

Emergency Remote Teaching in the Times of CORONA Pandemic

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“We need technology in every classroom and in every student and teacher’s hand, because it is the pen and paper of our time, and it is the lens through which we experience much of our world.” – David Warlick

Progress is related to technology. When WHO declared COVID 19 as pandemic, the world adopted work from home policy in every sector. As a consequence, the sculpture of education changed considerably with the exclusive hike in online learning and teaching which is conducted remotely and on e- platforms. Is education ready for an excursion to risk billions of learners and their future? The unprecedented challenges and the unanticipated future urged to adapt and find solutions to keep students’ motivated on their route to learning and abandoned face-to-face classes for the interim period. The lockdown turned out to be an interruption to their learning journey. With the government’s worldwide step to cover the COVID 19 outbreak with certainly no speculations about specific vaccines or treatment for this disease, the educational institutes faced the utmost challenge to keep studies in pace. According to a report, 188 countries declared the shutdown of their academic institutions affecting 15 crore learners globally. Quarantine and isolation impacted the continuous progress of education methodologies. Correspondingly, a replacement to the traditional method of teaching became the need of the hour. A sudden shift away from the traditional classroom in several parts of the world perplexed everyone for the lasting period of online learning methodologies and how this shift would impact the education sector. When the entire organizations worldwide explored the contingency and emergency plans and percussions, education did not nestle behind and found its savior.

Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) is the exercise of shifting classrooms from physical face-to-face teaching to virtual electronic classes rapidly. However, the intention is not shifting teaching from the conventional teaching system into the online learning program. It is a stopgap to this pandemic and vary in meaning from scheduled online learning. As a repercussion to precautionary measures taken by almost all educational institutions, ERT has been brought into existence which recommends rapidly developed, interim support of instruction without any prearranged resources and base. It is more like an exigency of registers which is utilized at the time of emergency situation. This has become the prologue of the new education history.

Another wave has hit the globe with a catchphrase of learning without suspension of classes was initiated in China. As the spread of the disease evolved at a massive scale, the academic institutions, universities, and schools responded in diverse approaches. Accordingly,

the curriculums were converted to an online classroom by the educators, with the aid of digital tools and online educational platforms. The key focus was to transform the curriculum into a digital environment rather than implementing online tutoring. It was the real challenge of the educational organizations. But here lies an eternal question, is the higher education well prepared for the upcoming digital era?

One misconception still lingers in the minds of the learners and educators i.e. similarity and difference between E-learning and ERT. As E-learning utilizes the tools of ICT for the implementation, its major dimensions are the availability of an acceptable infrastructure which plays a paramount role, course contents feasible for online learning as not all course materials of physical classroom approach teaching can be utilized with online learning since both have distinguished requirements. The most glaring dimensions are the attentive instructors who can operate online classes and have adequate knowledge of e-learning systems. The instructors must possess the ability of framing the course content and assessment apart from online learning system knowledge. It also involves another pillar i.e. attentive students who possess motivation and willingness to study regardless of the techniques and appropriate assessment methods suitable for e-learning.

A sudden provisional shift of instructional delivery to an online delivery mode as result of an immense ruination is different from the online courses which are initially planned and designed to be delivered virtually. ERT exploits the available remote teaching tools for delivering the curriculum or educational materials that would be delivered as blended courses in physical classrooms. Once the crisis fades, the instructional delivery will revert to its original format. Thus, due to urgency and utmost priority, providing a reliable, temporary, fast, and durable access to the instruction and instructional assistances during the crisis would be more efficient than reconstruct a sophisticated educational ecosystem.

Earlier, various models were implemented by the countries for online learning in schools and universities like radios, mobile learning, and television learning etc which were suspended and interrupted due to various unrestricted issues. There were several interactive web based learning programs which was developed to maintain student-centered learning programs. There was a major issue with the number of families who have access to computer system, especially in the rural areas of the nation, it is as low as 50 %. It might have cast a negative impression of online education but smart phones emerged as a substitute. There were other online resources and modes introduced by various other countries such as Online libraries, TV broadcasts, guidelines, resources, video lectures, online channels. In order to increase the coverage of the lessons in schools, Georgian Public Broadcaster's launched their first educational Channel titled - "Teleskola" (TV School). Through this channel, live lessons were broadcasted in different subjects. In this dense period, the education sector received the support from companies such as Microsoft, Google, Zoom, and Slack which offered various features with free versions. Microsoft offered free premium version for six months and increased the number of existing new users. Google enlarged the meeting size up to 250 people and enabled recording facility,

zoom also expanded the time limit of calls in countries where the demand was sufficiently more.

Nevertheless, with the enduring digital revolution, ample tools and options are available to mitigate the mutation process of the emergency remote teaching. The educators and academic institutions have to prepare themselves with the requisite skills and tools in a fast manner to this shift. We have to be able to think outside the box to create best solutions to meet the needs for our students. It might help us to invent new solutions to unmanageable problems. Apart from the delivery strategies, mediums, needs and limitations, focus should be given to faculty support and training as they play a crucial role in enhancing the learning experiences of the students.

There are various ongoing support models like full-course design support, opportunities for self development, learning to develop the content and management system training and support along with learning media tools with training experts. Digital fluency is the demand of the online learning and Faculty who seek support typically have varying levels of digital fluency and are often accustomed to one-on-one support while experimenting with online tools. It focuses on the aspect that faculties should take charge of the course design process, its development and the process of implementation. With the mushrooming of the online learning events, support teams must search for the ways to meet the institutional need by helping the faculties to sustain in an online environment.

After implementation of the process, an evaluation is called for efforts of emergency remote teaching. But then the question lies, on what basis the evaluation criteria should meet. Can we compare face-to-face learning with an online methodology with an online course version? There can be several other approaches. The successful outcome depends upon various factors. From the faculty point of view, student learning outcome serves to be a primary interest. If we take faculty's perception into consideration, their prime motive is to find out students learning outcome, the intended knowledge, skills, behavior, attitudes which they gained from the online instructional experience.

Various psychological outcomes for students such as the factors of motivation and engagement are directly proportional to the success outcome of the learners. Attitudinal outcomes are also possibly of interest, for students and for faculty. It also affects the perception of the faculty. Several methodical outcomes like at what rate the course is completed, how much time faculty invests, reach and approach in market, promotional strategies do play a significant role in distance mode learning. Eventually, implementation resources and strategies are practicable areas of enquiry modes, like the reliable technological devices, access power to learners, teaching methodologies, various equipments and government allowances to distance program. These factors lead to effective implementation of ERT and can prove effective in the long unforeseen future. Evaluating ERT will require broader questions, especially during initial implementations. Evaluation of ERT should be more focused on the context, input, and process

elements than product (learning). It will provide us with more critical elements in a short timeframe.

The shortage of cultured technology and learning experience in creating an e learning platforms is the ultimatum of the decade faced by educators and academic institutions worldwide. Almost 90% of the population is covered with Internet zones but only 50% utilizes the proper data which hampers the continuity of the online education. Various other forms of the electronic online media like television or radio is reachable but learners cannot access due to poor connectivity. We have to augment the usage of mass media and sufficient time for effective planning and production for ERT with a requirement of a satisfactory environment and atmosphere needed required by the remote teaching for well organized delivery process. The key ultimatum is to increase the sense of community. The education sector demands more interaction from the social collaboration of teachers and students on e-learning platform to compose new strategies to interact to create a teacher-student friendly online platform. The limelight of successful online learning depends upon how the course content is framed, the major outlines, interaction network of professors and learners and the access to the study materials.

As mentioned above, it is a temporary but dark phase. We have a long way ahead to progress with the online technology. Online learning is destined to rise at high pace. The ongoing research is carried on to facilitate the methodologies of teaching pedagogy and learning. Until then, we have to boost ourselves to grow and learn faster and faster.

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