **counselling** role:

m5	Among the various agents and administrations involved in the counselling process (Department of Education, schools, local councils and local entities), agree on a **general template that defines the powers**, dedicated hours and skills of the various figures of professional and academic counselling, within and outside schools.

Based on this model, **increase the allocation of counsellors** in schools, especially in schools with the most complex needs.

4. *Revising the curriculum, learning and skills-based evaluation*

The review of the content of obligatory and post-obligatory secondary education continues to be a relevant topic. We know that the skills-based curriculum is, in practice, being applied unequally among schools and educational stages. The fact that part of the curricular content scheduled for the 2019-2020 school year could not be taught means that an urgent readaptation of the curriculum must be carried out at practically all levels for the 2020-2021 school year. We should make use of this circumstance to encourage a readaptation of the curriculum that is more concerned with the acquisition of skills rather than the "logic of the syllabus".

Taking advantage of the current curricular redefinition, we propose the updating of a **more extensive curricular debate, whose criteria covers the prioritisation of skills and basic and essential knowledge** at the various educational stages (offloading a large part of the current curricula) and foreseeing appropriate formulas for evaluating this learning.

m6	During the 2020-2021 school year, begin a **debate process that results in an updated curricular proposal** in terms of skills, those that are "basic and essential" and personalisation.

This process must be led by the Department of Education and include a committee of professionals and experts on education. In this debate, projects that are already in progress must play a key role, such as the *Xarxes de competències bàsiques* (basic skills networks) or the *Xarxes per al canvi* (networks for change) projects.

At the same time, because we know that changes to evaluation are a catalyst for changes in educational content, it will be necessary for this curricular debate to also include reflections on real skills-based assessment methods. Leading to:

m7	The creation, by experts, of a **catalogue and protocol for using assessment tools** based on skills, which includes methodologies such as: self-evaluation and co-evaluation rubrics, meta-evaluation, training feedback and democratic evaluation.

This catalogue should have the support and validation of the Department of Education.

5. A policy for schools with complex needs

Looking after schools that are highly vulnerable is a basic challenge in education policy in order to remedy the effects of social inequality and inequality in terms of learning conditions. In Catalonia we do not have an overall strategy or template for caring for disadvantaged schools, rather we have actions and one-off plans with insufficient resources. **Considering that it is the students, schools and environments that are most vulnerable that will have been the most affected by the economic, social and educational crisis caused by COVID-19, this policy is now more necessary than ever**.

Among other actions, a policy with these characteristics should include measures such as:

m8	The study and implementation by the Department of Education of the **formula-based funding** in the allocation of human and material resources to schools.

In this way, the resources are allocated gradually based on the criteria of needs and the stigmatisation of high complexity is thereby avoided.

m9	Creation of **priority action areas**, as a basic unit in managing the education and human resources (teaching staff and specialists) and in the specification of educational services and programmes in disadvantaged areas.

This would be managed by a co-responsibility body formed by representatives from schools, Parent-teacher Associations, students, education administrations of the local area and autonomous community and with regional representatives.

6. A policy to combat academic segregation

We know that **a segregated school network represents a prominent problem for educational equality**, at the same time as it impedes the overall results of the system. We know that the level of segregation in many municipalities is high, both between different school areas and within each area. The Pact Against Student Segregation promoted by the *Síndic de Greuges* (Catalan Ombudsman), in collaboration with the Department of Education and signed by local governments and members of the educational community (2019), provides a good framework for progressing towards a real policy combating school segregation. Among other measures, the following must be implemented:

| m10 | With regards the education administration, guaranteeing the removal of any economic barriers to the choice of school. |

This involves ensuring that **all educational activities are free** at all public schools and *centres concertats*.

| m11 | Putting the **planning criteria** that are necessary into practice in order to progress towards balanced schooling (the majority of which are covered by the 2020 Decree on student admission). |

For example, when defining the NESE student cases and when establishing minimum and maximum fees for these students in schools and catchment areas.

| m12 | **On a local level**, establishing and applying the tools and mechanisms that could contain segregation processes: |

For example: units for detecting NESE students, local planning boards, Municipal Education Offices (OMEs in Catalan), adjusting reserves for NESE students, etc.

7. Policies for combating the level of students leaving the educational system

After a decade of constant decrease, in the last few years we can see an increase in the rate of those leaving education early: 19% in 2019, among one of the highest in the European Union (with an average of 10.2%). In addition, we know that the rate of students leaving the educational system doubles in the case of foreign young people and children from families with a low level of education.

It is completely plausible that the situation that we are left with due to COVID-19 will lead to new increases in the drop-out rate, especially among the most vulnerable groups. On one hand, we can predict that in the short and medium term there will be an increase in resorting to the informal economy for many families who will have lost jobs and income, and that this situation creates a pull effect for young people with a low level of qualifications and a need for income. On the other hand, the long period of absence from classes will probably encourage a feeling of academic disconnect in many young people that may result in episodes of absenteeism which, in turn, may increase the likelihood of leaving education early in the short or medium term.

Overall, it is vital to plan measures that limit the drop-out rate during the next few school years as much as possible. These measures may be sorted into three action mechanisms:

m13	Study and implement a system of **"salary grants" for young people between 16 and 18 years old** from disadvantaged backgrounds in order to keep them in the education system, with the aim of covering the direct and indirect costs of schooling, as well as compensating for the cost of opportunities by continuing to study.

These grants would have to be co-funded by the Department of Education and the local authorities.

m14	**Enhancing additional activities during ESO (compulsory secondary education)** for disadvantaged students or those at risk of dropping out in all schools, in the context of the additional and intensive measures of the Decree on inclusive education, strengthening the role of **counsellors and mentors** and their personalised support role.

m15	Creating or strengthening **local plans for preventing and combating students leaving school early**.

Led by local councils, these plans must include efficient circuits for identifying and treating at-risk cases, in support networks with the participation of schools (mentors and counsellors), and EAPs (advice and psycho-pedagogical counselling teams), municipal services as well as the area's production network.

8. Real policies for family support for schooling

The COVID-19 crisis, the periods of school closures and lockdowns have made it obvious that not all families have the same material and cultural resources to be able to provide their children with an environment full of educational opportunities.

Once the remote closure of the previous school year has been overcome, the summer period and start of the new school year will continue to be crucial for designing measures for **empowering families, particularly those that are most disadvantaged, in their role of supporting their children's education**. These measures are taking place to give confidence and guide the involvement of parents in education at home, as well as to encourage their participation in school life.

The measures that should be prioritised with this dual objective are as follows:

m16	Provide schools with a **specific action plan for educational support and connection for the most vulnerable families** through reference figures (mentors or other connecting figures) along with continuous contact by telephone.

m17	Regarding the municipalities' social and educational services, establishing or strengthening plans for detecting, monitoring and contacting vulnerable families, including providing a link to the school, for example using the **reinforcement of municipal family mediation figures**.

m18	With regards to the Department of Education and co-funded by local councils, opening a series of **special subsidies for Parent-teacher Associations at schools in vulnerable settings** that work based on an inclusive logic.

9. *360º (365 day) educational policies and environments which are equitable and of a high-quality*

Learning and educational opportunities for children and adolescents play an increasingly greater role in the interconnection between multiple learning contexts, within and outside school. This statement was valid in circumstances before the COVID-19 crisis, but it acquires special meaning in a context of school closures, lockdown and progressive relaxation of restrictions during the school holidays.

This fact translates into the need to provide educational opportunities outside school, encouraging all children and adolescents, regardless of their economic and social situation, to be able to **access a wide range of enriching educational experiences** and ones that they enjoy, creating consistent learning trajectories.

Based on this objective, it is necessary to:

m19	Establish local agreements between different local councils, schools and local entities to implement a stable range of **personalised education plans** in neighbourhoods and towns, guaranteeing the quality of the activities included in these plans and the reason for their inclusion.

This refers to creating **accreditable and high-quality educational circuits** that connect learning within and outside school. The Local Educational Plans may provide interesting models in this regard.

The plans should include all those mechanisms that incentivise participation from children and adolescents from families and backgrounds that are less well-off, mainly:

➕ **Grants and aids** which cover all the direct and indirect costs of participation (local funding).

➕ **Focused informative action** by municipal services and counsellors at schools.

10. Evidence-based educational policies and teaching practices

Nowadays, in Catalonia there is a clear gap between the educational system and schools on the one hand and, on the other, the world of research and evidence-based knowledge. The administrations and schools encourage numerous programmes to resolve educational challenges, but they do not do so by taking into account the evidence available on their impact. At the same time, these are programmes that are rarely evaluated in a systematic and rigorous manner. Alternatively, the majority of the research into education is indifferent to the educational world's need for knowledge. This gap entails a loss of opportunities for improving and modernising the system and educational policies.

We know that educational practices and policies that take into account research-based knowledge increase their chances of success, and because we are in a post-crisis context where we need to maximise those chances more than ever; it is necessary to progress towards designing and establishing an **integrated system of educational R&D with the participation of the government, education professionals, universities and organisations which mobilise knowledge**.

An initial measure to take on this path would be:

m20	Creating a **White Paper on the use of research and scientific evidence in the decision-making process regarding education policy**.

This document should allow the creation of a model for **evidence-based educational policies**, identifying procedures, involved parties and elements of conditionality and transparency, and at the same time generating the **conditions that allow it to be evaluated** in the short and medium term.

Its creation would be the responsibility of a committee including representatives from the administrations involved and professionals and experts in the field of education, and it would need to have the ultimate support of the country's education and research community.