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Digital Empowerment in Educational Sector after COVID-19: Issues and Challenges

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ABSTRACT: An immediate and effective response to the crisis was to go digital. Developing robust online platforms has become necessary to offer continuity in learning. Yet in a developing country like India with vast disparity in socio-economic backgrounds of students and the quality of educational institutions, the shift has not been easy. The COVID-19 crisis will have significant implications for U.S. investments in global women's economic empowerment, including the Women's Global Development and Prosperity (W-GDP) initiative, the Development Finance Corporation's 2X Women's initiative, and U.S. investment in the Women Entrepreneurs Financing Initiative (We-Fi). The gender and social norm manifestations of COVID-19 present an urgent need for governments, businesses, community leaders, and decision makers to act. Most importantly, however, the pandemic has affected the job prospects of young professionals and college graduates. Richer countries are better prepared to move to online learning strategies, although with a lot of effort and challenges for teachers and parents. Making this a reality will require dedication within and beyond the halls of our nation's schools. An educational experience is not one-size-fits-all, and schools should support personal experience, family expectations and socioeconomic status. We need to ensure that curricula make sense and at the same time, we need to improve content delivery so students are engaged and retaining information.

I. INTRODUCTION

The structure of schooling and learning, including teaching and assessment methodologies, was the first to be affected by these closures. Only a handful of private schools could adopt online teaching methods. Their low-income private and government school counterparts, on the other hand, have completely shut down for not having access to e-learning solutions. The students, in addition to the missed opportunities for learning, no longer have access to healthy meals during this time and are subject to economic and social stress. The shift to digital learning is troublesome because no one was ready until the COVID-19 took hold. The real factors of the 21st century have changed the way we deliver/access information, share knowledge, and ease learning. The COVID-19 pandemic and its resultant impact on our lives have raised the need to adopt innovative ways of getting education services at all levels. An immediate and effective response to the crisis was to go digital. Developing robust online platforms has become necessary to offer continuity in learning. Yet in a developing country like India with vast disparity in socio-economic backgrounds of students and the quality of educational institutions, the shift has not been easy. The digital divide has been further widening the gap, and needs urgent attention from both public and private sector players as the crisis continues. Good teachers, refreshed curricula and effective tools will ensure students stay involved and active in the learning process.[1] The UNESCO numbers on school closures caused by COVID-19 illustrate the pandemic's overwhelming impact on education throughout the world. At its peak, early April 2020, the nationwide closures of educational institutions were affecting over 91% of the global student population. In absolute numbers, this means that nearly 1,6 billion students in up to 194 countries were impacted by schools being shut down.

Because of its far-reaching impact, the COVID-19 pandemic has given us massive insights into how the role of technology can radically shift to reach 1,6 billion students and how to adapt learning processes in challenging times.[2]

II. DISCUSSION

The coronavirus outbreak has evidently been a sledgehammer blow to our global economy. The pandemic has left stock markets to bleed, hampered supply chains, and triggered a slowdown amounting to massive losses. Lockdowns—a key enabler of social distancing—have challenged the 'business-as-usual' sentiment and forced industries to reimagine, respond, and recover. The education sector, in particular, has been the first of firsts to bolster its digital forms of engagement and reveal innovations to meet the changing needs. Health officials are currently taking steps to prevent the introduction and spread of Covid-19 (Coronavirus) into communities across the world. The pandemic situation is affecting the lives of many students, families [3]& communities. This special collection is compiling stories and solutions from schools around the world doing their best for students.



The COVID-19 crisis will have significant implications for U.S. investments in global women's economic empowerment, including the Women's Global Development and Prosperity (W-GDP) initiative, the Development Finance Corporation's 2X Women's initiative, and U.S. investment in the Women Entrepreneurs Financing Initiative (We-Fi). The gender and social norm manifestations of COVID-19 present an urgent need for governments, businesses, community leaders, and decision makers to act.[4]

Students from private schools and those from urban areas can access high-quality digital learning. But we aren't able to help those from the economically weaker parts in rural areas. There is no plan for them. The Government needs to subsidise phone data and phones for people in rural areas. There needs to be an aggressive push to do this as quickly as possible.

III. CONCLUSION

Professionals across industries are understandably experiencing a lot of panic. Uncertainty when it comes to job prospects is a growing problem in the hierarchy of all companies, regardless of the sector in which they may be. Most importantly, however, the pandemic has affected the job prospects of young professionals and college graduates. Richer countries are better prepared to move to online learning strategies, although with a lot of effort and challenges for teachers and parents. In middle-income and poorer countries, the situation is very mixed and if we do not act appropriately, the vast inequality of opportunities that exists – egregious and unacceptable to start with – will be amplified. Many children do not have a desk, books, internet connectivity, a laptop at home, or supportive parents. Others do. What we need to avoid – or minimize as much as possible – is for those differences in opportunities to expand and cause the crisis to have an even larger negative effect on poor children's learning. High level skills, research and innovation are an integral part of the government strategy to overcome and recover from the current pandemic. The research response to coronavirus (COVID-19) has provided positive lessons across the research pathway and highlighted areas which need improvement. This learning will support the future health resilience of the nation and the ambition to make the UK the leading global hub for life sciences. Student perspectives do play a valuable role in boosting quality and value across the sector, but there is concern that the benefits of this survey are currently outweighed by the negative behaviours and inefficiencies it drives. Universities must be empowered to have the confidence to educate their students to high standards rather than simply to seek 'satisfaction'. [5]

We are therefore asking the Office for Students to undertake a radical, root and branch review of the NSS, which:

- reduces the bureaucratic burden it places on providers
- ensures it does not drive the lowering of standards or grade inflation
- provides reliable data on the student perspective at an appropriate level, without depending on a universal annual sample
- examines the extent to which data from the NSS should be made public
- ensures the OfS has the data it needs to regulate quality effectively
- will stand the test of time and can be adapted and refined periodically to prevent gaming

IV. FUTURE SCOPE

Despite all-time highs for graduation rates, significant education gaps still persist. We have seen improvements in equal access to elementary and secondary education, yet there is still more that needs to be done to increase opportunities for students to attend college by better preparing them for post-secondary education.[6]

We've come a long way since African American students were "separate but equal"—yet while the nation's high school graduation rate topped 80 percent, the 69 percent rate for African American kids is far too low.

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, only about 25 percent of the nation's high school seniors were proficient in math and only 38 percent are meeting adequate levels of proficiency in reading. ACT's annual report on college and career readiness shows that only 5 percent of African American students graduate high school college-ready, compared to the 25 percent national average.

Our focus needs to shift from equal access to education, to equal access to quality education. We must not only ensure that students have access to school, but also that attending is worthwhile. After all, the social and economic returns on investment in today's students will benefit us all.



Graduates of Bowie State University arrive for the school's graduation ceremony at the Comcast Center on the campus of the University of Maryland in College Park, Maryland. Bowie State University is Maryland's oldest historically black university and one of the ten oldest in the country. [7]

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The Quality Challenge

Making this a reality will require dedication within and beyond the halls of our nation's schools. An educational experience is not one-size-fits-all, and schools should support personal experience, family expectations and socioeconomic status. We need to ensure that curricula make sense and at the same time, we need to improve content delivery so students are engaged and retaining information.[8]

We also need to get parents deeply involved.

According to research from United Negro College Fund's Frederick D. Patterson Institute, almost 90 percent of low-income African American parents want their children to earn a bachelor's degree. But these parents simply do not know what they need to do to help their children achieve their educational dreams—we need to help them help their children achieve those dreams. Teacher training and leadership programs can help enable and empower teachers, and, consequently, improve quality.[9]

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