

# **WORLDWIDE SCENARIO OF UNPLANNED TRANSITION TO E-LEARNING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19 AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTION: A REVIEW**

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## **ABSTRACT:**

The on-going COVID-19 pandemic caused by SARS-CoV-2 remains a serious issue for global health, economy as well as education. First it was identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. As of 10th June 2020, more than 7.18 million confirmed cases across 188 countries and territories and more than 408,000 deaths have been reported worldwide. Even after a very great degree of constant research and clinical practice, no medicine and no vaccine is yet approved for coping with the treatment of this disease. In addition, the education system is facing multiple challenges. Waking up at morning, preparing lessons, getting ready, dressed into an ironed uniform, eating breakfast and then hurriedly rushing to catch the public or private transport were the common pictures in the lives of every student but all these have hit the pause button since the outbreak of COVID-19. In such context the study shows worldwide pictures of adopting e-learning as one and only mode of transaction of knowledge. The present paper is a review based study on the current scenario of changing educational landscape throughout the world and aims to explore students' perception towards e-learning. A detailed study on published peer reviewed scholarly articles, unpublished non-peer reviewed articles and related aspects with an emphasis on e-learning explores that e-learning digitally divides the students into privileged and unprivileged sections. Some students without technology, connection and devices struggle hard to participate in e-learning, others enjoy significant benefits. Here the concept of equity becomes discoloured.

**KEYWORDS:** E-learning, Covid-19, Adaptability.

**INTRODUCTION:** COVID-19 primarily spreads during close contact of peoples, very often via small droplets by sneezing and coughing. The droplets usually fall to the ground or on other surfaces. People may be infected by touching that contaminated surface and then by touching their face or by shaking hands to the already infected people. In these circumstances, as a part of social distancing, by the beginning of April 2020 more than half of the world's population (around 3.9 billion people worldwide) was under complete lockdown. By late April, around 300 million people in the countries of Europe, 200 million people in Latin America, nearly 300 million people in the United States and 1.3 billion people in India was under lockdown. Now online teaching and learning is the only mode of education as social distancing is the path to reduce this disease. Online classes have replaced the traditional classroom concept during this lockdown. Due to the sudden unplanned lockdown, not only in India but also in several countries lack of proper planning, lack of technology, lack of digital skill and training continuously posing challenges for many students. However, students from all over the world shared mixed opinion regarding e-learning.

**OBJECTIVES:** The present paper is a review based study. The objectives are to explore the current scenario of changing educational landscape throughout the world and to explore students' perception towards e-learning.

**SOURCES:** A detailed study has been done on published peer reviewed scholarly articles, unpublished non-peer reviewed articles and related aspects with an emphasis on e-learning.

## **REVIEWS (INTERNATIONAL):**

1. Ali, W. (May, 2020) intends to portray the current situation across the countries of Europe mainly after stepping into the world of e-learning during Covid-19. Meta-analysis was used in the study only. In the emerging and ever-changing COVID-19 context, New York University Shanghai (China) and Duke Kunshan University (Taiwan) offer successful plans and rapid implementation regarding online education using the video-conferencing platform Zoom and Moodle. But it is to be noted that these Universities had existing experience with the usage of these technologies (Czerniewicz, 2020). Likewise, some schools in Australia have struggled with rapid switching to online learning. Similarly Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Hungary and Poland have followed the trend and suspended face-to-face teaching in all universities. In Italy, the University of Bologna distributed free SIM cards to students without access to internet. The University of Warsaw moved their courses online. Belgium and Romania has decided to move lectures and courses online as much as possible and cancelled a lot of educational events. The study also emphasizes on the issues highlighted by World Bank, 2020b such as even after providing the best facilities, transitioning to online learning at a large scale is very difficult.

2. According to Abbasi, S., Ayoob, T., Malik, A., & Memon, S. I. (May, 2020) the objective of this study is to explore whether the perception of students towards e-learning is positive or negative during the lockdown. It is descriptive cross-sectional study conducted on April

2020. A self-administered questionnaire by the authors was developed. A pilot test was run on 30 participants before the administration of the questionnaire with validation by two medical educationists and by calculating reliability of the questionnaire which turned out to be 0.85. 382 (137 males and 245 females) MBBS and BDS students of all levels at Liaquat College of Medicine and Dentistry were selected as sample through convenience sampling technique. The questionnaire was sent to the participants via e-mails. Out of 23 items of the questionnaire one was about the choice of gadgets or devices used for e-learning, 5 covered demographics, 17 determined the positive and negative perceptions of students towards e-learning. 5-point likert scale was adopted. To determine the perceptions of students towards e-learning independent T-test was applied. Overall, 77% students had negative perceptions towards e-learning and did not prefer it for future learning. This picture clearly shows that the students of Pakistan are not ready to adopt e-teaching and learning environment though the result of the study can't be generalized as the participants were from a single medical and dental college.

3. Ali, N. U. A. (April, 2020) reported that to avoid any educational loss Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan directed all universities and accredited institutions to begin online classes. But the students shared too many negative experiences. Firstly, they said that most of the times the bandwidth is so poor that the students cannot even see the teachers. Despite of this condition, teachers take the classes in 40 minutes' time slots on zoom and pretend to have same classroom experience as earlier in real classroom situation. Secondly, whereas world's top universities are trying actual self-paced online learning and Pakistani universities are enforcing online learning via streaming. Thirdly, the scenario was like many students were stranded due to the lockdown and unable to go home or stay in university hostels after announcing lockdown. So there is no point of making mandatory attendance in the online classes. All should have equal opportunities to get education. Lastly, a new trend (#We\_Want\_Semester\_break) emerged out in Pakistan and the students from all over Pakistan joined the protest. Students were boycotting the online classes and as a result many universities suspended them. Even then the students demanded to stop these virtual classes, recommended a semester break and continuation of traditional classes after this pandemic is under control.

4. Li, C. & Lalani, F. (April, 2020) shows unplanned rapid move to e-learning have been emerged out and there have already been successful transitions amongst many universities. For example, Zhejiang University situated in China managed to start all the courses in the Spring Quarter from February 24 by using the platform of "Learning@ZJU" and "DingTalk for Zhejiang University". The Imperial College London (England) started offering a course on the science matters of coronavirus, which becomes the most enrolled class(113,912 already enrolled till the date of 27 May) launched in 2020. Based on some research this article points out that on average, students retain 25-60% more material when learning online compared to only 8-10% in a classroom and e-learning requires 40-60% less time. Dr. Amjad, a Professor at The University of Jordan says, "... I will stick to Lark even after coronavirus, I believe traditional offline learning and e-learning can go hand by hand." There are, however, gaps to overcome. The worldwide picture across the countries is not same.

Some students without technology, connection and devices struggle hard to participate in e-learning, others enjoy significant benefits. For example, According to OECD data 95% of students in Switzerland, Norway, and Austria have computers to use for e-learning whereas only 34% in Indonesia do have computers. While Governments of New South Wales, Australia have been providing digital equipment to students in need, many are not.

5. The case study of Bao, W. (April, 2020) focuses on a number of problems arising in China due to the massive outbreak of COVID-19 such as it unexpectedly forced Peking University to launch live online programs of a total of 2,613 undergraduate online courses and 1,824 graduate online courses in order to ensure the normal teaching environment with 44,700 students (Lei, 2020). But an analysis based on the students' responses in social media proves that the students do not face challenges due to technical operational obstacles. Instead, they have difficulties regarding lack of a good learning attitude, self-discipline or good learning environment during this period of time.

6. Azzi-Huck, K., & Shmis, T. (March, 2020) discussed some strategies in the World Bank Blog that have already been taken by various countries. Some of those are - (1) turning to fully online learning (China, Italy, France, Germany and Saudi Arabia); (2) using mobile phones or television as learning devices (Vietnam, Mongolia);(3) creating more than 800,000 accounts for all teachers and parents, opening the digital textbooks for grades 1 to 10 and broadcasting educational programs through two national TV channels (Bulgaria).

## **REVIEWS (NATIONAL):**

7. According to Kesharwani, S. (May, 2020) when it comes to classroom experience virtual classrooms and various online tools today bring the teachers and students as close to a real. In addition, through these tools the teachers and parent meetings as well as staff/management meetings will be more easy to organize and cost saving too. He personally suggested that as a product of out-of-box thinking due to COVID-19 pandemic a blended approach of learning and more importantly blended enrollment of students will come in which the existing schools will enroll students in offline mode and online mode with no restriction. Also, the Coronavirus is acting two-fold for education system in India as firstly on the darker side it has forced the institutions to cancel face to face learning and postpone examinations and secondly on the brighter side it is making the students and teachers "tech savvy". Schools are conducting online classes to complete the remaining parts of courses and other higher institutions are also conducting exams online. Moreover, various institutions are conducting online seminars and workshops. So, it is expected that the overall picture of Indian education system will turn out to be better in post Coronavirus era.

8. This study of Fatima, A. & Raj, U. (May, 2020) is focused on the students' mental condition caused by the thread of COVID-19. Google forms were used for the collecting data containing authorize questions (related to stress assessment questionnaires). The forms were filled by 500 students of different schools /colleges/ universities from different states of India. With the help of the Google form result analysis system, the results were calculated. On the analysis of the data it was found that 51.4% of students are stressed in this condition of

threat. 69.8% of students are stressed about their studies. 78.4% students are not willing to take online classes. 43.6% of students are not satisfied with online classes. Giving examples of previous studies the authors claim that the stress level of the students increases as they are not comfortable with online studies. Most of the students' mental health is not good enough and most of them are worried about their online study.

9. Raj, U. (May, 2020) aims to study to what extent students are affected by Coronavirus in the entire world and what type of effect is felt on Indian education system. A number of total 10 articles were downloaded from the internet and after in-depth study of Indian Education system the author draws the conclusion which meet the objectives of the study. The following data by UNESCO shows worldwide schools closer in months-

- The percentage of affected learners due to COVID-19 in March, 2020 has increased from 0% to 44% [770,095,236] of total enrolled learners including India which also came in localized closures. 108 countrywide closures.
- In April, 2020 the percentage has increased from 44% to 90% [1,576,086,772]. 189 countrywide closures including India.
- In May, 2020 the percentage has decreased from 90% to 72.4% [1,268,164,088] of total enrolled learners. 177 countrywide closures including India.
- Total affected learners from pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary schools are 320,713,810 in India.

In his study he claims that data from the Mission Antyodaya, a nationwide survey of villages conducted by the ministry of rural development points to that around 20% of Indian households received electricity but for 8 hours and only 47% received quite 12 hours in a day. A change in education system by adopting online learning would not be easy for India as the government of India has not yet solved the key problems those are faced by the students here. The problems in the sections like internet connectivity, power supply and electronic devices need to be solved first to reshape education.

**RESEARCH GAP:** There are some gaps on which the future researchers may work. There is an opportunity to study the perception of teachers and parents as well towards e-learning. The current study does not contain the picture of the present scenario of many other countries.

**CONCLUSION:** To conclude it can be said that whereas some governments take so much initiatives for making e-learning successful by meeting requirements, some don't; whereas a section of financially stable people provide all the facilities to their children to continue e-learning, the other economically backward section can't; whereas previously experienced students enjoy their learning in this period of time, others struggle hard to participate. It is clearly visible that e-learning digitally divides the students into privileged and unprivileged sections. So, inequality exists in present educational scenario from this point of view. In post pandemic world blended learning should be preferred, properly planned and implemented successfully as well to avoid any kind of difficulties in students' learning in future.

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*“This change is inevitable as the current COVID-19 situation demands it for the safety of students and the teaching staff”- Czerniewicz (2020)*