Generation Covid and the impact of lockdown

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Introduction

This article explores the different groups of school-aged students in England whose educational provision has been affected by the pandemic of 2020 and 2021. I look at who they are and the impact that lockdown educational arrangements might have upon subgroups within the cohort. I also consider the research implications arising from the need to evaluate these students' progress through the education system and beyond.

Our organisation is concerned with education in a wide sense. We have provided assessments for over 150 years, but over the past quarter-century this has expanded to include curricula and educational support. Our organisational mission is to unlock the power of education for every student. In line with that mission, we are working to evaluate and minimise the effects of the disruption from the pandemic upon the users of our products and services. This article seeks to provide additional insight into that process by providing a factual account of the school-aged year groups in England who are affected by the disruptions caused by COVID-19. It takes a step back from the very detailed analyses and debates that are ongoing in every educational sector about the details of arrangements and assessments in order to record, for posterity, an overview of the student groups who are affected.

Background

COVID-19 was declared a pandemic on 11 March 2020 (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). From an educational perspective, in England, the first point at which students' lives began to change was with the onset of lockdown[1] on 20 March 2020, when schools were closed to all pupils except key workers' children and those deemed vulnerable[2] (Kim & Asbury, 2020) as a means of reducing the spread of the virus (Viner et al., 2020). At this point, learning moved online with immediate effect, in all circumstances where it possibly could. Primary school students, parents and carers carried out home-schooling, using activities provided by the school. Both caregivers and schools supplemented these activities with

1 Lockdown is the term used widely to refer to the closure of non-essential retail services and entertainment/leisure events and venues which was combined with instructions to the public to stay at home whenever possible. At various points in time, there were also restrictions on distance that might be travelled, activities which could be undertaken out of doors and fines for breaching these restrictions. At times when full national lockdown was not in place, a tier system was also used, which allowed different freedom of movement in geographical regions according to the proportion of the population infected.

2 The definition of vulnerable students includes those assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children and young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan, or who are a looked-after child, or who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan, or who have been identified as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services). For further examples, see GOV.UK (2021a).

material provided via television or online sources. Secondary school-aged students were largely taught online by their school teachers, and studied independently. By 30 April 2020, the World Bank (The World Bank, 2020) reported that 674,868,288 students were in countries with fully closed schools and a further 93,602,500 in countries with partially closed schools. England fell under the latter category.

English schools take a long summer break from the middle of July to the beginning of September. In 2020, this coincided with the gradual easing of lockdown with the result that September 2020 saw most students returning to schools, albeit under arrangements which restricted unnecessary mixing, distanced pupils and mandated mask-wearing in some situations. Disruption still prevailed, with considerable numbers of students self-isolating[3] at any given time, and, in some cases, 50 per cent of lessons continuing to be delivered online in order to keep year group bubbles[4] separate.

The emergence of a new, more infectious variant of the coronavirus in late 2020 meant that the Government's aim to keep schools open carried too much risk. After a Christmas break that many students will have found disturbingly unfamiliar and stressful, a second lockdown shut schools on 5 January 2021, after one day back. Alongside the announcement of this was the notice that the examination session of summer 2021 was cancelled.[5]

Intention and limits of this article

I have restricted the scope of this article to England. The discussion points raised will certainly apply to students in other parts of the UK nations, and to those in other countries, but everyone's context is different and it is beyond the scope of this piece to include examples from other jurisdictions.

I have also limited my discussion to the effects of the events of March 2020 to July 2021. There seems good reason to do so. As this piece is being written, a vaccine is being rolled out and there is general optimism that disruptions from lockdowns or other government interventions will be minimal by the school year which begins in September 2021. So, although all current school year groups feature in the tables, I am assuming that the level of actual disruption in schools seen in the two academic years from September 2019

3 Self-isolation is the mandatory restriction of a person to their home if they have the illness or have been in close contact with someone who has it.

4 Bubbles refer to a defined cluster of people who are grouped together and who remain separate from others. In a domestic setting, a bubble could consist of more than one household, if certain criteria were met. In schools, this means groups of students who are separated (by space or over time) even when sharing the same facilities. For example, in a sixth form consisting of groups, each year group could be made into a separate bubble and would attend college premises on alternate weeks to minimise contact between the two groups. The principal rule which applies to bubbles is that if one person in the bubble contracts COVID-19, the whole bubble has to self-isolate.

5 For absolute clarity and accuracy, it is a point of record that the Government announcement (Johnson, 2021) stated that "it is not possible or fair for all exams to go ahead". The interpretation of the phrase depends upon whether "all exams" is taken to mean "any exams" or just "some exams". The media interpretation, shared widely and immediately, was that the intended meaning was no exams would go ahead.

to July 2021 will have abated by the beginning of the school year in September 2021. If history proves me wrong, which I sincerely hope it does not, the reader may be able to deduce the effects upon successive cohorts, depending upon where they have progressed in the system.

In this article, for simplicity, I use the terminology of "schools" to refer to places of education up to the age of 18, "assessment" to refer to forms of formal qualification or certification and "students" to refer to the learner population. Further explanation of the terms can be found in the endnote.[i]

Affected students in England by year group

Table 1 shows the school year groups in England,[6] all of which will be affected, to a greater or lesser extent, by the events of 2020 and 2021. The table shows their birth year and the year group they belonged to in March 2020, the latter expressed using the English education convention of "Y" to denote "year" followed by the number of the school year, which ranges from "-1" denoting the year prior to "R" (reception year, effectively year 0 in the school system) to 13 (the second and final year of sixth form for many students following a traditional academic route).

Table 1 also indicates particular features of concern relevant to that year group and whether key educational assessments were due within the year. For brevity in the discussions which follow, GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education), IGCSE (International General Certificate of Secondary Education) and vocational assessments taken at the end of Y11 are described as 16+ assessments; A Level, IB and vocational assessments taken at the end of Y13 are described as 18+ assessments—those being the typical age at which they are sat.

Table 1 also captures the broad extent of the non-compulsory curricular events that were likely to have been curtailed. The latter are important because many students will have suffered the loss of a great many peripheral activities that would normally have been valuable additions to their first or early-career curriculum vitae. Considering that many of the part-time and casual employment opportunities for the 15–18 age group are in the hospitality and retail industries, which have been especially hard-hit by lockdown, it becomes clear that Further and Higher Educational Institutions and employers will need to alter their expectations of what experiences they will see in applications for many years to come. Older students in this table will be under-experienced in many parts of their lives, not just their educational progress. There is also a possibility that some of the younger students will miss opportunities for learning and being assessed in skills such as cycling proficiency and swimming, which may result in an increase in accidents among this cohort in years to come.

What we see from Table 1 is that, in general, some year groups are likely to be more affected than others. Broadly speaking, it is those students who are approaching the end of compulsory education or those at transition points whose assessments and onward trajectory are most likely to be affected. However, it is also clear that students across

6 Compulsory education only. Excluding university students and pre-school provision earlier than the year immediately before compulsory primary attendance.

all year groups will face issues connected to particular areas of lost learning or lost school experience.

Table 1: Identifying the Covid generation in England.

Birth year 1 Sep–31 Aug	School year in March 2020	Particular concerns about this cohort	Educational content and assessments affected (content from National Curriculum)[7]	Educational assessments/ achievements affected—non-compulsory curriculum
2001/02	13	Final year of sixth form or Further Education College studies or learning within apprenticeships. University entry applications are often completed by this year group.	High-stakes 18+ assessments summer 2020.	• Duke of Edinburgh programme; • Music assessments—e.g., ABRSM, Trinity College and others; • Dance assessments; • Other sports, arts and academic awards and competitions—e.g., Maths Olympiad, public speaking, school plays, sporting fixtures; • Prefect-ships and school teams captaincy; • Some apprenticeship programmes disrupted—either the college-based component or the on-the-job training or both. Students furloughed, or prevented from travelling (Ventura, 2020).
2002/03	12	First year of sixth form studies or Further Education College studies or learning within apprenticeships.	High-stakes 18+ assessments summer 2021.	
2003/04	11	Final year of secondary school-based studies. Sixth form entry. This year group will have had 16+ assessments replaced by Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs) and 18+ assessment courses disrupted for at least 2 out of 6 terms.	High-stakes 16+ assessments summer 2020. High-stakes 18+ assessments summer 2022.	
2004/05	10	First year of GCSE courses and many vocational pathways.	High-stakes 16+ assessments summer 2021. High-stakes 18+ assessments summer 2023.	

7 GOV.UK (2021b).

Birth year 1 Sep–31 Aug	School year in March 2020	Particular concerns about this cohort	Educational content and assessments affected (content from National Curriculum)[7]	Educational assessments/ achievements affected—non-compulsory curriculum
2005/06	9	Transition choices year from general to specialised curriculum.	Key Stage 3 curriculum. High-stakes 16+ assessments summer 2022.	• Music assessments—e.g., ABRSM, Trinity College and others; • Privately funded, school-based music tuition opportunities lost; • British Gymnastics Award Schemes.
2006/07	8		Key Stage 3 curriculum.	
2007/08	7		Key Stage 3 curriculum. Common Entrance Exam (Independent School Entry) in 2020.	
2008/09	6	Transition to secondary school.	Key Stage 2 curriculum. Key Stage 2 national assessments in 2020. Common Entrance Exam (Independent School Entry) in 2021.	• Department for Transport Bikeability scheme; • Swim England swimming challenge awards; • End of primary celebrations and events; • Privately funded, school-based music tuition opportunities lost; • Music assessments—e.g., ABRSM, Trinity College and others.
2009/10	5		Key Stage 2 curriculum. Key Stage 2 national assessments in 2021.	• Music assessments—e.g., ABRSM, Trinity College and others; • Privately funded, school-based music tuition opportunities lost.
2010/11	4		Key Stage 2 curriculum. Key Stage 2 national assessments in 2022.	
2011/12	3		Key Stage 2 curriculum.	

Birth year 1 Sep–31 Aug	School year in March 2020	Particular concerns about this cohort	Educational content and assessments affected (content from National Curriculum)[7]	Educational assessments/ achievements affected—non-compulsory curriculum
2012/13	2		Key Stage 1 curriculum. National tests and teacher assessments in Maths, English and Science.	
2013/14	1		Key Stage 1 curriculum. Phonics screening check.	
2014/15	R	Just settled into Reception as lockdown in 2020 began. Restarted in September 2020 only to be locked down again in January 2021.	Early years curriculum. Teacher assessments.	• Introduction to school life very severely disrupted.
2015/16	-1 Pre-school	Transition to primary school from home or pre-school occurring just after lockdown, with limited preparatory events. Locked down again in January 2021.	Early years curriculum.	• Introduction to school life very severely disrupted.

Learning loss has not been specifically captured by this table—aside from Y13, the extent of learning loss (in terms of hours attending school) is assumed to be broadly the same across all year groups, even if it differs between educational settings. Year 13 lost a few weeks of their teaching/revision time, but had nearly completed face-to-face teaching and learning at the point of lockdown. In other year groups, the content of the learning loss will vary between year group and setting and is beyond the scope of this discussion.

Learning loss is also only half of the story. While there is a rightful focus on lost learning and how it affects the students approaching high-stakes assessments, the impact of the pandemic has been keenly felt in the loss of the school environment. Schools are not just places where students are taught. They are a cultural and social hub, where students experience consistent attitudes to learning and are given opportunities that do not

necessarily exist within the home environment.

While Table 1 shows the core information about who is part of the Covid generation of students and the key educational and assessment milestones that have been very specifically disrupted, it is important to delve deeper to look at what impact might be felt and how this might differ for different subgroups of students.

What complications systematically affect the impact of COVID-19 disruption for different groups of students?

In Table 1, we saw how the core year groups of students within compulsory education in England have been disrupted by COVID-19. However, we cannot assume that this disruption occurred in the same way for all students.

The English education and assessment system is arguably built upon a principle of meritocracy. Put very simply, this means that progress and achievement is based upon individual performance, talent and effort rather than wealth or social class. In reality, other sociological factors do play a part and there has been much argument about whether equality of educational opportunity exists (Heaton & Lawson, 1996, pp.146–153). Nevertheless, key to the system, as it normally functions, is a principle of equality of opportunity regardless of factors such as gender, class, background, race, religion or economic circumstances. However, viruses are no respecters of educational principles and closing schools in order to reduce the spread of the virus has had effects which exacerbate the impact of disadvantage for many students:

(i) The underlying principle that all students have the same equality of opportunity for learning does not hold when you look at the cohort as a whole. Under normal circumstances, in England, we can assume that every student (with the exception of those noted in (ii) for whom mitigations are applied) has a similar basic availability of qualified teacher-led learning hours. The amount of learning loss during the pandemic cannot be assumed to be equally distributed across all students because it depends upon an interaction between each individual student's home circumstances and their school's response.

(ii) Many of the methods by which equality of opportunity is traditionally managed are dependent upon attendance in person at school; for example, free school meals to compensate students who would otherwise struggle to learn when physically poorly nourished. While schools have remained open for vulnerable students, and communities have, in some cases, provided alternate provision, these arrangements cannot be presumed to be applied equally.

(iii) New factors affecting equality of opportunity have emerged and it is unlikely that these can be fully documented or quantified in time for the alternate arrangements for assessments in summer 2021, even though Y10 and Y12 students taking two-year courses such as GCSEs, IGCSEs and A Levels will have been struggling with them for five out of the six terms[8] of their course of learning. Y9 and Y11 students taking assessments in 2022 will also have been affected for at least two of the six terms of

8 The English school system is divided into three terms per academic year.

their courses (possibly more, because at the time of writing the arrangements for the summer term of 2021 are not yet known). These new factors include, but are not limited to:

- difficulties with technology including, but not limited to, insufficient internet bandwidth to support full engagement with some or all forms of online learning organised by the school and differences experienced at school level with the organisation or provision of an effective online experience;
- non-conducive learning environments outside the student's control;
- less motivation to learn online (which the student cannot control for themselves if they do not understand why it is happening);
- more distractions, anxieties and mental health issues;
- inability to complete the full course of learning; and
- unwillingness to expose their home environment to scrutiny via video camera, thus less face-to-face contact.

Some of these issues (the second to penultimate points above) will also apply to vulnerable students attending school settings, who are being asked to attend lessons online from the school setting, that is, if all attending students are supervised together in a classroom and each follows their individual lesson programme online.

Table 2 presents, in a structured way, some of the different issues which have arisen. However, one further complication when considering the nature of disadvantage is that some students have greater opportunities than others by virtue of their particular school or home environment.

England has a broadly two-track education system with selective or fee-paying schools as well as state schools. It would be naïve to argue that fee-paying or selective schools automatically advantage their students (in normal times) by comparison with state schools, because, at individual level, students in either environment can make more or less use of the resources they are offered. Nevertheless, a quick survey of the claims made on a few fee-paying schools' websites suggests a number of areas where their students are claimed to benefit from enhanced opportunity:

- Enriched educational experience, through extracurricular initiatives, programmes outside the curriculum and the opportunity to set their own curriculum and tailor learning beyond the boundaries imposed in the state sector;
- Reduced class size—more one-to-one time;
- Safe learning environment—higher discipline; and
- Excellent resources (technical, sports, facilities).

Advantages due to enhanced resources, as described above, have direct relevance to the very specific issues which have arisen around coping with learning during lockdown. Online learning works best with efficient technology, smaller groups and individual support for students who struggle with it. Therefore, in any attempt to systematically

consider how lockdown has affected different groups of students, some of the factors which characterise (but are not inclusive to) fee-paying or selective schools must be considered. However, these factors should not be regarded as entirely indicative of particular school types—in the context of "lockdown learning", a parent who is an experienced IT user and is working from home might be just as valuable and effective a resource to a student as enrolment at a school which has enhanced IT solutions available. Therefore, in Table 2, three categories of students are shown which are not based on school type: Group 1—neither advantaged nor disadvantaged normally, but affected by lockdown; Group 2—advantaged in some way that mitigates the impact of lockdown and Group 3—disadvantaged in the normal system and with additional disruption from lockdown.

The categories in Table 2 are not mutually exclusive for individuals. For example, it is perfectly possible for a student to fall into the category of being advantaged by virtue of enhanced personal financial resources and also fall into the category of being disadvantaged by not coping well with traditional assessment models.

A key factor of importance is whether the individual student has control of the advantage or disadvantage being described. A student who has spent most of lockdown playing Call of Duty on their Xbox to the detriment of their studies has still had the opportunity to engage with online learning, whereas one who has been repeatedly unable to access sufficient bandwidth to participate in lessons has not.

Table 2: Effects of lockdown on individual subpopulations of students.

	Nature of the disadvantage or advantage	How is this reflected?	What differences will the pandemic, and particularly the locked-down environments from March–May and in November 2020 have made to their educational experience?
Group 1—neither advantaged nor disadvantaged normally, but affected by lockdown.	No particular advantage or disadvantage. All have broadly the same opportunities to learn, similar pathway choices, and a similar set of assessment experiences.	Individual experiences will vary.	With the possible exception of Y13 (births 2001/02), all students have experienced severe learning loss during their compulsory school education. Y13 had almost finished their taught courses in March 2020, but will have missed school-based face-to-face revision and assessment preparation sessions. Many Y13 students taking practical assessments requiring school-based facilities may have been unable to fully complete them. Online learning approaches will have been of mixed success across this group, largely due to the need to overcome practical issues and to acclimatise teachers and students with the differences in approach.[9]

9 Some of these students may have been identified as vulnerable—the Government definition (GOV.UK, 2021a) includes as an example "those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study)"—and offered a part- or full-time place in school.

	Nature of the disadvantage or advantage	How is this reflected?	What differences will the pandemic, and particularly the locked-down environments from March–May and in November 2020 have made to their educational experience?
Group 2—advantaged in some way that mitigates the impact of lockdown.	Enhanced personal financial or non-financial resources, either of which leads to an enriched cultural and educational experience, either in an educational setting or outside of it.	Greater opportunity to attend a fee-paying school environment. Greater access to equipment and software. Provision of additional private tuition. Greater support for learning. Members of household have skills which support online learning.	As Group 1, although online learning approach may have benefited from greater support or investment. Existing differences in achievement and attainment between this group and Group 1 will be increased.
	Attending an educational establishment with greater financial resources than the norm.	Enriched educational experience. Additional technology.	
	Attending an educational establishment with greater non- financial resources than the norm.	More tailored learning environment.	
	Advantaged by lockdown.	Some students will, for a number of reasons, thrive in the alternative learning environment that lockdown creates.	These students will achieve greater educational progress than they might have done under normal circumstances and will attain better results in assessments.
Group 3—disadvantaged in the normal system and with additional disruption from lockdown.	Students who have underperformed at an earlier stage of their education and been unable to catch up.	Tailored learning approaches in schools under normal circumstances.	There may be more variety in the provision of support for these students and it is difficult to predict which students will become more disadvantaged and which might regain some progress.

	Nature of the disadvantage or advantage	How is this reflected?	What differences will the pandemic, and particularly the locked-down environments from March–May and in November 2020 have made to their educational experience?
	Students who do not cope well with traditional learning or assessment models.	Individual support in schools under normal circumstances.	Students who do not cope well with traditional teaching methods in schools are probably unlikely to find online teaching easier. Students who struggle with assessments are likely to suffer heightened anxiety around preparing for 2021 assessments in the atmosphere of "will they/won't they happen". There may be fewer resources available for support in schools.
	Students with underlying mental health issues.	Individual support in schools under normal circumstances.	Existing support for mental health issues may have been affected by lockdown. Existing mental health issues may be worsened or changed by the changes due to the ongoing situation and the loss of control over daily schedules. Many students will be experiencing mental health issues for the first time as a direct consequence of lockdown.
	Students who are not equipped with sufficient language skills (e.g., economic migrant, asylum seeker and refugee students).	Individual support in schools under normal circumstances.	Fewer resources available for support in schools.
	Students who require accommodations to be made in order to access education (e.g., Special Educational Needs and Disabilities).[10]	Individual learning programmes. Assessments with accessibility provided.	Increased stress, worry and other mental health issues in students and their families. Amplification of the effects of loss of routines, support networks and structures and of specialist input by comparison with other groups (Asbury et al., 2020).
	Students whose time and/or effort commitment is curtailed due to circumstances beyond their control (e.g., young carers).	Support from schools under normal circumstances.	Hard to predict as a number of underlying factors could alter. Lockdown might provide greater time, with less need to travel. Existing support services might be disrupted leading to increased distraction and worry or decreased time.

10 Many of these students will have been considered vulnerable and offered a full- or part-time place at school. Not all will have taken up a place where offered.

	Nature of the disadvantage or advantage	How is this reflected?	What differences will the pandemic, and particularly the locked-down environments from March–May and in November 2020 have made to their educational experience?
	Students from an educationally, culturally or socially disadvantaged background.	School settings provide stability, equipment and strong adult support under normal circumstances.	Likely to fall behind educationally. May not be able to participate in lessons, unless equipment provided. Even where equipment can be provided, may be unable to use it, maintain it or keep it safe.
	Students who have experienced unusual disruption in their lives at the time of assessment.	Special Consideration.	There will be many more of these students during a pandemic.
	Students who live in poverty.	School settings provide resources such as food and equipment under normal circumstances.	Some support provided by schools and wider community provision, but the effects will be larger than usual.

The need for research to support the Covid generation

Fulfilling the educational obligation to the Covid generation of students will include tracking their progress for years to come in order to ensure that they are as little disadvantaged as possible. It will also be important to ensure that the measures taken to protect them do not disadvantage non-Covid generations.

It is clear that there will be an ongoing and extensive educational research need, both:

i. to monitor and evaluate the effects of the educational disruption experienced by the year group cohorts from Table 1 as a whole; and
ii. to provide evidence which will contribute to the evaluation and mitigation of disproportionate effects or biases felt by subgroups such as those described in Table 2.

Within the assessment research community, there will also be additional concerns about managing high-stakes assessments. There are ongoing practical dilemmas about how best to provide an effective and fair assessment solution to successive year groups, each of which has significantly different experiences in terms of content and learning loss. There is a need to manage the expectations of those who use the results of high-stakes assessments for selection purposes and assist with their interpretation of results from different years. Finally, there are numerous technical difficulties to be explored and overcome. For example, understanding, tracking and explaining any differences in standard of high-stakes assessments which have occurred as a consequence of the practical solutions implemented for the year groups concerned will be critical. Planning ahead for cohorts who have missed earlier national assessments (e.g., Key Stage 2 testing)

will also be needed, if those results are used at later stages of assessment provision.

Figure 1 illustrates some of these cohorts (year groups) on a timeline.

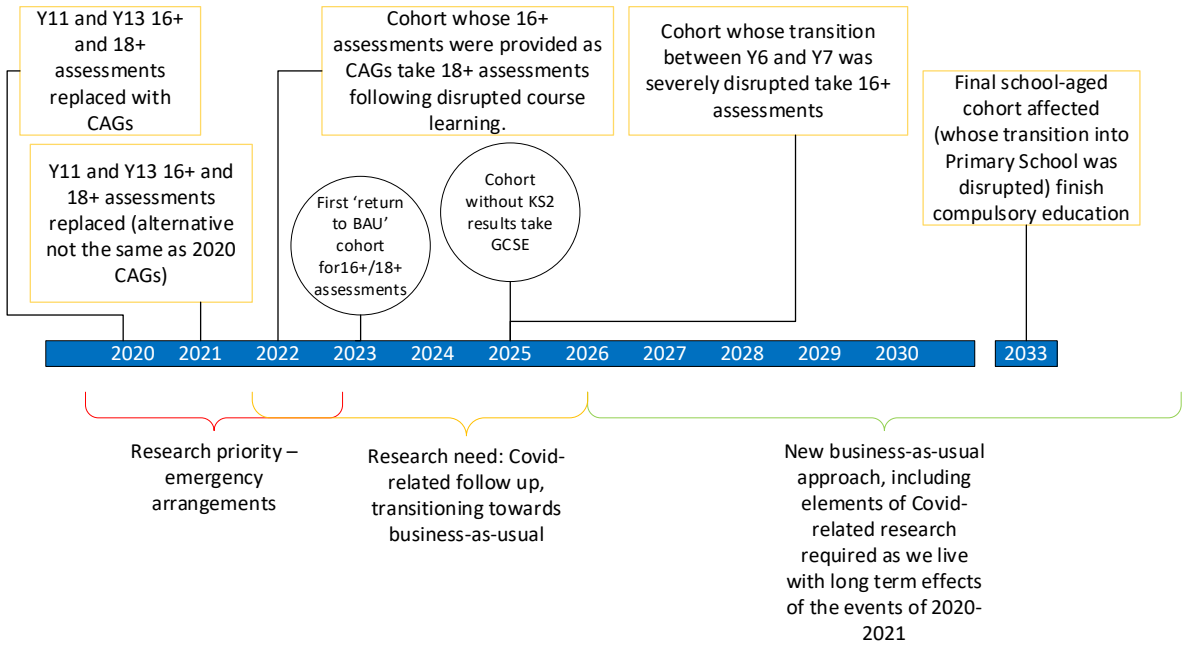

Figure 1: Timeline of research needs for different age cohorts.

Underneath the timeline is a suggestion about how the pandemic might impact upon assessment research specifically. The timescale is based upon the presumption that ongoing educational disruption will have ended by September 2021 (i.e., that students will experience normal school-based education from September 2021) and "business as usual" refers to research which is not concerned with pandemic-related arrangements. Ultimately, the two will blend together and the research response will move from an emergency "just in time" or reactive approach to a long-term business-as-usual strategy which incorporates ongoing elements of pandemic-related research.

Our particular interest is in those areas of research which focus upon high-stakes assessments—many other research bodies will also be tracking other aspects of lifelong progress and wellbeing. Many educational agencies will be undertaking work to support the Covid generation. There is a danger of duplication of effort, with different agencies only becoming aware of each other's work upon publication. There is also a risk that the sheer volume of research output will overrun the resources available to policymakers and compromise effective engagement with all of the potentially useful material. Meta-analyses and review documents will be important tools to avoid either of these problems and some form of centrally organised collaboration and registration of research may be desirable, following principles such as those suggested by The Royal Society (2019).

Summary

In this article, I have sought to explore who the Covid generation in English schools are, and to look at some of the different ways they may be disadvantaged. I have also acknowledged that some students may have benefited, either in terms of relative comparison with peers (i.e., not as badly disadvantaged) or in absolute terms (e.g., if lockdown learning positively suited their personality or situation).

I think it is hugely important to consider, at this stage, how research evidence will play a part in shaping the future of this cohort of students. While the full impact of lockdown on their education may not emerge until today's students are a long way into their careers, there is much we can do to support them throughout their journey.

[i]A note on terminology. Certain terms within this article are being used consistently, in order to improve the reader experience. While it might be more precise to use variations of terminology when describing certain situations, the nuances of these variations are often understood only by those whose expertise is in a very niche field. In the interests of reaching a wider audience I am therefore applying the following definitions:

- Students—refers to up to 18 year olds in any part of the system who are engaged in the process of learning in any setting (including within an apprenticeship programme in a workplace).
- School—a place of learning or a central place of assessment (more specifically known as a centre). In this article, "school" might mean a workplace context or a centre which makes entries to assessments.
- Assessment—all forms of assessment which lead to certification of a programme of learning or experience through some form of structured and controlled system to ensure that only the student's own performance is recognised. This includes examinations and tests which are, traditionally, invigilated sessions. It also includes vocational assessments, apprenticeship certification and other forms of deriving qualification grades, such as the Centre Assessed Grades used in 2020. The term "examination" is still used where it is part of a known phrase, such as "examination session".

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