Emerging Trends of Remote Learning in the Higher Education: Challenges and Opportunities after COVID -19 Situation

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only affected higher education on a global scale, but it has also brought numerous challenges to the higher education community. Remote learning refers to situations where learners and lecturers or information sources, separated by time and distance, and therefore cannot meet their needs in a traditional classroom environment. It can encompass a wide variety of learning opportunities. This could include exploring the natural world, activities to support students' local communities (with appropriate social distancing), and engaging in hands-on projects and artistic creations that stem from students' passions and experiences.

The purpose of the study is to emphasize the benefits and impact of remote learning on higher education. The research method of this study used the second-hand data listed in different databases of books, research papers and related articles on remote learning and higher education on the Internet.

The research results of the paper show that higher education in India lacks challenges in terms of declining institutional income and national budget cuts, deterioration of financial conditions among students, quality problems of remote learning, and inefficient credit transfers. The study also reports on various opportunities for higher education.

Researchers have found that remote learning can help promote flexible schedules. Learn important skills; enhance technical knowledge; a safer and more accessible environment; a world full of possibilities; walk your own way and build long-remote friendships.

Higher education institutions need to improve their quality and reputation. Colleges and universities should have good infrastructure to attract students. The government must promote cooperation between Indian higher education institutions and top international institutions. It can also establish links between national research laboratories and research centers of top institutions to improve quality and conduct collaborative research.

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only affected higher education on a global scale, but it has also brought numerous challenges to the higher education community. It has driven the fastest change in higher education across the globe, necessitated by social remote measures preventing face-to-face teaching.

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, 1.5 billion students in 190 countries around the world cannot go to school (UNICEF, 2020). Therefore, educational institutions have undergone a huge transformation from traditional face-to-face learning to distance learning in a short period of time (Kandri, 2020).

The initial response of educational institutions is that teachers are eager to change their traditional courses to adapt to the online environment, their focus on technology,

learning management systems, and various online learning platforms that learners can use at home (Perrotta, 2020).

However, it believes that merely converting content to an online learning environment is not enough. It is evident that while transitions to online delivery are a necessity, overlooking online pedagogy can be equally detrimental. In essence, it has been a test of organizational digital agility on the part of the university (Zhaohui, 2020), in that, this pandemic has forced the higher education sector to undergo various forms of operational changes in addition to making adjustments to course delivery methods (UNESCO, 2020).

1.1. Remote Learning

Remote Learning occurs when the learner and the instructor, or the source of information, are separated by time and

distance and thus cannot meet in a traditional classroom setting. It is not synonymous with online learning, synchronous learning vs. asynchronous learning. While technology can be a supportive tool, especially for online learning, with remote learning, districts and schools should also consider ways that student learning can continue offline, such as helping students to engage with resources in their everyday lives and in the natural world around them.

It is also not intended to replicate the traditional school day; however, remote learning can still provide unique opportunities to support students' curiosity and understanding as well as introduce new content and reinforce existing knowledge and skills. It can encompass a wide variety of learning opportunities. This could include exploring the natural world, activities to support students' local communities (with appropriate social distancing), and engaging in hands-on projects and artistic creations that stem from students' passions and experiences.

Examples of remote learning tools include large-scale video or audio conference calls, telephone or video calls, emails, projects, reading lists, online learning platforms, and other resources that can effectively interact with students. These tools can use to deliver courses, provide individual student support, provide resources (including teaching materials and student work), connect students with each other and their teachers, and provide feedback on student work.

1.2. Benefits of Remote Learning
In the past few months, there have been many outspoken critics of remote learning. These criticisms tend to revolve around the fact that remote learning emphasizes and exacerbates the gap between economic conditions, because not every child has the same Internet connection as his peers. Studies since his, her, their, etc. lockdown have shown that one of the main barriers to learning has been the lack of connection and interaction with a student's peers and their teachers. The global COVID-19 emergency has disrupted the lives of millions of people, including students and teachers: schools are known to be hotbeds of disease, and it is logical to close them.

But in education, as in theatre, the show must go on: that is why teachers are turning to remote learning as an alternative. Remote learning has been around longer than most people realize, but the current state of emergency is forcing a faster pace of change for which many are ill-prepared.

Like most novelties, remote learning may cause distrust among teachers, who do not know how to use its full potential, so here is a brief list of the key benefits of remote learning.

➤ **Remote learning enables students to catch up and revisit a topic with ease:** When utilizing the educational technology, one of the most obvious benefits of remote learning for the student to catch up and revisit a topic and especially for those with mild learning difficulties such as dyslexia or ADHD is easy.

It also helps to solve the problems faced by students, because students are less likely to raise their hands to ask questions in any class. Many teachers organize short calls after or during a lesson, so that they can go over any issues or answer any questions, meaning that children do not fear overhearing asking a question they think the rest of the class might make fun of.

➤ **Remote learning can help promote flexible timetables:** Remote learning provides flexible timetables, so students who may not adapt to a rigid and unchanging system can embrace the freedom and creativity of a more flexible timetable. Of course, this idea depends on the age group and school schedule. Students can decide when to go out or have a meal without having to organize time. Flexible timetabling also allows for extra tutoring, which, in today's Independent School landscape, is fundamental for some children getting into more selective schools.

Extra tuition can help students regain the confidence they may have lost, and it can also help them understand the topic better, because tutors may have different interpretation methods.

➤ **Higher accessibility and retention levels for those who do not learn solely through sight or sound using educational technology:** For students who do not learn by merely listening or watching a teacher go through a topic, teachers can make use of other methods like game-based learning (GBL), which proves to help especially at-risk school groups to learn, as it promotes creativity and exploration.

Much of the educational technology available today provides educators with the opportunity to make lessons more collaborative and innovative. Introducing mini competitions with leader boards, as well as using the multitude of online resources at student's fingertips, all of which prove to significantly increase levels of retention.

➤ **Remote learning can enhance technical knowledge:** Remote learning not only helps students understand the educational technology available, but also when they use it correctly, can also help prepare them for life after school, at university and in the working world. Although young people tend to surround by screens more and appear to be more tech-savvy than older generations, this idea does not mean that they used to troubleshoot any technical issues, which is a valuable skill in the workplace, especially in a world that is now working from home indefinitely.

Understanding conference technology platforms such as Zoom and Teams are also very useful, not only to promote community development during remote learning, but also to increase the understanding of available platforms available.

On the other hand, tests for schools, colleges, universities, and recruiters are becoming more and more online, so those who are accustoming to online research and writing work may perform better than those who are not accustoming to using online interfaces.

➤ **The important skills of the future can be learned through remote learning:** In addition to learning future technical skills, remote learning can also help improve certain life skills, especially for older students who are engaged in single jobs. When remote learning is delivered in an efficient manner and accepted in a safe and stable environment, students will learn time management, multitasking, responsible and independent study skills, all of which are essential for success in exams and later life.

➢ **A safer, more accessible environment:** This is the most obvious advantage of distance learning today, but it is also true in the absence of a pandemic. Teaching at a remote is safer. Through distance learning, students with disabilities will have the same learning opportunities as everyone else without endangering their health.

➢ **A world of possibilities:** If we can learn without leaving home, we are not only safer, but also less limited in our choices. Online courses eliminate the need for commuting or going out to continue learning and education. Hence, if we wish, we can apply for courses offered anywhere in the world without worrying about the hassle of studying abroad. With the help of remote learning, our choice of education and career is no longer limited to the closest thing, but opens up an infinite world in front of us.

➢ **Go your own way:** With the help of distance learning, we can manage homework according to our own time, watch lecture recordings and personalize our learning path. As far as K-12 is concerned, learning in our own way will encourage us to take responsibility without the need for teachers to monitor our every move, which can even provide students with the opportunity to go to college.

1.3. Fostering long-remote friendships:
Signing up for online courses means connecting with students from all over the world, which may be the beginning of long-term beautiful friendships with people who can provide different perspectives and interesting discussions. It does not necessarily apply to traditional class groups, who are using remote learning as a temporary solution and know each other in real life, but the experience of learning online may inspire today's traditional students to become the remote learners of tomorrow. Now that the global pandemic is limiting international travel, contacting students from foreign schools may be the start of a new and cheaper version of cultural exchange programs.

1.4. Impact of Remote Learning
During the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the unique issues facing the community is how to conduct remote learning responsibly and effectively. Outside of traditional classrooms, students, and teachers use electronic technology to access educational courses and are looking for new ways to stay in touch and interact, while at the same time stay safe at home. The sudden breakthrough in teaching and assessment is not possible without challenges. Teachers and students are facing with the learning curve of an unfamiliar digital platform. Parents working at home must take into account their professional responsibilities to the needs of the students at home.

➢ **How does COVID-19 affect the higher education sector?**
The COVID-19 outbreak has caused a downward spiral in the world economy. This pandemic has caused huge losses to the economy and has had an amazing impact on the higher education system. This epidemic has also transformed traditional oral teaching into online teaching, and lecturers and students have been exposed to novel and innovative teaching methods. Online teaching is causing an uproar on an untested scale and an unprecedented scale. The pandemic has interrupted regular learning, has made all educational methods and strategies unstable, and has made students unable to pay for tuition and other education-related expenses.

What is the current situation of the Education Sector? The pandemic has significantly disrupted the higher education sector. Owing to this, the structure of learning-teaching got affected. The education sector has been fighting to survive the crisis with a different approach and digitizing the challenges to wash away this threat. Globally, over 1.2 billion students are out of the classroom as per data. As a result, education has changed dramatically with the distinctive rise of e-learning, where teaching undertakes on digital platforms. Yet, many students are lacking access to the technologies needed for home-based learning and have few means to continue their education.

The most important and difficult challenge comes from the level of preparedness of educational institutions to deal with the crisis brought about by this crisis. The preparation of higher education for the coming digital age of transformative learning has been questioned (Houlden&Veletsianos, 2020). Poorly managed and resourced institutions coupled with socially disadvantaged students with limited access to the internet and technology have affected how educational institutions adequately respond to learners' needs and inability to engage in an online learning environment (Zhong, 2020). Several reports suggest that infrastructural requirements to support online learning are quite valuable, especially for individuals who choose or need to work and study remotely from their homes (Morris, 2020; Perez, 2020).

➢ **What are your thoughts on switching from remote to online or remote learning?**
With a shift to online or remote learning, we learned that all of us are rowing in the same direction. We rise to the challenge and adapt to the challenges that once seemed improbable. We embraced discomfiture together. Some remote learning could be desirable for our students. Most importantly, we are learning to care about productivity as we get through this crisis. Finally, online courses are becoming ambassadors for educational technology and effective online design.

Another challenge comes from concerns about the quality of online education. Higher education sector's movement toward remote learning has not only raised questions about the value of online learning due to limited or inadequate access to technology (Anderson, 2020; Carey, 2020), but it has also raised a myriad of concerns about the quality of online learning (Newton, 2019). A recent report suggests that only 15% of college students enroll in full-fledged online programs even before the pandemic (Ginder et al., 2019). Research also suggests that students in the vulnerable category, more often than not, scuffle just to complete their online courses, let alone achieve positive learning outcomes (Barshay, 2019; Protopsaltis & Baum, 2019). Moreover, students find that many online options are more expensive than the traditional learning environment of ordinary universities, and they believe that online options cannot bring a favorable return on investment (Newton, 2018). According to reports, only about 50% of institutions provide educators with online teaching experience (Bettinger& Loeb, 2017; Lederman, 2020).

There is no doubt that in this ongoing pandemic, online learning is essential. However, educational institutions need to fully evaluate the skills, knowledge, and abilities that they

want to instill in students, while also considering the impact of online learning on quality, achievement, and the job market.

➢ What are the hazards of remote learning?
Social isolation is one of the major changes that have been born from the aftermath of this global pandemic. Consequently, this event caused the school to close and suddenly interrupted the learning of millions of students. For a while, many people lost hope. However, this unexpected change suddenly occurred in the field of education, especially in the field of remote learning.

Perks:-
The emergence of remote learning platforms has changed the norms of the traditional environment.
1. Remote learning provides students with the flexibility to learn at their own pace, when and what they want.
2. It eliminates the time wasted in going to school, and avoids being late for class.
3. Students become more capable in using technology, which is especially useful.

Perils:-
The advent of remote learning has disrupted the traditional methods that have worked hard for years to achieve perfection.
1. Remote learning fails to recreate the personalized approach of teachers, present in a classroom with students.
2. The personal interaction between teachers and students is lost in remote learning.
3. In remote classrooms, there is less interaction between students and teachers, so the emotional intelligence between students may decrease.
4. Sometimes, a network issue or a software glitch can come in the way of an effective educational experience.

2. SCOPE OF THE STUDY
The scope of the research is to elaborate remote learning for higher education. The Institutions further improve themselves with more benefits and facilities to overcome the drawback from higher education. The study covers the challenges and opportunities for higher education about a remote learning. This study will be helpful for organizations and researchers to conduct further research.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
This research conducted research using second-hand data listed in different databases of books, research papers and related articles on the Internet on remote learning and higher education.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
➢ To know the concepts of remote learning.
➢ To study the benefits and impact of remote learning.
➢ To study the challenges faced by Higher education.
➢ To study the various opportunities in Higher education.

5. HIGHER EDUCATION
Unlike in the past, online education has now become mainstream, and this is just a one-off event. We have already seen working professionals accepting the paradigm shift and switching gears to the online model. First, it brings the flexibility of doing the program without having to quit the job. In fact this issue has been more adopted among professional professionals, especially among major wage earners. Secondly, affordability; online degrees can be offered at 1/10th the cost of the same offline degree, with

much more domain-specific and detailed knowledge, along with industry-relevant skill sets that will help any professional in their career. Third, the coronavirus pandemic has proved the robustness of the online model, while the offline model has stagnated. The government's choice is very clear that establish a virtual university to promote the adoption of technology in education.

➢ National Education Technology Forum as envisaged in the new education policy, should add with University Grants Commission and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), and "should start the work immediately."
➢ The Indian government will set up a virtual university to the adoption of technology in education.
➢ GOI will soon take the necessary steps to set up a virtual university, which is different from the concept of an open university. This fact will help to achieve the ideal gross enrollment rate (GER) for higher education envisaged by the National Education Policy (NEP).
➢ GOI also called for the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning technology for mother tongue teaching in higher education.
➢ The GOI also announced that branding of study in India program should take up on a wider scale and dedicated task forces should "analyze the reasons behind students going abroad for pursuing studies."

5.1. Challenges faced by Higher Education
➢ **Declining institutional revenues and state budget cuts:** The COVID-19 pandemic has placed enormous pressure on institutions' balance sheets, which will likely result in school closures and could also have implications for educational quality. Colleges and universities are highly dependent on tuition revenues to fund their operating budgets, but surveys suggest that 1 in 5 would-be college students are unlikely to enroll this fall. These enrollment declines would leave the system with an estimated $23 billion shortfall for the coming academic year. In addition to an estimated 25% reduction in "auxiliary revenues" from facility rentals for conferences, summer camps, and other events.

➢ Coronavirus disease has also increased the national budget, heralding a reduction in national higher education funding. This is especially troubling given that appropriations still haven't entirely recovered from the Great Recession, when per-student funding fell by more than 24%. These new declines will be particularly painful for public institutions, which rely heavily on funding from state and local governments. Once the virus subsides, enrollment in these schools may increase, but it may be before the state budget recovers from the crisis.

➢ **Deteriorating financial circumstances among students:** Around half of high school seniors and current college students report that the coronavirus disease has impacted their family's financial situation, which means many students will likely need more aid than originally anticipated. This will put more pressure on institutional resources.

There are also some administrative challenges to consider. Eligibility for federal student aid determining by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which relies mainly on two-year-old tax return information, which is now seriously out of date for millions of students. While the

Department of Education allows financial aid administrators to alter a student's FAFSA through professional judgment, this system lacks a standardized process.

➢ **Quality, concerns for remote learning:** Movement toward remote learning has raised questions about the value of online education. The media has reported on the basic challenges faced by students, many of whom do not have access to the technology or high-speed internet connection required to complete the course. But questions of quality go beyond the issue of access. Before the pandemic, only over 15% of college students enrolled in fully online courses. Research shows that students who only receive online education, especially disadvantaged groups of students, often find it difficult to complete courses. On average, their academic performance is poor.

Many online options are more expensive than traditional universities and colleges, and often fail to provide students with a positive return on investment. Teachers are also challenged by this shift. Only 50% of institutions have teachers with online teaching experience. Although distance learning is a necessary immediate response to this public health crisis, more insights are still needed to better understand the impact of extensive online learning on student visits, completion rates, and labor market success.

➢ **Inefficiencies surrounding credit transfers:**The COVID-19 pandemic will also likely lead to an increase in transferring credits, as current students consider less-expensive educational options that are closer to home and displaced workers choose to enroll in courses to gain relevant skills. In addition to previous college coursework, transfer credit includes other credit for prior learning, such as workplace or military training, volunteer service, or other professional certifications.

Unfortunately, institutions often fail to recognize some or all of the students' existing coursework or experience as credits. This fact is usually due to concerns about cross-institutional courses. The content and quality of these courses may not be equal, but it may also stem from challenges related to providing prior education or training records. Technical limitations of universities and universities often force students to track and submit paper copies of these records. With colleges and universities moving online, students will need digital access to successfully get credit for their past work and learning.

Losing credits will increase the cost of students and even prevent graduation. For a long time, advocates of higher education have been calling for a more streamlined assessment to effectively promote credit transfer and completion. Given the current emergency situation, there is an urgent need for fair, transparent and accessible credit transfer options to ensure that students are on the path to graduation.

5.2. Opportunities in Higher Education
COVID-19paired with more than its fair share of obstacles for the higher education sector. However, there are opportunities, too for schools and students alike. Here's a closer look at the impact of the pandemic on higher education, along with how students can position themselves for success amidst the ongoing changes and uncertainty ahead.

➢ **Shifting to remote learning platforms:**COVID-19 has distracted higher education institutions and caused them to respond quickly, switching from classrooms to online teaching mode. As many universities in the world turn traditional classroom teaching into virtual teaching. For example, in the United States, 70% of American teachers have never taught online courses before.

Online courses can provide at a lower cost without sacrificing many benefits. According to Harvard Business Review, "By freeing resources from courses that can be commoditized, colleges would have more resources to commit to research-based teaching, personalized problem solving, and mentorship. The students would also have more resources at their disposal, too, because they wouldn't have to reside and devote four full years at campuses. They would take commoditized courses online at their convenience and at much cheaper cost".

Lastly, it is important to acknowledge the need to study at home. The necessity of COVID-19 has brought some unexpected positive effects.

➢ **A flexible college option:** As the higher education system continues to change, many students are looking for new ways to achieve their university degree goals. The University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) is a leader in the online learning and blended learning field. Scotland's newest university, UHI uses innovative technology and cutting-edge pedagogy to provide 21st-century learning opportunities to students.

➢ **Replace competition with collaboration:** It is impossible to estimate the number of colleges and universities that will force to suspend operations and close due to declining student enrolments and revenue. If the virus abates and then re-emerges in the autumn and winter, additional losses of both students and revenue will make it impossible for many tuition-fee-driven, endowment-poor institutions to survive. The combined profession is one of the criteria that offering teaching online courses is part of the school's criteria. These institutions should provide dual degrees without negotiation. Combining result will better retention rates and less students loan debt.The benefits and the liabilities will focus. This opportunity requires action now, not sometime in the future. The opportunity comes from the belief that higher education, as we have known it, will never be what it was before COVID-19 rewrote the rules governing when and where students enroll and graduate.

➢ **Create a year-long academic programme combining the best of in-person and online learning:** In an April 2020 survey report published by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, 58% of 262 college and university respondents are considering or have decided to remain fully online for the autumn 2020 semester and 62% are considering decreasing, or have decreased, the number of in-person courses for autumn 2020. COVID-19 may accelerate the end of the traditional semester-based system for collegiate registration, progression, and graduation because Gen Z students use to being online, all the time. Edward J Maloney, writing an article in Inside Higher Education, listed several potential academic scenarios that could implement for the next academic semester, including:

1. Beginning the autumn semester later than usual, in October or November.
2. Changing the autumn to the spring semester.
3. Creating a structure gap year, reducing the number of courses offered on campus and increasing the number of courses taught online.
4. Designing separate courses for residential and online students.
5. Allowing students to take one course at a time for three or four weeks.
6. And provide an improved teaching guidance model so that students can participate in common online lectures.

6. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic has driven the fastest change in higher education globally, due to the need for social distancing measures to prevent face-to-face teaching. This has led to an almost immediate switch to remote learning by higher education institutions. Because of this virtual reality, it will continue to grow as an educational tool. Finally, online courses have promoted or satisfied the demand for more flexible and convenient higher education options, and learning has allowed us to go further.

Higher education institutions need to improve their quality and reputation. Colleges and universities should have good infrastructure to attract students. The government must promote cooperation between Indian higher education institutions and top international institutions, and set up links between national research laboratories and research centers of top institutions to improve quality and conduct collaborative research. There is a need to focus on the graduate students by providing them such courses in which they can achieve excellence, gain deeper knowledge of the subject so that they will get jobs after recruitment in the companies, which would reduce unnecessary rush to the higher education.

The continuing pandemic is a huge obstacle in the global higher education sector. However, considering several key aspects of online learning, it will certainly ensure that we adapt to the needs of the online learning environment. This idea will require to develop the science of learning, while we take steps to introduce various technological innovations to help online teaching and still be able to deliver on the promise of learning and skills developed on the part of students/learners.

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