The Role of Education During and After COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

Education has always been a vital component of societal development and the production of learned citizens globally. This has primarily been achieved through conventional teaching methods within educational institutions. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has created global upheaval, which has changed the way in which education is imparted to students. The aim of this article is to provide a deeper understanding of the changes in education systems, impact on students and determine how the role of education has changed due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, to help the future of education after COVID-19. A systematic review is implemented within this article through a guided literature search. Results have indicated that education systems have undergone rapid transitions from conventional teaching and learning methods to remote techniques, due to the implementation of government 'lockdown' measures. This has allowed education to continue with elements of flexibility and cost effectiveness. However, concerns relating to mental health issues, poverty, examinations, and future prospect remain a concern. The COVID-19 pandemic can act as a catalyst for change facilitating amicable policy implementations, addressing vital issues that create dilemmas and increased disruption within education systems not currently addressed in legislation. Simultaneously, the role and purpose of education remains the same, but with additional responsibility for educators and students. The methods through which objectives are achieved have altered, but change is an element of life particularly as we enter the new normal way of education that will continue to alter until global health risks are alleviated.

Keywords: Education, Educators, Students, COVID-19, Pandemic

Introduction

Education has always been a vital component of societal development and the production of learned citizens globally(Braskamp, 2008). This has primarily been achieved through conventional teaching methods within educational institutions. Traditional teaching and learning have historically taken place routinely through human interaction, face-to-face as it has been deemed as the most effective form of educating students. It has obtained desirable results;thus,methodologies of teaching pedagogies have been implemented within educational

institutions successfully. It is not surprising, as traditional education has altered through history and has been progressing over approximately one hundred years (Somani, 'TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION VS TRADITIONAL EDUCATION: A TRANSITION IN THE 21ST CENTURY – A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW, 2020).Traditional education has fluctuated from educational essentialism and educational perennialism to educational progressivism (Hans & Crasta, 2019). It was expected for students to be placed into groups based upon age and learning abilities. Identical material was dictated to each student, who was then expected to rely on their transcribing andmemorising abilities to attain success. Hence, there was total reliance on observation and listening skills,to carry out manual tasks projected through an educator. It was only in the 19th century, that the initiation of technological advancements enabled schools to utilise technology in 1963 under the vocational education act (Dugger, 1965). Advancements in technology are continuously developing, aiding the problems encountered as a results of the global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

COVID-19is a deadly virus that has "affected two international conveyances, two hundred and ten countries and territories"(Somani, 2020). Transmission occurs when "droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes" (WHO, 2020) and a non-infected person transfers the droplets into their eyes, nose or mouth through physical contact or inhalation(Noi, 2020).To date 25th January 2021,there has been 100,227,054 cases and 2,147,949 deaths globally resulting from COVID-19 (WHO, WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard, 2020). Therefore,on 11th March 2020global leaders proclaimed a public health emergency (NHS, 2020). This consisted of strict lockdown measures and social distancing regulations, learning from historical contexts like the flu epidemics. Although the social distancing measures have been implemented to protect human beings from critical health complications and fatality, many aspects of life have been deeply impacted. The pandemic has given rise to social, economic,and political challenges and created global upheaval, which has changed the way in which education is imparted to students.

Study Objectives

The aim of this article is to:

Provide a deeper understanding of the changes in education systems.

Understand the impact on students resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Determine how the role of education has changed due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

To help the future of education after COVID-19 through recommendations.

Methodology

A systematic review is implemented within this article through a guided literature search. Manual and electronic sources like databases, journals and magazines are searched. The database search includes Google Scholar, Blackwell Synergy, PubMed, Lexis Nexis, and Gateway. Published work and grey literature are identified through using the initial keywords during the identification process: 'Education', 'Educators', 'Students', 'COVID-19', 'Pandemic', 'Education system'. I then continue the process by extracting, analysing, evaluating, and interpreting the existing literature works. As there is an array of

papers identified, the following exclusion criteria is implemented:

Papers irrelevant to education during COVID-19 arenot included.

Literature with a focus on higher education systems only are excluded.

Papers using languages other than English are overlooked.

Older papers with information like newer papers are not used.

Papers with insufficient technical information to their approach are omitted.

To provide a study focus, twenty-seven are shortlisted and through close examination of literature it is found thar five are duplicated hence, not used. After reading the paper abstracts and introductions, one paper is eliminated, the implementation details within three sources are not sufficient thus, leaving eighteen primary studies to be used in this article.

Results and Discussion

Education Systems

Results have indicated that education systems have undergone rapid transitions from conventional teaching and learning methods to remote techniques, due to the implementation of government 'lockdown' measures. The education systems, had to rapidly revise methodologies to enable education to continue, simultaneously break the habitual traditional teaching and learning that students and educators were accustomed to. The pandemic has created immense change within societies, and further transformations within education systems. Human beings are social animals and creatures of habit who are not accustomed to change, resulting in rigidity and difficulties. Education systems have adopted online technological platforms to educate their students. Remote learning was previously used to teach part-time courses within higher education, allowing students flexibilityaround personal life responsibilities and circumstances. However, the pandemic created a rapid transition from traditional education to remote electronic learning. Educational institutions started to use interactive video-conferencing software that enabled live virtual interaction. This created a foundation for effective communication to be administered and the closest to face-to-face interaction where verbal and non-verbal forms of communication could be observed (Somani, EFFECT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON COMMUNICATION, 2020).

Educational institutions have followed a specific design relating to teaching methodologies and assessment, that primarily focused on attaining goodexam results, student satisfaction and student attitude. The journey is initiated through a physical admission process, examinationsthe collation of tuition fees and literary reading material contributing towards institutional revenue. Due to technological progression, globalisation has enabled the movement of finances, allowing students to send finances to education institutions internationally.

The examination process for students involved the physical presence in a quiet examination room under closer educator observation. However, during COVID-19 the examination process has been disrupted nut students are able to complete their exams online. The assessments are inclusive of long or short questions and answers, multiple choice, or visual presentations. They have been recreated aiming to mirror traditional

concepts during the pandemic, but through virtual platforms.

Education systems have had to provide student and educator support through the pandemic. Many have incorporating additional extracurricular sessions relating to health and wellbeing to guide students.Several education systems have had relieve some staff of their duties within the institutions, simultaneously they have also been able to save cost on basic premises needs like cost of electricity and water.Also, during the pandemic many education institutions have not had to provide stationary for their students nor have they had to travel to their institutions to receive or impart education, contributing towards cost effectiveness.

Impact on students

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a notable impact on students internationally, stemming from uncertainties produced from challenging situations.The pandemic has affected more than 1.2 billion children within 186 countries due to school closures (UNESCO, 2020). Not only are students worried about factors relating to obtaining good examination results, but it is also vital for them to have access to internet connectivity to enable continued education. The students and educators must learn to use new technological software and have the appropriate hardware available, prior to receiving the educational material. This can be through various forms like video conferencing and the associated tools like 'chat' functions or 'hand raise', navigating around resources and uploaded documents to gain knowledge.

Research has alluded to the fact that students suffered an element of psychological distress due exam pressureprior to the COVID-19 pandemic. However,stress and anxiety were exacerbated during the pandemic particularly in students with existing mental health issues(Somani, The Impact of COVID-19 on Human Psychology, 2020). This had been largely due to the fears of the unknown and uncertainty of the future. Many students also have an instilled fear of being infected with the virus and the safety of family and friends, which contributes towards negative psychological effects on students.

The social interaction between students has ceased in a traditional sense, leaving students feeling isolated and encountering loneliness. However, the virtual interaction and breakout sessions on videoconferencing software has enabledpeer-to-peer interaction and learning to take place. Remote learning has enabled students to develop theiradaptability and critical thinking skills, although this can be viewed as a positive, the student body consists of individuals who possess different learning styles, and they may endure challenges. This, requires a strong element of self-motivation to succeed within education during this pandemic.

Students have now been given the flexibility to complete their education at their own speed, around other commitments. They can re-visit topics that require further understanding and complete tasks in their own time, thus time management has become a vital element of remote learning. It has also been proven, that students have been able to conserve time and travel expenditure with a cost reduction of 30-40% compared to traditional education methods (DFE, 2018). This has allowed

education to continue with elements of flexibility and cost effectiveness.Despite attempts to save costs, some students face poverty that has affected them receiving quality education due to inadequate technological means or insufficient funding. The pandemic has affected economic stability through which many individuals have lost their jobs, this may include studentthemselves, family members or others who paid tuition fees, resulting in students leaving educational institutions. Therefore, concerns relating to mental health issues, poverty, examinations, and future prospect remain a concern.

Role of education

During the COVID-19 pandemic the role of education has altered slightly due to increased pressure, to provide appropriate support to both students and educators. This is in addition to the transition of education to remote methods. The role of education has remained the same in the fact that, it essentially aims to produce a generation of individuals that can solve current and future societal problems with knowledge, wisdom, ethical values, and principles. This is learnt through the education systems from a young age, towards building a strong foundation towards a prosperous nation. Thus, the role of education has not changed, however the pedagogy in imparting and receiving knowledge in education systems has changed. Change is a dominant part of life; education will continue to evolve,and it is necessary for human beings to progress with the changes of life. The role of parents and guardians during the COVID-19 has been immense, it is through their support that students are able to perform as they usually provide the motivation for students to progress.

During the COVID-19 pandemic there will continue to be rapid changes within society, until immunisation has proved effective and nations are all vaccinated. Although the future needs of society may alter, the role of education outcomes will remain unchanged.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic can act as a catalyst for change facilitating amicable policy implementations, addressing vital issues that create dilemmas and increased disruption within education systems not currently addressed in legislation. Simultaneously, the role and purpose of education remains the same, but with additional responsibility for educators and students. Many disparities have been highlighted within education systems resulting in student inequality and ability. Many students who are not engaged with the learning material and do not have physical or emotional support find education during this pandemic extremely challenging. Remote learning has been proven to increase information retention within a shorter timeframe.Students usually retain approximately only 8-10% of the information in a traditional environment, while remote learning has shown a retention rate of 25-60% (Gutierrez, 2016).Therefore, many changes that have been highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic like the use of remote technology, may become a permanent contemporary form of educating students. Due to the immense change in the world, the importance of efficient and effective communication between the education systems, educators and students has become imperative.

Recommendations

The methods through which objectives are achieved have altered, but change is an element of life particularly as we enter the 'new' normal way of education that will continue to alter until global health risks are alleviated.Therefore, a blended learning method is recommended enabling students to engage not only in remote educational methods, but also participate in human interaction. This will enable educators to identify students who may require additional support academically or personally. Simultaneously,this creates a further element of trust between students and educators and facilitates a journey towards good communication contributing to good mental health. There is a requirement for education systems to devise strategies to help students who will be future workers within nations, to navigate ambiguity through providing emotional, social, and organisational skills. This will enable students who are the future leaders of each country to be well educated and equipped, to act responsibly within times of crisis in the future.

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