

# CHANGING PERSPECTIVES IN THE GLOBAL HIGHER EDUCATION: POST PANDEMIC

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## Abstract

*Crisis demands society to renew itself, albeit in a disruptive way. Novel Coronavirus, COVID-19, is one such crisis that affects the entire world. The pandemic transforms our world suddenly and dramatically. COVID-19 pandemic has led to the closure of schools, colleges and Universities in order to prevent the spreading of diseases by the measure of Social Distancing or Physical Distancing. According to UNESCO, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) were closed completely in 185 countries in April 2020, and it affects more than 1,000 million learners around the globe. Every extraordinary times, call for extraordinary measures. So, during the COVID-19 pandemic, a dramatic or radical transformation has been seen in Global Higher Education system also. The world has been responded to the pandemic with emergency e-learning protocols, marking the rapid transition of face-to-face classes to videoconferencing based learning systems. For a student it leads to a change in perspectives related to their conventional style of education. They realized that they can acquire knowledge from anywhere in the world according to their wish. It also provides opportunity for them to improve their skills as well. However, it leads to a strong competition around the world. This article offers an assessment of the emerging trends, issues, challenges and priorities in Global Higher Education in the post pandemic period which will help us to utilize all the opportunities for excellence.*

**Keywords:** Crisis, COVID-19, pandemic, social distancing, transformation, Global Higher Education, emergency e-learning protocols, videoconferencing.

## INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 pandemic that spread globally in 2020, marked as a turning point within education. More than 20,000 universities and 200 million students were affected adversely through this because it leads to a sudden transition from face-to-face education to e-learning.

Pandemic affects rich and poor countries alike, by disrupting the lives of all groups in society, the impact on students from vulnerable groups may be greater than for average student population. Students and academic institutions in low income countries and in less affluent parts of other nations is mostly affected.

Schools and higher education had faced several challenges to arrive at this stage. Different phenomena's helps people to overcome the pain and hurdles, to learn from their own mistakes and to create 'new normal'. The present context of the COVID-19 pandemic forcing us to start a new beginning.

### Global Higher Education – Pre Pandemic

Education have an important role in every one's lives. It helps them to feel, behave and think to attain success, and improves not only their personal satisfaction but also their community. In addition, education develops human thoughts, personality, dealing with others and prepare people for life experiences.

If there are no obstacles, everything in this world will keep going in a normal pace. Like this, education is also a system in its process / pace before pandemic. Face-to-face and distance mode of education is the most preferred way to get educated, at that time. It is normal that, some of the universities and educational institutions in developed and developing countries have used distance mode of education. And some of the online platforms like coursera is more popular for providing knowledge-based and also skill-based education through online or distance mode. And there are free as well as paid courses in these platforms. However, these facilities of education was not properly used in the education system. The traditional practice of teaching and learning like face-to-face mode is continued in schools as well as universities. i.e., they are limited to the four walls of the classroom. People were sending their children to educational institutions to get educated. They keep children in the classroom for the whole day and teachers were conducting their usual duties.

Due to the development of technologies, teachers were forced to learn these technologies in the field of education in order to explore more in their field. But, they faced some limitations in this.

Before pandemic, everything goes normal in the field of education. But, there were some of the emerging changes as well as in the system. STEAM education, innovation in education, the integrated curriculum etc. have provided some ways of hope to improve our educational practices. But due to this coronavirus pandemic, our education system in the world have faced a lot of challenges that had never expected.

### **Education in the middle of COVID-19 Pandemic**

With the arrival of COVID-19 pandemic, it leads to profound changes in almost every sectors. It also creates a broad crisis for the education system globally. As per the reports from UNESCO, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) were closed completely in 185 countries in April 2020, affecting more than 1,000 million learners around the globe in order to prevent its further spread. People were forced to stay inside their house in order to prevent the pandemic through the process called *Social Distancing* or *Physical Distancing*. Functions of all the sectors including educational sector were stopped. All the chances of opening the schools and universities for face-to-face mode of education had lost. Education had faced its most savage situation during this period. So, the need for alternative ways arises. In this condition, the online mode of education was the only option for continuing educational processes. It is not so much complicated in the case of developed countries but, in the case of developing countries, it was a great challenge due to their poor facilities. Thus, there emerged a new wave of exploring the possibilities of the online platform of learning using Google meet, Zoom and other such meeting platforms. Students as well as teachers were participating in different such learning platforms to develop their skills and knowledge. Thus, these online platforms have created a space for thinking about more opportunities in educational activities during and after the pandemic. It made the people think of how to continue educational activities during such pandemics.

### **Impacts**

Across the globe, the spread of Novel Coronavirus, COVID-19 has led to the closure of schools and colleges in order to minimize the community transmission that could develop quickly in dense social networks. And it affects more than 20,000 universities and 200 million students all over the world. And it affects almost every sectors; and also education sector. Some of the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on education includes:-

### ***Closures and transition to online mode of education***

World Health Organization had given repeated warnings to many countries in order to be prepared for a possible pandemic in February 2020. In March 2020, it was noticed that COVID-19 was spreading rapidly among almost every countries and thus Governments finally showed alarm and began shutting down businesses, schools and universities. About 20,000 higher education institutions had ceased its normal. But after a few days of preparations, many institutions had switched to online classes.

This sudden closure helped a lot to prevent the pandemic among a large community but it forced schools and colleges to work in unfamiliar ways. i.e., they forced to shift to online mode of education by suspending all other activities, including research, lab and field work.

Every higher education institutions have faced a lot of challenges to make a transition from face-to-face to online mode of education. And in the case of developing countries, they faced serious difficulties with IT infrastructure and internet access during the transition to online education.

### ***Difficulties relating to reopening***

There exists many difficulties in reopening colleges, universities and schools safely. In some nations after a few months, governmental authorities and heads of higher education institutions have generally decided that it is safe to reopen, although with specific precautionary measures like testing, tracing and social distancing. But in countries where the pandemic is still raging, including the United Kingdom, the United States, and the outlook is uncertain, and decisions may have been heavily influenced by political and economic considerations.

### ***Impacts on students***

The sudden closure of schools and colleges and transition to online mode of education affects almost every students in the world, especially low-income students, girls and women, members of minority groups and students with special needs.

### ***Incomplete learning***

COVID-19 pandemic caused impact on student learning in the sense that many students all over the world have had an incomplete learning experience during that period due to lack of technology, inadequate internet access, or insufficient training for online education. Along with this many students were also suffered mental health problems.

### ***Difficulties in exams and assessment***

Suddenly, education shift to online teaching and learning, but there arises difficulties regarding assessment, examinations and graduation. There were a lot of struggles regarding whether to postpone or cancel final exams,

and also about selecting and recruiting students for next academic year. A big concern for many higher education institutions had been to avoid increased cheating during online examinations.

### ***Financial crisis in education sector and shortage of resources***

The higher education sector had been affected by both health emergency and economic depression, because, universities, colleges, students have suffered substantial income loss. The rapid transition from face-to-face to online mode of education and additional spending on health prevention measures caused unplanned expenditures.

And also, the crisis lead to weaknesses in the financial structure of many higher education systems and institutions. In the case of private higher education institutions that depends fully on tuition and, international students, financial survival becomes a great task for them. Many students with limited resources dropped their higher education altogether and some shifts to more affordable public institutions.

### ***Problems relating to research and internationalization***

Education shifted to online mode, but the research activities is greatly affected during this period due to lab closures, travel restrictions, and difficulties relating to conducting experiments or field investigations etc.

Restrictions on travel and the issuance of visas halted the mobility of students all over the world. Academics and students who had planned long-term relocation had been forced to suspend or cancel their projects.

### ***Education – Post Pandemic and Emerging Trends***

By nature, we humans experience the context, learn from it, and try to make changes in our practices by making them favourable to us. Such changes are inevitable for the education system also. Because, the education system is greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. So there arises a need to modify our entire system of education for a sustainable future. Now it seems that we need to explore another innovative model of education that is capable of handling the emerging problems.

Our educational practices are paralyzed. Because, that practices produce students who have very limited knowledge with almost no skills including limited moral values. Thus it increases the rate of unemployment instead of solving existing problems. After this pandemic, practices can be implemented to foster the knowledge, skills, and values of a learner, a creator, a designer, a thinker, a developer and a collaborator to solve the existing real world problems. For this our education system needs to amalgamate the following and emerging changes.

### ***STEAM Education***

The integrated approach of learning comes into existence which promotes multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches of learning (Liao, 2016). Implementing the more progressive and enabling pedagogical approaches. STEAM education framework is another name in the pedagogical innovation (Pant, Luitel, & Shrestha, 2020).

In the post-pandemic context, it is necessary to implement the practices that have the potential to integrate skills in a learning setting. STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Arts & Mathematics) education helps to inculcate both knowledge and skills in learners to solve existing problems. In this process, the learner will become a real-world problem solver who is capable of collaborating with others by understanding the value of cooperation in the workspace. In STEAM, science is all about asking questions and discovering the answers to explain how things work. Next, technology supports learning to learn effectively. Here, technology uses science to create new machines and more effective ways of doing things. Engineering is all about finding and designing solutions to problems by using science, technology and mathematics. Next, arts is all about using the right brain or creative thinking skills in learning. Eventually, mathematics is about numbers, patterns, and problem-solving. Mathematics is in everywhere, so it is integrated into every context of learning.

### ***Entrepreneurial leaning***

It is one of the difficult phase of economy of each country during COVID-19 pandemic. Because, businesses were forced to close for many months. But, in this post-pandemic context, it is necessary to start fresh and continue the economic activities with a new endeavour. For this education is the pillar to help people to develop knowledge and skills in economic activities. For this, entrepreneurial learning should also be included as a part of education. Students require certain skills and abilities like turning ideas into actions, creating new jobs for people, willingness to integrate skills and competencies, discipline, ability to take risks etc.

The term entrepreneurial learning and skills came from a business worldview and economic theory. The learning is about grabbing the knowledge and skills from the start up of any business venture, solving the problems of consumers in the process of using your service and products, to the optimum success of the company or the business venture (Rae, 2004). These are related to business and economics. However, it is inevitable to include entrepreneurial skills in the education system as on of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. But, it is observed that people who are from management field are not able to use their knowledge and skills in doing business; because, our educational practices are more focusing on theoretical knowledge rather than practical knowledge. So, in this vein, whatever the discipline or subject of study is, this skill has to be included in the education system.

### **Technology Enhanced Learning**

Education sector is one of the sector that greatly affected by the pandemic. This context helps to conduct educational activities using ICTs tools, techniques and methodologies. Online education was the least affected platform of getting an education. The use of these technologies makes learning fruitful and lively. These are putting life in the concepts, so that learners interact and perceive those concepts conceptually (Selwyn, 2020).

In the post-pandemic situation, ICTs in education should be the main focus in the world. The participatory approach of teaching and learning should be implemented so that teachers and students learn things and develop skills and also the professional development programs helps to empowers teachers and others to equip with the knowledge and skills of emergent tools and techniques to use in their culture of teaching and learning.

Assessment procedures can also be done using technologies. Google classrooms and other classroom platforms etc. helps to assess students learning by facilitators using collaborative or individual mode. They can provide feedback immediately in a real-time setting and also they can use automatic feedback system to provide commends and feedback on the works of their students.

Both students and teachers can enhance their skills through technology-based environments like YouTube, where people can get any kind of information to learn new things by watching videos. And also, search engines like Google provides 'n' number of sources to get information.

### **Creativity in learning**

Developing creativity is one of the learning skills that has to be the focus of education in the post COVID-19 context. Creative thinking skills help to improve the imagination skills, develop generative perspectives, think of the possibilities and work on them, develop the visual perspectives of everything. This skill improves spatial abilities, visual imagery capabilities, facial recognition, artistic abilities etc.

We have seen that the education system has lost, to most extent, the learners with a genuine passion for doing work, the desire of creating something innovative, curiosity, the ideation of solutions, the desire to do hard work, the focus etc. However, creativity in education embraces these qualities (Kim & Park, 2012). For this educational activities should be planned and designed effectively by including project-based learning, activity-based learning, inquiry-based learning, context-based learning, problem-solving methods etc.

Moreover, the arts should be the centre of these concepts. The integration of arts is inevitable in the post-pandemic context in order to make learners as critical thinkers and problem solvers to develop other transversal skills so as to foster flexibility and adaptability, and other social and cross-cultural skills.

### **Teacher Education in New Normal**

COVID-19 context has taught teachers new methods and approaches that they had not practiced and prepared so far. They have learned new and innovative perspectives on teaching and learning. To the most extent, they have been equipped with both knowledge and skills. They have observed the new practices of teaching and learning happening worldwide. As a result, they have started thinking about making some radical changes in the education system for the post-coronavirus context.

The focus of teacher education should be guided by the constructivist and transformative vision of education. So, teachers will be able to analyse critically their ways of teaching and learning by reflecting upon their experiences, overcome the challenges and work for improvements. Similarly, teacher education is anticipated to focus on the participatory approach of research to resolve their contextual problems on their own.

## **CONCLUSION**

The year 2020 was a difficult phase for many sectors. Because, COVID-19 pandemic hits almost all the sectors drastically. Humanity remains unprepared and lacks the skill to mobilise and enforce a rapid international response in terms of crisis. It also creates a broad-based crisis for higher education globally. It makes a change from face-to-face to online mode of education. But, it faced a lot of implications include challenges to the internationalization of higher education – a key global element in recent decades, financial challenges and others. Along with these challenges, it also provides a lot of opportunities for students as well as teachers. And also it leads to a change from the conventional style of education.

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