Transformative Education for a lockdown generation

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We could assume that youth are less vulnerable to the pandemic than the elderly. Yet, are the youth therefore more resilient to its social and economic consequences?
Data from the last recession would imply differently. The economic downturn triggered in 2008 revealed an additional vulnerability of young people with severe social effects in addition to economic costs.
It is because of the prolonged crisis that many young people today will get to their 40s without knowing anything but job insecurity and postponing major life decisions until economic conditions improve. Is history going to repeat itself?
One study on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on youth, conducted by the International Labor Organization, found that the pandemic has caused one in six young people to lose their jobs, as well as a 23 percent average reduction in working hours for anyone still working.

When understanding the combination of large informal economies and high level of youth populations in the region, we notice that the effects of prolonged youth unemployment may be particularly "damaging and long-term".
As United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres remarked recently, a second consecutive "lost generation of youth" could "fuel declining confidence in political establishments and institutions." In such conditions "it is all too easy for extremist groups to exploit the anger and despair," he stated.
Does this latest "lock-down generation" lead to an increased risk of global upheavals and violent extremism? The Arab Spring uprisings in 2011 were motivated by rising unemployment levels among large and well-educated youth populations, coupled with high levels of political and social alienation. Across the Middle East, the repercussions continue to ripple, with recent mass demonstrations in Lebanon hitting their height.
In particular, lack of action to protect disadvantaged young people may be politically, economically and socially disastrous.
COVID-19 came just at a time where Lebanon is facing an unparalleled socio-economic and political crisis. Like the rest of the globe, the disease outbreak has pressured the government to trigger lockdown measures, which exacerbated the already devastating socio-economic situation of Lebanese people.

This reality created new risks and challenges of engagement in violent extremism. According to the UN report on COVID-19 impact on terrorism, the short-term risks include the increased risk of online radicalization due to individuals spending more time online as a "captive audience." On the mid-term, these risks range from terrorists leveraging an increased susceptibility to radicalization and inciting a rise in anti-government attitudes. In a moment when trust is lost between citizens and government, inciting anti-government narratives could potentially provoke the use of violence in Lebanon.
The new "normal" generated by the crisis, youth at home with far more time to spend online where they get exposed to challenges incited by misinformation and disinformation, hate speech exacerbated by a desperate socio-economic circumstance that increased the risk of recruitment by violent extremists.
In such a scenario, can Transformative Education serve as a "soft-power" solution to fight radicalization and extremism that can lead to violence?

COVID-19 is evolutionary in terms of education, which does not have to be worse off. As per the Brookings Institution, the disease outbreak reveals several innovative new educational methods and styles of learning to determine a road map of how education will recover better than ever from this global recession as millions of students return to school.
Transformative education is considered as one of those teaching experiences that promote deep engagement and reflection on the way students perceive the world, culminating in significant developments in how they see and recognize themselves and their role in the world.
Education has been seen historically as a significant equalizer of society, providing students of the less fortunate families with the resources they need to gain higher levels of financial stability and achievement in their respective careers.
Unfortunately, however, education might also tend to perpetuate socio-economic inequalities almost as well as to minimize them. This really is far too apparent in recent times, as parents and schools with the most financial and technical capital are looking to be the readiest for the coronavirus pandemic while others are lagging behind.
The TE theory was developed in the late 1970s by sociologist Jack Mezirow, with the goal of promoting change within an individual's thoughts and behavior, with the intention of promoting "a more critical worldview as we seek ways to better understand our world." As per Mezirow, the TE is founded on the notion that "personal experience is a critical component in a learning process intended to bring about transformation". The goal of TE is to inspire learners to see the social environment critically via an ethical lens, in order to question and alter the current system as change agents. The concept has developed over the last five decades, along with its ability to act as a tool for anti-and de-radicalization processes aimed at mitigating the challenges of violent extremism.

A "whole society'" strategy to responding to the pandemic through investment in young adults and youth-driven programs is a way to create stable and inclusive communities. Coordinated global action could leverage the energies and dreams of the "lock-down generation" to drive the world towards a more peaceful and inclusive future.

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