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Distance education in the post COVID-19 pandemic era

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Abstract

Students and teachers at all levels of school have been driven by the coronavirus pandemic to quickly adapt to online learning. The effects of this and the changes needed to make it work could alter how education is provided indefinitely. The COVID-19 pandemic has compelled people everywhere to adopt virtual learning extensively. The current problem is unparalleled in scope, even if online and remote learning have previously been employed to guarantee continuity in education, such as in the wake of earthquakes. The long-term ramifications of this are now being debated, as well as the potential future of education in the post-COVID age. Some people think immediate return to the customs of the actual classroom is must. However, for some, the forced transition to online learning offers an opportunity for change and a chance to rethink how education might be provided. In this paper we discuss about the online education in post COVID-19 era.

Keywords: Distance education, learning, COVID-19, pandemic

Introduction

Online learning has always been seen as a viable alternative, especially for adult students looking for higher education alternatives. However, the COVID-19 pandemic's rise has forced educators and students at all educational levels to quickly acclimate to online courses. The transient character of this changeover was described by the phrase "emergency remote teaching," which was first used in the early phases of the pandemic [3]. Due to subsequent increases in the rate of infection, training has occasionally been moved online, then back into a physical classroom, and then back online again. Other times, students could take classes online or in person using a combination of remote delivery and face-to-face instruction (referred to as the HyFlex model) [2]. In either scenario, educators just had to figure out how to make it work, taking into account the opportunities and limitations of the particular learning environment to design lessons that were practical and efficient. In fact, using a variety of distribution methods has a long history in education. Since the 1950s and the work of B. F. Skinner, who suggested utilizing technology to guide individual learners through carefully structured sequences of instruction with feedback [3], mechanical (and then later electronic) teaching machines have given personalized learning programmes instant confirmation of their response's accuracy. The first formally represented examples of programmed learning, or "planned" learning events, were based on Skinner's ideas. Then, in the 1960s, Fred Keller created a system of training that was tailored to each student [4]. Wherein students read the required course materials on their own first, and then participate in one-on-one tutoring sessions to demonstrate their understanding of the topic before being given permission to move on. Periodic class meetings were scheduled to go over subjects, address questions, and provide students a chance to mingle. On the idea that initial subject engagement might be completed individually, then debated and applied in the social environment of a classroom, a tailored system of instruction was developed. In order to determine which techniques would motivate students to achieve the desired learning outcomes, these forerunners of modern online education used key principles of instructional design. Instructional design is the systematic process of applying psychological principles of human learning to the creation of effective instructional solutions [5]. In other words, they thought about the decisions that may be made regarding the design and delivery of the educational experience to ensure student success.

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These early advancements in education provided the foundation for modern virtual learning, which also involves a number of other instructional strategies and delivery mode combinations.

Online Education and COVID-19 pandemic

By the year 2020, additional advancements in education will have allowed for widespread use of online learning. Access is a major problem. There are still several issues with this, such as the fact that some areas, especially rural ones, lack Internet connectivity and those different family members have different needs for using home technology. To give students and families the facilities and resources required to participate in and effectively finish coursework^[6], innovative solutions have evolved. For instance, mobile hotspots have been offered by school buses, class packs have been mailed, and instructive presentations have aired on regional PBS stations. The acceptance and availability of electronic materials and activities that can now be incorporated into online learning experiences have both risen in the year 2020. Experts from all over the world can now participate in online classes thanks to synchronous online conferencing tools like Zoom and Google Meet. Presentations can also be recorded for later viewing by individual students at their convenience. Furthermore, innovations like virtual field excursions and virtual labs have been made possible by the recognition of the value of experiential, hands-on learning^[7]. Additionally, the COVID-19 epidemic is expected to have a long-term impact on lesson planning. The pandemic's restrictions gave teachers a chance to think about novel ways to teach particular themes. The experience has provided a rare opportunity to reexamine tactics that best support learning within the affordances and limits of the online setting, despite the fact that reconsidering instructional approaches was forced and hurried. The significance of "seat time" as the basis for educational credits will be questioned in particular when there is more variation in teaching and learning activities. Protracted Zoom sessions are rarely essential for training and are at odds with the psychological theories of how people learn. While forced interactions among students for the sake of interaction are neither motivating nor helpful, interaction is crucial for learning. Although the distinctions between traditional and distance learning have been eroding for a number of decades, the pandemic has accelerated this process. Because of improved infrastructure and developed skill sets that enable people to move between various delivery systems, less single mode and more multi-modal instruction (and consequently more instructor options) are starting to become the norm^[8]. In response to the change to virtual learning, new combinations of instructional delivery have emerged that have been guided by well-established best practises of hybrid or blended teaching and learning^[9]. The use of various delivery methods will probably continue, and it will be a strategy used with students of all ages^[10, 11]. As educators can support pedagogical methods from a menu of instructional delivery options, a combination that has been supported by earlier generations of online educators^[12], future iterations of online education will no longer be constrained by the traditions of single teaching modes. The modifications to how learning outcomes in online contexts are assessed are also significant. By removing assignments and completely modifying assessment methods, many

educators have changed how student achievement is assessed^[13]. These changes include determining how to learn using methods that take advantage of the online delivery mode, such as interactive conversations, student-led instruction, and the use of games to boost motivation and focus. Flexible or extended deadlines for assignment completion^[14], increased student choice in assessment methods, and more authentic experiences that involve the meaningful application of recently acquired skills and knowledge^[15], such as team-based projects that incorporate a variety of creative and social media tools to support collaborative problem solving, are some specific changes that are likely to persist.

Viewpoint

Technology and administrative processes for adopting online learning, as well as the infrastructure that supports its access and delivery, have to fast adjust in response to the COVID-19 epidemic. Although many people still struggle with access, significant resources have been allocated and procedures have been developed to help learners get access to the course's activities and materials, to make communication between teachers and students easier, and to manage the administration of online learning^[15]. The future generation of online learners has a clear path ahead of them as paths for greater access and opportunity to online education have now been built. Prior to the pandemic, the main goal of distant and online education was to give people who couldn't otherwise enroll in a conventional, place-based academic programme access to instruction. Their audiences as well as the larger learning ecosystem have altered as its goal has evolved to facilitating continuity of instruction. When the fear of COVID-19 is no longer a concern, it will be fascinating to examine whether elements of emergency remote instruction continue in the following generation of education. But new audiences will surely be attracted to online education^[16]. The distinction between classroom-based education and virtual learning will likely become even more blurred as a result of the flexibility and learning opportunities that evolved out of necessity.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

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