

Global Educational Trends, Issues and Challenges in Educational Governance

Impact of Covid-19 on Quality of Education on Students

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ABSTRACT

This report tries to highlight the major challenges that Covid-19 pandemic brought mainly to the global educational sector. The Covid-19 has greatly affected the entire globe and it not only brought challenges for the educational sector but has significantly created problems for all the domains of the world bringing the global system at halt. This study will try to explore all these problems keeping in mind the Pakistan's context and it will highlight the issues faced by teachers, students and the administrators of the education sector. The main issue that this report focuses on is exploring major hurdles faced by the students, teachers and admin of the schools & colleges in delivering quality education.

This report will try to highlight all challenges and problems faced in the educational sector in provision of quality education. For this, the study will discuss all the literature review regarding challenges impeding to quality of education given to the students and problems faced by the teachers in this regard, focusing specifically on the issues students' face during remote learning. Moreover, interviews have been conducted from present teacher, student and head of highly recognized and reputable institutes in order to gather data for the analysis. This is done mainly to look at the exact situation of the educational sector in Pakistan during the pandemic. Furthermore, the data gathered from these interviews are discussed in detail and some of the significant recommendations are provided keeping in mind all the problems & challenges regarding the quality of education. Lastly, the report also contains way forward for this study and how it can be helpful for the educationists in the long run in order to cater to such situations in future.

Keywords: COVID-19, Online Education, Quality Education, Impact of COVID-19

INTRODUCTION

Background

The COVID-19, a catastrophic virus was first identified in 2019 in Wuhan, the capital of China and has since then spread globally. The pandemic spread shows how the world has been changing and brought down to its knees within no time. Due to coronavirus, millions of people around the world got laid off from their jobs, schools, colleges and universities were closed down, stores were closed, public meetings were prohibited, travel restrictions, physical segregation, and lockdown drills were practiced worldwide to control spread of the virus. This all had an immediate effect on the world economy since the epidemic has had a negative impact on a variety of non-essential service sectors, some of which have been struck more severely than others. As coronavirus pandemic has brought challenges globally affecting the social and economic stability, it is no less to say that the education sector has been affected the most all over the world. Schools are being shuttered all around the world as countries work to slow the spread of COVID-19 (Bhagatt & Kim, 2020). But it leaves the students and teachers out of classrooms and it begs the question, “How do we educate the children during a crisis?” The education completely switched to online learning due to which the middle and low income countries struggle as everyone does not have proper resources, internet connection or a device through which they can learn online. There is no doubt that the outbreak of coronavirus has affected on the availability of resources and materials as there was a sudden closure on all the public places. It might have been a little easier for the richer and developed countries that have the resources, electricity as well as an uninterrupted internet connection to adapt with this mean of education. The students in the areas where there is no internet access are unable to attend the online classes also; the vocational education that requires practical and technical learning gets

affected on a huge level (Schleicher, 2020). Every student that goes to any grade level has missed out on instructions and suffered regardless of whatever is being done because the situation is different than before. Students, particularly secondary education students, or students who are attending the tertiary education, may or may not return to the schools due to which an unexpected and large number of students' dropouts were noticed globally. Due to the academic disengagement students are struggling whether in terms of their results or their mental health. Virtual learning was never an easy job and now when this has become the only mean of education for students as well as the teachers during lockdown is quite stressful.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

As a student of educational governance, the purpose of this research based assignment is to research how school, colleges, universities and other institutions have planned to handle this global challenge. There are a lot of issues which have been highlighted and addressed in recent literature all around the world on the impact of COVID-19 but the main focus of this study would be the issues faced by the students in online learning and how does it affects the quality of education. The study aims to conduct a thorough research on the issues faced by the students. It would particularly emphasize on the factors that leads to the difficulty for the students to get quality education in taking online classes which ultimately affects their performance.

The research would also discuss what issues of educational governance have emerged during Covid-19 and which initiatives, policies, priorities, what challenges different stakeholders have faced in their respective roles, how do they have addressed those challenges and what reforms have been introduced and implemented locally, regionally or globally.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There are no appropriate studies that have shown the factors in detail that influence the performance of the students and the issues they face taking online classes. The research would include the interviews from three relevant stakeholders i.e. a teacher, student and the head of a school/college to have their detailed viewpoints on how are they tackling the situation and what issues they face due to remote learning on daily basis. This study would help in providing significant details to the educationists that could help them in making reform and policies for the future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Globally, the economy, social life, and educational services have all been severely impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. Countries are somehow managing to protect the public at such times but some countries are failing to do so. The global educational system is significantly being impacted by COVID-19. There were policies made according to the situation at hand and those policies mainly revolved around the instructors and pupils keeping safety and wellbeing the first priority. E-learning was implemented globally in the initial stage of the pandemic to keep in mind the public's safety but then the major question is that how the governments and authorities of countries around the world handled the situation specifically in the education sector without compromising the quality of what and how students learn (Farooq, Azam, & Mansoor, 2020). Different countries responded to the pandemic differently. According to a study conducted in China, the online and offline classes were well connected with each other. On the other hand it was stated that if the physical classes were to be conducted then proper measures would be taken to ensure the teachers' and pupils' health and safety. China's education sector clearly stated the

policies that focused on quality education if online classes are given to students (Li, Xue, & Li, 2020). Various policies were adopted globally by the education sector due to the pandemic but the major concern was that how the policies were made and are those policies still being implemented in a way that the teachers or students both benefited from it and the same time the quality of education won't get compromised.

Quality Education & Governance Challenges in COVID-19

For public safety lockdown in countries for a long period of time had a huge impact on the education system worldwide. The quality of education in this new normal situation of pandemic coronavirus has been affected the most as the learning and teaching shifted to virtual classes. Education must not stop amidst pandemic so something had to be done to deal with the situation of pandemic so the learning shifted to homes. It would not be wrong to say that students can never get that same quality of education that they get in physical and face to face classes as there is a boundary in the online classes due to which students interact less with the teachers and vice versa. Students can take classes through educational institutions using technologies like Zoom or Google Meet (Bhagatt & Kim, 2020).

The Federal and Provincial governments of Pakistan acted upon the situation and moved the classes quickly to be broadcasted on the televisions as a study told that 62.5% sampled people have televisions as compared to radios. But then the inequality issue rose as the people who do not have a computer or a device, or even an internet connection due to area coverage couldn't have access to the virtual classes, similarly some households didn't have T.V sets (Malik, 2020). In Pakistan some schools and colleges were moved online, some suspended the classes until the further notice of opening of the schools while the rest continued with hybrid classes. Some schools made a policy of students coming to school on alternate days so that fewer students

gather in a class at a time. Home based learning became a new normal and schools shifted to virtual learning. There was no training provided to the teachers as many are still unable to use the technology and gadgets like today's kids do but still this change was imposed on students and teachers for good. A study shows that a student can only get quality education through online classes if he gets uninterrupted internet connection, sufficient resources and a well-trained teacher (Garcia & Weiss, 2020).

Another challenge to the global education system due to pandemic can be financial crisis. Many people got laid off from their jobs, and many people can be facing poverty issues more than ever as COVID-19 affected the economy of the world on a large scale. Students might dropout if financial aids are not provided as schools or colleges might also be financially weak.

Quality is one of the major areas in the basic education that needs to be discussed as education is all home based now. Improvement of the performance of each respected schools in the relevant field, through the delivery of the teachers competence and skills, which are guided by the principles of being evidence based, results based and learner centered, all contributes to the quality education. The concern that arises is whether it can be maintained through online sessions or not. The major challenges the students and teachers both could be facing can be the difficulty in teaching/learning the vocational education e.g. a language course or a theory course might be easy to teach/learn through online class but courses that involve the practical's and different resources required to perform those practical's might be hard to teach/understand (Bhagatt & Kim, 2020).

Global problem requires global solutions, ELearning is one of them and it should be making a contribution but it isn't. Challenges are bound for stay at home students trying to learn online

and at the same time system expecting them to produce good results provided little or no feedback from the teacher. Students are losing motivation to learning as they are not getting the support from the system and due to the academic disengagement for a long period. Li et al. (2020) stated that due to online training sessions, video conferencing and online lectures there is an overall improvement in the education system during this period as teachers got to learn technology and many have also improved in this certain area. Approximately 80% of educators and students have now transitioned to online learning. China established a governance structure under a single and centralized leadership communist party of China to improve emergency crisis, two way communication, teaching plan and implementation of the measures required for the quality education for students (Li, Xue, & Li, 2020).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the literature review and secondary research the study that intends to seek the answer is as follows:

1. Is quality education the biggest challenge for students in ELearning?
2. Is there a lack of resources or materials for the students?
3. How does online education affect the performance of the students?
4. How important is the teacher-student interaction and feedback process?
5. What measures does the student expects from their school/college at such times?

DATA METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is the best part to deliberately tackle the exploration issue. This type of research is qualitative and explanatory as the research defines an attempt to highlight the difficulties experienced by students and instructors in online programmes as a result of COVID-19. The research identifies the challenges faced by stakeholders of the education system by taking their interview to know more about the situation.

The time horizon of this research is cross sectional as this study is intended for short period of time i.e. less than a year. The data collection method that would be used in this study is the qualitative data that is the non-numerical data. The validity of the objectives derived from the research questions would be checked by the qualitative method that would be done by conducting interviews from a student, teacher and a head of a school/college.

QUALITATIVE DATA & ANALYSIS

Student

Distance education does not provide quality education to the students and does not produce the desired outcomes and a positive return on investment. Students who are particularly underprepared or weak might underperform and produce poor results as they need extra support and guidance (Newton, 2020).

An interview was conducted by a university student of an HEC recognized institution of Pakistan. The questions were asked to highlight the major issues that affect the quality and the performance of a student and how that student manages the online classes? Following are the responses to the questions asked:

Q1). How do you feel overall about distance education?

Response: It is an all new experience of taking classes on the screens and studying from slides for all of us. I feel a little disengaged and disconnected from my class fellows and teachers as there is little or no interaction. Overall experience is not so good.

Q2). What device do you use for taking the classes?

Response: I use laptop for attending the classes but once the electricity is cut I am unable to charge my laptop, then I switch to mobile but sometimes it is also not charged at that point I simply listen to the recorded lectures after the class.

Q3). How effective has remote learning been for you?

Response: Obviously, it has been difficult to take classes while sitting at home but if one thing that benefitted me was that my traveling time was saved as my school is far from my home. But still that doesn't mean that we ignore the negative aspects of it. Many of the concepts taught to me are still unclear as I am unable to always ask the questions during the class and if I ask I don't get a better understanding of it like I used to get in the class.

Q4). How supportive has your university been in providing you with the tools to learn from?

Response: My University has been very helpful in providing the required material for all the courses. Our teacher posts all the material and the recorded lectures in the Google classroom and we can access it anytime we want. We get the slides, articles and case studies on our official email id. The administration is also very helpful in this entire scenario.

Q5). How stressful is distance learning for you

Response: Remote learning is not an easy thing for sure. You need to make sure that you have a good bandwidth internet that too with uninterrupted connection, electricity, device to get connect with and most importantly a peaceful environment where you can take classes.

Q6). How do you manage time while learning remotely?

Response: Managing time is not an issue while learning online in fact you save a lot of time. I mean you don't have to get extra early for the university to travel and you can have as many breaks you want. I don't have an issue managing my time as all my classes are in afternoon so I set my tasks accordingly.

Q7). How helpful are your teachers while studying online?

Response: Well to be honest teachers are not much of a help to me. The things In class, I struggle to understand, I query my teacher in class also but still I don't get my confusion cleared. I don't get feedback timely on my tests, assignments and exam so due to this I am not sure that where I stand in the middle of my semester. Some teachers only upload the marks without telling where the improvement is needed. And often my emails go unattended or I get a very cold response.

Q8). How peaceful is the environment at home?

Response: This is the major concern for me because studying at home with microphone on especially when kids are all around the home jumping from here and there is a nightmare for anyone. It is not peaceful taking online classes at home sometimes I take my class outside my

house when the noise is unbearable for me and when I have to give presentation or have to participate in the class.

Q9). How important is face to face communication to you while you learn online?

Response: As I told earlier also that I often lag behind while picking up some concepts while learning online as there are some days where there is internet issue or electricity issue so it then becomes difficult for me to catch up. In face to face class you don't have to worry and can take extra help and support from you class fellows and teacher as well. But I have noticed that during online classes there is a barrier between you and you don't talk often to each other. We have a class group on Whatsapp but that is only used for conveying important notices. So you need to help yourself if you are taking an online class at least that's what I do.

Q10). What measures do you recommend your school administration to take for the problems you discussed?

Response: Let me tell you that it would take years for everyone to work on the issues students are facing while taking online classes as such a difficult time never came before and it is not only me whose suffering but many other students as well. But still, I would request my school management to create an individual feedback corner on our student portal where student comments or questions are added after every class Also, if students are pressurized to do the assignments at such a time then there must be a rule for teachers to check those assignment/test/quiz within time with the feedback included. Also, there can be one to one session online once a week to know about the students' progress and mental health as well.

Teacher

E-Learning has not only been a challenge for students but teachers as well. Student and teacher interaction is an essential part of the educational system. Teachers need to make sure that their students are getting what is being taught to them for which human interaction and motivating the student is required but this all is not possible during an online class (Barshay, 2019).

An interview was conducted by a college teacher of a well-recognized institution of Pakistan. The questions were asked to highlight the major issues that affect the quality and the performance of a student. Following are the responses to the questions asked:

Q1). What has been the hardest or the biggest challenge about moving your classes online?

Response: The hardest part I feel about moving classes online is that you don't know if the student understands everything or not as there is no interaction and a communication gap. Sometimes it seems that I am teaching to the walls or I feel the students are asleep during the class. Also, I can do nothing about those students who don't switch on their cameras or even microphone due to which it's difficult for me to know whether they are getting anything or not and that's the difficult part for me.

Q2). How do you think your students have adapted?

Response: I think my students didn't adapt well with the situation as during the lockdown we had online classes and once the lockdown was lifted we had physical classes for three months. The students' attendance was higher in the physical classes as compared to the online classes which meant that the students' preferred taking physical classes rather than online.

Q3). What are your biggest concerns about online teaching?

Response: My biggest concern is for my students obviously as my first priority is my class. Whatever I teach to them in online class I feel that I am not doing enough and there is always a doubt that whether they understand the lesson or do I need to change my style. Very few students participate during the class and the rest are the ones with turned off cameras and microphone. I don't force my students to turn their cameras on because I believe that my student's comfort comes first. Another concern is that most of the class is not performing well on the tests held online.

Q4). When working remotely how do you manage your day?

Response: It is very difficult for me to manage my day when I work from home. I am a mother and a wife so when I am at home no one takes my job seriously and they think that I am on my holidays. So it is difficult for me to make them understand that I need to concentrate on my work as I do in the college. So managing house chores and working at the same time can be a headache for me at times.

Q5). What are the essential components of a successful online course?

Response: Key components for making an online course effective can include interactive students' session, showing students relevant videos to keep them engaged, making them understand certain topics by storytelling or experience, making the PowerPoint readable and sending the extra relevant course materials after the class as well. At the end of a class I call the names of my students one by one to ask if they have any confusion regarding the lesson. I try my best to engage my students during the class.

Q6). What kind of support do you offer to students when they face connectivity issues or any other problem?

Response: I give my students leverage when such issue comes. My all lectures are recorded and I post them in the Google Classrooms so that the students who are unable to attend my class due to any issue they can listen to it afterwards. After the class the students' can write to me personally as well if they do not get something and then I explain to them in a makeup class and solve all their problems in that class. I take makeup class twice a month for those students who were unable to catch up. I feel that I am a good support for my students as they can easily contact me whenever they want and I am always available for their help.

Q7). How do you ensure the quality of the online courses?

Response: The quality is definitely compromised while teaching online because it's not the same as we were teaching in a physical class. There is a lack of motivation and support provided to students in an online class but still I make sure that my students get extra support and feedback where needed. I allow my students to text me, email me or call me whenever they feel like if they have any confusion. I add extra key notes and videos in my PowerPoint to make the slides more detailed and understandable.

Principal

The pressure is high for the school leaders at such a time where the resources and options are limited but the expectations of others are very high from the leaders. The head of a school has already a lot to do but when a structure is completely shifted to an online system the work load doubles (Harris & Jones, 2020).

An interview was conducted by a school head of a prestigious institution of Pakistan. The questions were asked to highlight the challenges due to which there is a shift in an overall system. Following are the responses to the questions asked:

Q1). How are you holding up during this whole COVID-19 situation and how has the leadership adjusted to WFH?

Response: As far as priorities shifted I don't think they truly have shifted what I do think has happened is that people are a little more cognizant of what the principal actually does. It merely serves as a reminder to us that schools are more than just a place for learning as we have been leading this enormous effort to protect the students' welfare and keep them safe in extremely challenging circumstances. There is that shift from an academic to a more socially emotional attitude making sure everyone is safe. But remote learning has been a difficult task as we principals are least able to still feel that role of instructional leader.

Q2). What communication tools or techniques have you been employing to work remotely?

Response: I use my laptop for the communication with the teachers mostly as this is the most professional and reliable way of contacting and setting agendas during the meeting.

Q3). Has the college laid off employees since COVID-19 began?

Response: Well we didn't lay off any employee in fact remote hiring was done during COVID and 3-4 new teachers were hired through an online interview selection process.

Q4). What safety precautions has the college taken to guarantee the security of all staff members and students?

Response: it was stated that if the physical classes were to be conducted then proper measures would be taken to ensure the wellbeing and security of both pupils' and teachers. It was decided once the school opens the students and teachers would only enter on the condition if their body temperature is normal. We ensured that students and teachers get all the necessary material for their safety e.g. sanitizers, disinfectant, masks and body temperature apparatus.

Q5). How do you prepare agendas in remote meeting to be more effective?

Response: It's something that we have always done but I think people are seeing it more now given the circumstances we find ourselves in. I am working with teachers on curriculum instruction and we are visiting virtual classrooms and providing feedback.

Q6). How do you ensure the transparency and quality of online classes?

Response: In this virtual setting, instructional leadership takes on a slightly different appearance. I have assigned a co teacher and headmaster for every online class so they can visit the class anytime to check and then provide the feedback. Through this there is a transparency in what is being taught and what are the issues prevailing for students and teachers.

According to the interviews held in Pakistan it can be said that students cannot get quality education while sitting at homes due to lack of interaction, feedback and motivation which adversely effects on students' performance. Students' expect from the school/college to cooperate in a way that their performance doesn't get affected i.e. to provide weekly feedbacks, have one to one session as students don't/can't speak during the class, assess them in a way in which they are comfortable and provide them support in any way required.

LIMITATIONS

Every study has certain limitations and constraints. This research also has some restrictions, in geographical terms as the data collected was from the Pakistan's school/college. The research was not able to conduct higher number of surveys or interviews and the deductions drawn are only on the basis of literature review and the three interviews conducted.

REPORTING & SYNTHESIS

Policy & Reforms

According to the study conducted by Sen, Pakistan is not as badly affected like other countries so the lockdown was not so strict here (Sen, 2020). Punjab has maintained the position in the terms of social protection by imposing a “smart lockdown” to counter the situation wisely in education system as well (Peace, 2020). Most of the countries imposed the change on teachers without any training. A study conducted in China stated that the training of the teacher would be done to use the technology by introducing virtual training sessions. The policies also included that rewards and appreciation to be given to the front line teachers in those regions where there is serious outbreak of the virus (Li, Xue, & Li, 2020).

It is a critical issue in education right now that due to the transition in the whole system because of COVID-19 a gap has been created due to which students feel disengaged academically. Many students are not privileged enough to have devices or a wireless connections at home which makes the whole online education process difficult. A young student is learning at such times without the proper guidance, support and motivation from an adult. Reforms and policies introduced after the COVID-19 have been somewhat the same globally with a little difference as

students embraced a new era of education as schools across the nation closed their doors due to a viral outbreak by taking classes online. (König, Jäger-Biela, & Glutsch, 2020). Like other countries, in Pakistan social distancing and masks were made a compulsion; everyone has to go through a temperature check before entering any building, sanitizers are installed in every public place and lockdown to be imposed where needed for the public safety.

IMPLICATIONS

This research provides policy makers and researchers with some helpful insights and feedback regarding the issues faced by students in an online education and to highlight some of the important factors that lead to the poor performance of the students. Along with this the educationists can come up with the reforms with the help of this report and work on the shortcoming in the education system that leads to the difficulties for students and teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has exposed the gap in some areas but still there are issues to be covered. In future the researchers can test and study other factors as well by taking as many interviews and conducting surveys from the students who are getting online education. According to the research conducted few of the recommendations for schools/colleges can be to cooperate with the students, provide them feedback weekly and have an individual interactive session once a week for the teacher and student satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

I was able to identify and apply governance practices in accomplishing the research's mission. I learnt to present and write effectively with the clarity to the relevant topic. I was able to gather the data, use it and understand it to inform current practice in education system at present due to COVID-19.

Summarizing the whole study, it can be said that according to the data collected through research and interviews coronavirus has adversely affected the education system specifically affecting the quality of education for students from all over the world.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Student

Q1). How do you feel about online learning in general?

Q2). What device do you use for taking the classes?

Q3). How successful do you find online education to be?

Q4). How supportive has your university been in providing you with the tools to learn from?

Q5). How stressful is distance learning for you?

Q6). How do you manage time when studying remotely?

Q7). How supportive are your professors while you're learning online?

Q8). How peaceful is the environment at home?

Q9). How important is face to face communication to you while you learn online?

Q10). What measures do you recommend your school administration to take for the problems you discussed?

Teacher

Q1). What has been the hardest or the biggest challenge about moving your classes online?

Q2). How do you think your students have adapted?

Q3). What are your biggest concerns about online teaching?

Q4). When working remotely how do you manage your day?

Q5). What are the key factors for making an online course effective?

Q6). What kind of support do you offer to students when they face connectivity issues or any other problem?

Q7). How do you ensure the quality of the online courses?

Principal

Q1). How are you holding up during this whole COVID-19 situation and how has the leadership adjusted to WFH?

Q2). What communication tools or techniques have you been employing to work remotely?

Q3). Has the college laid off employees since COVID-19 began?

Q4). What safety precautions has the institution taken to guarantee the security of all staff members and students?

Q5). How do you prepare agendas in remote meeting to be more effective?

Q6). How do you ensure the transparency and quality of online classes?

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