

Online Mode of Lifelong Education Derived from Responses to Covid-19 Pandemic.

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Abstract

Coronavirus is not only a virus with health effects, but a virus that reorders our lives, makes us think differently about the future and rearranges our social and economic priorities including online education. After the coronavirus outbreak and the decision of suspending studies in schools and universities have been made by governments for practicing social distancing to prevent students from being infected, a new big challenge has been imposed regarding educational process; especially, this decision has affected about a billion people who are no longer employed in education. This study aimed to obtain and highlight the online mode of lifelong education derived from responses to Covid-19 Pandemic. To achieve the objectives of this research, the researcher used descriptive approach to study the nature of the study. The study in hand provides brief overview of the literature, and how it contributes to enhancing lifelong learning and ultimately concludes along with recommendation to give directions for future research by applying different level of analysis on exploring the positive impact of Corona pandemic on lifelong learning. The researcher found that the online mode of lifelong education requires the expanding investment in educational technology, increasing people's awareness and conviction in online education. Furthermore, teachers and trainers are trained on new systems in the field of online education, which will support lifelong education in the future.

Keywords: covid-19, pandemic, lifelong learning, online learning, online education

1. Introduction

On 31 December 2019, an epidemic of uncertain origin identified in Wuhan, China had first been confirmed to World Health Organization State Offices. WHO is functioning around the clock day and night to interpret evidence, give guidance, organize with collaborators, help organize economies, expand resources and handles teams of specialists. The epidemic was declared an international public health emergency on 30 January 2020 and thus affecting certainly every sector of human life particularly Education. As an answer to coronavirus disease (Covid-19), as integral step a lot of countries have also imposed immigration bans on the community (both internal and external) and having the objective and goal to avoiding the outbreak from expanding from one person to the other. National health specialists including state authorities are undertaking multiple steps, namely working from home, social distancing, quarantining in case of symptoms; improving health institutions to manage the infection; and request everyone to stay at home [1]. COVID-19 has caused education disruptions and prolonged school closures all around the world, which affected 90% of the world's student population and led most countries to think about alternative ways of providing education to ensure that learning never stops. Keeping education continuity in mind, most countries rushed to online distance education using online platforms, e-learning, and ICTs, which set off an unplanned and rapid shift in the education sector, opened the door to many opportunities, highlighted existing and new disparities and gave rise to several challenges as well as many opportunities that could be used to expand education and lifelong learning in particular.

2. Literature Review The literature of this article mainly depends on research, articles and previous studies that dealt with the Corona pandemic, its relationship with education, and related implications.

2.1 Education During Covid-19 The COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and all continents. Closures of schools and other learning spaces have impacted 94 per cent of the world's student population, up to 99 per cent in low and lower-middle income countries. The crisis is exacerbating pre-existing education disparities by reducing the opportunities for many of the most vulnerable children, youth, and adults – those living in poor or rural areas, girls, refugees, persons with disabilities and forcibly displaced persons – to continue their learning. Learning losses also threaten to extend beyond this generation and erase decades of progress, not least in support of girls and young women's educational access and retention, but also about 23.8 million additional children and youth (from pre-primary to tertiary) may drop out or not have access to school next year due to the pandemic's economic impact alone. COVID-19 has shown a huge gap in digital divide among the students [2]. In order to learn online via the online platforms, a student would need to have access to the platform and guidance from parents. In terms of access,

the prerequisite to learn via the online platform would be to have internet and a device such as computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone. In urban areas, there are complaints that children have to share devices and they could not fully utilize the lessons online due to slow internet connections or lack of devices. However, in rural and remote areas such as the Orang Asal villages in Peninsular, Sabah and Sarawak, the coverage of the internet is limited. Some villages do not even have access to electricity, or it is very limited for night-time usage. [3]

2.2 The Impact of COVID-19 on Education Apart from its direct impact on schooling, the pandemic impacts include the possible use of school facilities as make-shift hospitals, as in some low-infrastructure rural areas the school may be the only public building available. That may cause lengthier disruption of education services making the building unavailable for education purposes. Also, as part of the coping mechanisms the practice of offering alternative services of remote learning may work better for those students in households with better connectivity and with higher initial digital skills [4]. This leaves those already disadvantaged further behind, so school closures with the inappropriate system coping mechanisms, might imply an exacerbation in inequality in education.

2.3 The Futures of Education after COVID-19 The study of Dr. Kim 2020 [14], stated that the COVID-19 pandemic took its toll on education systems around the world and cast a shadow on the future of education, as the crisis affected the education of 1.6 billion students across different school levels preventing them from going to school and university and engaged in distance learning. This has pushed education stakeholders to think out of the box to provide unconventional and alternative education modalities based on the use of the internet, radio and TV, which resulted in some constructive and positive changes as well as concerns on ensuring quality of distance education provided. According to Draycott, A. (2020) [6], The UAE launched the Mohammed bin Rashid Smart Learning Programme in 2012. The Programme aims to build solid educational infrastructure, train teachers and prepare students to use technological devices in education. At first, it was only used for online learning in specific cases such as students' traveling and absence from school. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the trend of online education, Spring break was brought forward by two weeks for Ministries of Education to be equipped with strategies to mitigate education disruption, thereby allowing them to improve education approaches, train teachers and prepare to launch the Smart Learning Programme for nearly 1.2 million students from different schools and universities. Enrollment rate reached 100% in all levels of education, from KG-1 to tertiary education, in Emirati schools – which includes private schools [5]. The effective implementation of the smart learning system requires the following:

- Training teachers, building their capacities and preparing them to provide distance learning and education.
- Creating, adapting and harmonizing curricula for distance learning.

2.4 Lifelong Learning and COVID-19 Lifelong learning is critical in addressing global educational issues and challenges. Lifelong learning from cradle to grave is a philosophy, a conceptual framework and an organizing principle of all forms of education, based on inclusive, emancipatory, humanistic and democratic values. Furthermore, in 2015 UNESCO urged Member States to understand education as an important public good essential to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals [7]. Education must also change the new approaches to learning for greater justice, social equity and global solidarity. Education must be about learning to live on a planet under pressure. It must be about cultural literacy, on the basis of respect and equal dignity, helping to weave together the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. In the post-pandemic era, institutions of higher education must find holistic approaches to reconnect with society around them. As educational institutions embedded in local contexts, their core missions of teaching, research and service need to be integrated in a proactive manner. Socially responsible higher education needs to connect with all providers of education in their contexts. The past division between primary, secondary and tertiary is artificial now, since new competencies are to be learned by all – students, learners, teachers and parents alike. COVID-19 has already laid bare the interconnectedness of all humanity; as higher education institutions begin to respond to these challenges, integrating a lifelong learning approach into their teaching, research and service activities will re-connect them to their local contexts and societal efforts. From the above research outcomes, there are many scholars and institutions of various countries study about negative impact of Corona Pandemic on education [8]. However, previous studies did not consider the positive impact of corona pandemic on education. On the basis of full reference to previous studies, this paper found the positive impact of Corona Pandemic on lifelong learning.

3. Research Approach To study the nature of this study and the objectives that we seek to achieve, the researcher used the descriptive approach that depends on the study of reality or phenomena as it exists in reality and is concerned with an accurate description and expressed in a qualitative expression. The qualitative expression describes the phenomenon for us and explains its characteristics, so it does not stop at the point of gathering information to describe the phenomenon, but rather it intends to analyze the phenomenon and reveal the relationships between its various dimensions in order to explain it and reach general conclusions that contribute to improving and developing reality.

4. Researchers Views and Suggestions Based on the collection and analysis of results of studies, reports, periodicals and books related to the topic of study the researcher found that Covid-19 pandemic has the following positive impact on lifelong learning:

a. Increasing the Investment in Educational Technology Outbreak of coronavirus has caused to speed up moving a lot of educational systems in the world to take many fast steps towards using e-learning and spending on it, which is going to simplify it and speed of using it and removal many its obstacles, where a lot of money will be designated for scientific research and field work to solve problems and overcome all difficulties that exist in front of e-learning and distance learning in order to ensure its spread and to employ it efficiently in the process of teaching and learning. The study of Huelsman, M. (2020) [13], points out that the investment in educational technology was 19 billion dollars in 2019 and it is expected that the cumulative investment in this field to reach approximately to 350 billion dollars in 2025. He believes that betting is growing on using technology in education field around the world and using technology in education is effective as much as it is based on the educational experience of teacher (no one else). Therefore, it is important in globalization era to take advantage of revolution of information technology by using it in education, but more importantly is to get teacher access to the interactive curricula which can benefit from the great and tremendous potential of technology according to a background aiming at achieving the educational goals of developing student's competence and building up his/her appropriate human personality that matches the fast growing 21st century. Perhaps one of the most prominent indicators of this is the increase in investment especially during the crisis and this is expected to continue even after the crisis with large sums of money as investment in techniques in general and in e-education in particular has already begun to increase sharply among major companies and new ones and even countries. And what refers to that is a report introduced by Dubai Corporation showing that the upcoming global investment figures in education technology will have rocketed from 18.66 billion US dollars in 2019 to 350 billion US dollars by 2025. It is expected that the size of the educational technology market in the UAE will have reached 40 billion dollars by 2022. CEO of Coursera for Education Solutions, mentioned (in Al-Bayan 9/8/2020), It is expected that online education market will be expanded on average 9.8% a year between 2017 to 2023. He stated that the market growth is likely to be driven by huge government investment and the rapid adoption of online education and e-learning by educational and commercial institutions especially after the Coronavirus pandemic [10]. And what enhances this trend is that a lot of prestigious universities in the world such as: University of Hartford, London University, The University of Sydney, Johns Hopkins University and The University of Manchester and others have started investing in e-learning and many of their curricula and textbooks have been turned into e-learning. Involvement of highly academic reputation universities and institutions in the field of e-learning reinforces predictions of energizing and developing digital education industry alongside with companies and global partnerships more rapidly than experts expect as they have predicted this qualitative transformation in the post-2030 stage. The trend in education today, especially after this pandemic, is going strongly towards enabling it and expanding its use and spending huge amounts of money for investing in it, maintaining it, spreading it and solving all its problems to compete competently with traditional education. This would be a good opportunity for our educational systems to get interested in developing e-learning and distance learning, spending on it and on research in it and maintaining it in our countries to fit our needs and aspirations of our countries taking the initiative and leadership in this field if they wanted to compete in the future of education with others. Dubai Future Foundation in cooperation with a government think-tank Dubai Future Research, launched a series of forward-looking reports on the impact of COVID-19 on different sectors including education. They projected that Educational Technology (Ed Tech) is a growing market with more people consuming education online and its global market is expected to increase around 2.3 times more, to 40 billion US dollars by 2022 from the current 18.7 billion US dollars especially there have been more than 1.2 billion school children who have been affected by school closures around the world as a result of COVID-19. The increase in the volume of investment in educational technology will ultimately lead to the provision of many options in education and thus maximize the chances of obtaining education continuously, or as it is called, lifelong learning.

b. Providing More Opportunities for Teachers and Trainers to Increase their Online Teaching and Training Skills. Educators are looking to other educators as well as trusted sources to help curate high-quality online learning tools. At National Geographic, they have curated collections for K-12 learners in their library [9]. They have created a new landing page that allows educators, parents, and caregivers to access their free materials quickly, and inspire young people. But it's not just teachers struggling, it's parents and other caregivers who are trying to bring learning to life. To that end, live streaming Explorer Classroom model that connects young people with scientists, researchers, educators, and storytellers. During this transition, students and families have access to that larger world. According to Jim 2020, educators must come out of this crisis stronger by collaborating and working together, company Tes, has got a big resource-sharing platform for teachers, including coronavirus-related resources. There are other platforms too, such as Teachers Pay Teachers and Khan Academy, where teachers can see what others have done. A teacher could say, "well, rather than record a video with the instructional element to be able to find someone who has done that really well already." One of the most important things teachers can do now is draw on what others are doing: Form community online, share the burden, and make things a bit easier. It's quite possible to think about rebalancing the mix between face-to-face and online. Teachers will have started to innovate and experiment with these online tools and may want to continue online pedagogies as a result of all this,

and this as well will also help in achieving the objectives of lifelong learning, because the practice of teachers for this type of education enhances their skills to play a greater educational role and cover the largest possible number of learners.

c. Increasing Culture and Conviction of the Importance of Online Learning in the Light of COVID-19. COVID-19 has been obliged the whole world, to evolve teaching and learning methods in such a way to be able to continue learning without doing any damage to the health system. So online learning is the best alternative although it was applied in some educational fields slightly, this pandemic has pushed the world towards expansion of teaching online (online learning) to an extent it has become a fundamental part of the education system and a good opportunity to promote and exploit it correctly during and after coronavirus pandemic. Distance education is deemed a new style and a new phenomenon in the educational environment that develops along with the growing technology advance in the world and its aim is to give an opportunity of education to students [11]. Educational institutions such as schools and universities have applied it as supportive alternatives that have been adopted by the Ministry of Education by sending educational topics and video clips to students through e-mail for explaining them to students who are in turn send their homework back to their teachers through e-mail as well. These online lessons are intervened by discussion talks in which valuable topics are introduced by several programs or applications especially during quarantine which are so important for keeping the academic year going forward or without delaying it at least that give a vent for all. A lot of educational systems are becoming more aware of the importance of e-learning after this pandemic and even they have been more convinced of it and going towards it strongly during the pandemic. It is expected that it will continue to be regarded and widely used even after the crisis and sooner and later. Many e-learning experts confirm that what will help its rapid spread, increase dependence on it and solve many of the problems facing it is the emergence and spread of the fifth generation G5 technology which has now appeared in many developed countries, Arab and gulf countries and this is what will greatly speed up developing and employing modern educational tools, methods and applications in classroom activating virtual reality in education significantly and rapidly so that the process of e-learning becomes acceptable and integrated as open classrooms that provide new methods of learning, which will help in reaching a digital, learning and teaching environment that is more effective and interactive in teaching and learning [12]. This will contribute towards achieving educational goals easily and encourage teachers and educators to increase using it. And this is all confirms the reinforcement of the spread of e-learning in future even after finishing coronavirus.

d. Reducing the Operating Cost for the Operators and Beneficiaries A lot of educational institutions that use distance learning will be obliged to expand the platforms of e-learning and use integrated education system more in such a way that balances between educational needs that match all educational systems and their multi teaching and learning programs, This will reduce the operational cost of educational institutions and thus provide low-cost services that support the path of lifelong learning.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations This study focused on the responsive strategy to the Corona pandemic and the opportunities to offer lifelong education regardless of epidemics or any other barriers. As distance education and blended education have become common after the pandemic, which is a great opportunity on the future of lifelong education, the researcher reached the following recommendations: a) A strategic vision and policies and regulations should be established and endorsed to organize using e-learning, distance learning and to determine its future reflections. b) Educational national platforms should be built up rather than imported ones to meet increased demand on e-learning and distance learning inside every countries. c) Raising awareness of the importance of e-learning and distance learning for all society and ensure the ways of dealing with it and using it in the best way. d) Work on emphasizing e-learning and distance learning quality which is lost nowadays in many educational systems in order to construct a lot of international qualifications that ensure its quality and recognition of world countries of it and its outputs as many countries in the world are still reluctant to acknowledge what results from such learning. e) Highlighted opportunities and foresights for shaping the future of education post COVID- 19 with a special emphasis on maintaining human connection and lifelong learning[10]. The researcher found that an opportunity for the education sector to unite for lifelong learning, forge connections across countries and continents, and truly share what works in a global way.

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