



Remote Learning During COVID-19

Market Research
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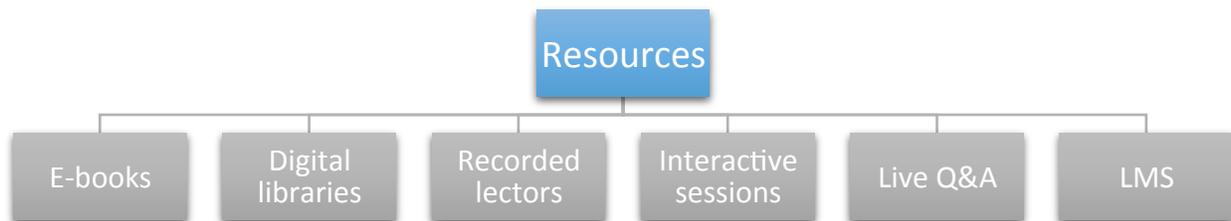
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1. Remote Learning

1.1. What is remote learning?

Remote learning is when the student and the instructor are not physically present in a traditional classroom environment. Information is relayed through technology, such as discussion boards, video conferencing, and online assessments. Remote learning can occur synchronously with real-time peer-to-peer interaction, or asynchronously, with self-paced learning activities that take place independently of the instructor. There are a number of online options available for communicating with students, collecting assignments, and distributing education material (Remote Learning Definition and Meaning, 2020).

1.2. Remote learning resources



There are various types of resources at our disposal as far as remote learning is concerned.

E-books are essential resources in almost every online course. The main advantage of using E-books is the fact that they are portable and provides the flexibility of studying from a computer, phone, or tablet. **Videos and recorded lectures** also offer a convenient way of absorbing a large amount of information in a relatively short amount of time. These can be accessed any time and from any electronic device, thereby, providing the students not only flexibility but convenience as well. Moreover, recorded lectures can be fast-forwarded or rewind. Hence, students have control over the pace of learning. However, challenges exist as far as remote education is concerned, and the biggest of these is how to replicate the face-to-face interaction and in-person discussions that on-campus institutions can easily provide. For this purpose, online learning can employ a combination of **discussion forums and interactive question and answer sessions** as a substitute to face to face

interaction and in-person discussions. The learning resources for remote learning are normally delivered via the institution's online **Learning Management System (LMS)** or learning platform. LMS usually consist of a central online platform that students can access from their personal PC, mobile or tablet (Online Learning - What is it and how does it work? ,2020).

2. Impact of COVID-19 on Education

The global spread of COVID-19 and subsequent lockdown in various countries is having a direct impact on education. The impact on education can be categorized into psychological and financial/economical. Some of the major impacts on education are discussed as follows:

2.1. Psychological health of students and additional stress

The COVID-19 outbreak has disrupted the lives of many people across the world. The rapid spread of the virus worldwide has created a sense of uncertainty and anxiety about what is going to happen. It has also caused a tremendous level of stress among educational institutes, including students. This stress may lead to unfavourable effects on the learning and psychological health of students. Moreover, international students staying far from home are not only worried about their health, safety, and education, but they also have a huge number of concerns for the wellbeing of their families. Students who managed to go home are worried about being unable to return to their respective institutions for further studies. The COVID-19 pandemic may have a serious impact on the careers of this years' university graduates. They are experiencing major interruptions in teaching and assessment in the final part of their studies. They may likely graduate late due to the postponement of the final examination. Further, the graduates are going to face the severe challenges of the global recession caused by the COVID-19 crisis (Sahu, 2020).

2.2. Children missing school

The costs of missing school for the children are enormous. Children learn less and lose the habit of learning. Zoom is a lousy substitute for classrooms. Poor children, who are less likely to have good Wi-Fi and educated parents, fall further behind their better-off peers. Parents who have nowhere to drop their children struggle to return to work. Mothers bear the heavier burden, and so suffer a more significant career setback. Children out of school are more likely to suffer abuse, malnutrition and poor mental health. In parts of Africa and South Asia, families are in such dire straits that many parents are urging their children to give up their studies and start work or get married. The longer

school is shut; the more children are likely to make this woeful choice. (The risks of keeping schools closed far outweigh the benefits, 2020).

2.3. Lower budgets for educational institutes

Recessions and lower revenue collections may force governments to trim school budgets. The outbreak of COVID-19 has disrupted normal life and the economy as we know it. The governments all around the world are expected to face massive budgetary shortfalls as a result of lower tax collections from all funding streams including sales tax, income taxes, property taxes etc. (The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on State Education Budgets - Nafme, 2020).

Government, households, and development partners are the main funders of education. The ability of each group to fund education will be affected by COVID-19 in different ways. Before the pandemic, governments were spending vastly different amounts on education (The Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education financing, 2020). Slowing economic activity will automatically translate into lower levels of tax and other government revenues. These revenue shortfalls, along with increased spending on public healthcare to combat COVID-19, would further fuel budget deficits. Consequently, education budgets will undoubtedly be affected. (The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on State Education Budgets - Nafme, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic will result in a massive income decline for many households. The household income of many families is likely to decline as rates of unemployment rise. Given the global nature of the economic crisis, even homes that rely on remittances are likely to see their incomes go down because of the pandemic. In many households, particularly low-income families, these declines in income will reduce their investments in education (The Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education financing, 2020).

Development assistance for education has only recently recovered from the financial crisis of 2008-09. Aid volume is likely to be negatively affected by the sharp drop in economic growth associated with the pandemic in some of the largest donor countries, e.g. the United Kingdom is one of the largest bilateral donors to basic education. However, the UK economy is forecast to contract by 6.5% in 2020, which could reduce the government's aid commitments by approximately US\$1.4 billion (The Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education financing, 2020).

2.4. Widening education inequality

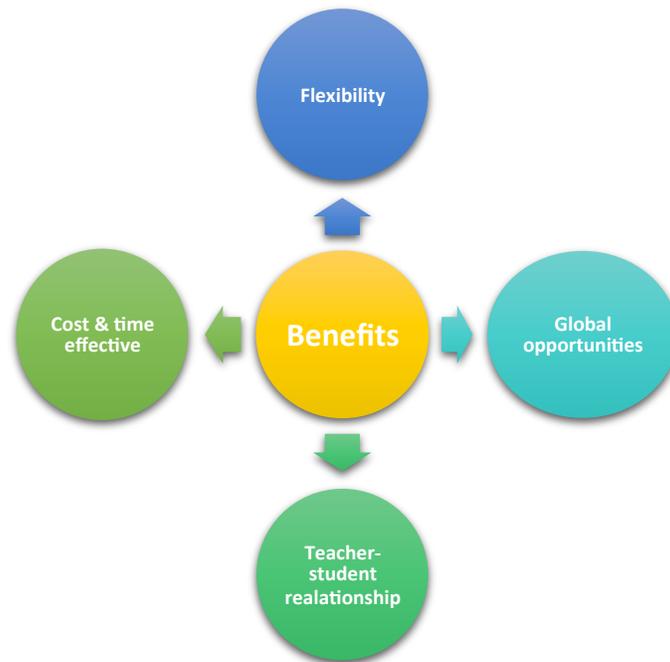
There was a significant gap in achievement between rich and poor students, even before the pandemic. This gap is expected to be exacerbated with the onset of COVID-19, e.g. in Britain in 2018, children from disadvantaged backgrounds were twice as likely to leave school without basic qualifications in English and Math relative to their wealthier peers. After months of coronavirus-induced school closures, that gap has no doubt grown even wider. Most learning has moved online with kids banned from classrooms. The shift has been easier for some than for others. Well-off children, meanwhile, are far more likely to have access to the necessary kit, including laptops and reliable broadband internet access. To reach the learning materials provided, many poorer ones must compete with other family members for access to a sole laptop or use their smartphones. Some must forgo lessons entirely. This is a problem for rich and poor countries alike. The World Bank estimates that, if schools remain closed for five months, pupils will forgo \$10 trillion of future earnings in today's money (The pandemic is widening educational inequality, 2020).

3. Benefits and Challenges of Remote Learning

3.1. Benefits of remote learning

The benefits of remote learning primarily revolve around the convenience factor as students can take classes, lectures, or exams at a place of their choosing. Learning material can be accessed at any time from any location. Furthermore, students can adjust the pace of learning or revisit class discussions or educational content at a time of their choosing. Moreover, remote learning

transcends borders, thereby providing diversity in courses and global learning opportunities.



3.1.1. Flexibility

One of the primary benefits of remote learning is unending flexibility. Remote education allows the learning experience to be tailored to student schedule. It also allows students to study remotely, at a university not in their home country. There is no need to travel to attend lectures and allows the students freedom to direct their own study schedule. The online resource material can also be accessed at the student's convenience.

3.1.2. Learning opportunities beyond borders

Remote learning means that students can study and attend classes anywhere in the world. This provides not only networking opportunities with peers across nations or different continents but also allows students access to expertise that may not be available in a specific geographical area. Therefore, students are free to choose the discipline of their interest, whether within their country or outside and are exposed to new ideas that transcend borders.

3.1.3. Cost & time effective

Remote learning means that commuting to an educational institute is not required. Students can join classes or participate in exams remotely, at a place convenient to them. Therefore, the absence

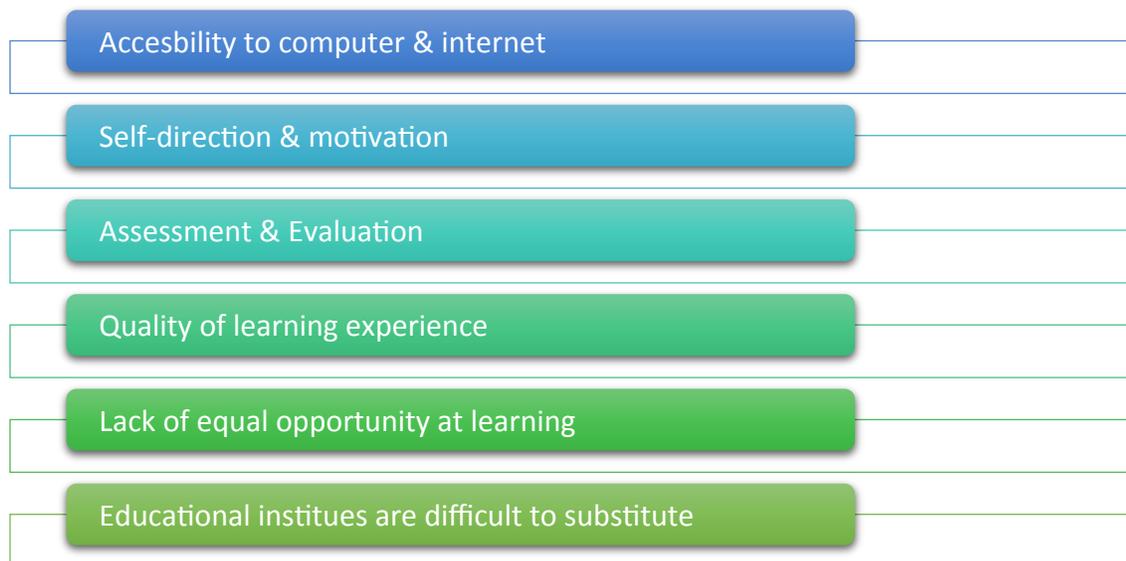
of a commute translates into a lack of spending on transportation. Moreover, the absence of commuting saves the time of both parents and children.

3.1.4. Teacher-student relationship becomes less formal

Breaking down barriers between teacher and student's is one of the by-products of remote learning, which can be beneficial from students learning point of view. The teacher-student relationship is expected to become less hierarchical as remote learning is reducing the typical reserve between instructor and pupil. Teachers who were previously reluctant to give out their contact details, now rely on WhatsApp to respond to students' queries. Students may even call their teachers to ask for feedback (The coronavirus is causing massive disruption to education in China, 2020).

3.2. Challenges of Remote Learning

Numerous challenges to remote learning exist and overcoming these challenges is also dependent upon the quality of IT infrastructure in a country, financial wellbeing of the family and the role educational institutes play in providing a common platform to students and in their soft skills development. Some of the challenges of remote learning are as follows:



3.2.1. Access to computer and reliable internet connection

At home, many students may not have the correct setup, such as books, computers, and high-speed internet connection. Understandably, requiring students to have the technological resources and

support at home needed for effective distance learning programs to work is challenging. In addition, students who do not have an internet facility will suffer a clear disadvantage while participating in the exams or other evaluation processes.

3.2.2. Requires self-direction and motivation

Remote learning requires far more self-direction and intrinsic motivation than in-person learning. For disadvantaged students, who may have to worry about supporting themselves and their families financially, this can be hard to muster (The pandemic is widening educational inequality, 2020). Children are easily distracted, e.g. by online games and require parent supervision while taking an online class. This is especially difficult for working parents.

3.2.3. Assessment & Evaluation

The transition from face-to-face teaching to online delivery has a serious impact on assessments and evaluation. Although technology has been used earlier to support teaching and learning, the assessment aspect is often under-developed. Applying assessments online on those courses designed for face-to-face learning is a challenging task. Students, as well as faculty, are uncertain about the procedure for administering assignments, projects, and other continuous assessments. Faculty members have to change the assessment types to fit online mode. It is difficult to monitor how they are taking it online and to ensure that students are not cheating during online tests and some, e.g. lab tests, practical, and performance tests are not possible to conduct online (Sahu, 2020).

3.2.4. Quality of learning experience

The quality of learning experience is a concern as most students feel that in-person learning far exceeds the remote experience. According to a survey of nearly 1,300 students by the online exam-prep provider OneClass, more than 75% of students think that they are not receiving a quality learning experience. In a separate poll of 14,000 college and graduate students in early April by the website niche.com, 67% said they did not find online classes as effective as in-person ones. (Daniels, 2020).

3.2.5. Lack of equal opportunity at learning

Equity issues are presented by the transition to distance learning. The presumption of every single student having the necessary technology, time, motivation, and support to participate in distance

learning is simply not real-life. Rural and low-income communities have less access to broadband internet access than their urban, suburban, and more affluent counterparts.

3.2.6. Role of an educational institute is difficult to substitute

School closures across the country have also shined a bright light on the enormous role schools play in our children's safety net, e.g. US public schools serve 1.3 million homeless students and almost 30 million children who rely on schools for breakfast and lunch (Seale, 2020). Moreover, educational institutes provide a common platform and conducive environment for students to develop soft skills, e.g. sports activities, debating competition or other extracurricular activities that cannot be held remotely. This not only poses as an impediment to social skills development of students but also affects their physical health and mental wellbeing.

4. Remote Learning During COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is a stress test for education systems around the world. Due to the crisis, 190 countries have faced complete or partial school closures, and as a result, more than 1.7 billion students have been affected. With hundreds of millions of learners forced to stay home, education policymakers are working to ensure that classes continue. Technology is one of the most critical tools to support remote learning when learners need to remain outside of classrooms. With many different approaches being taken by countries worldwide, the COVID-19 crisis is an opportunity for policymakers to learn from each other and co-operate to mitigate the effects of the pandemic (Lessons for Education during the COVID-19 crisis, 2020).

4.1. Austria

Since March 18, 2020, the **public TV station** ORF 1 has been offering a special education program for students at all school levels. Every morning between 6-9 am the program for pre-school and primary school children is broadcasted. Afterwards, the three-hour programme "ORF-1-Freistunde" offers an educational programme for students aged 10+. **Documentaries, informational segments & explanatory videos** are shown, specially designed for this target group. Students can express their questions and needs and contribute with videos and messages. **Learning platforms** like Moodle and LMS are being used, as well as cloud solutions from companies such as Microsoft and Google. The content platform Eduthek, developed by the Ministry, offers learning and exercise material from external providers for kindergarten and pupils of all school levels to practice at home

and to deepen their knowledge. Currently, numerous publishers and providers from schoolbooks are offering some of their content free of charge. The Government is also working on guidelines for distance learning and on a concept for a Distance Learning Service Portal as a single point of entry for teachers and school manager. There is no performance assessment at the moment; assessment will most likely continue when students return to school (How countries are using edtech including online learning, radio, television, texting to support access to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020).

4.2. China

China embarked on what might amount to the largest simultaneous online learning exercise in human history. The Ministry of Education launched an initiative entitled “Ensuring learning uninterrupted when classes are disrupted.” The Ministry of Education partnered with the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology in order to achieve the following (How countries are using edtech including online learning, radio, television, texting to support access to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020):

- i. Mobilize all major telecom service providers to boost internet connectivity service for online education, especially for the under-served regions.
- ii. Upgrade the bandwidth of major online education service platforms in serving millions of visitors simultaneously.
- iii. Mobilize society-wide resources for the provision of online courses and resources. More than 24,000 online courses have been made accessible for university students. Moreover, 22 validated online course platforms, most them empowered by Artificial Intelligence, have been mobilized to provide primary and secondary schools with free online courses.
- iv. Adopt flexible and appropriate methodologies to facilitate learning. Teachers have received guidance on teaching methodologies including through live-streaming of online tutorials and are advised to choose appropriate modes of delivery based on local e-readiness, including online platforms, digitalized TVs or mobile Apps.
- v. Strengthen online security through collaboration with the telecom sector and online platform service providers.

In poor rural areas, where some households lack internet access, instruction by television fills the void. China Education Network, a state-run service, has been broadcasting classes every weekday

from 8am to 10pm. The first lesson of the day is aimed at pupils in the first year of primary school. Programmes for older children air in the afternoon and evening. All core subjects, such as mathematics and Chinese, are covered (The coronavirus is causing massive disruption to education in China, 2020).

4.3. Jordan

The Ministry of Education is providing a daily schedule of TV broadcasts (on the sports channel) in Jordan of lessons for the Tawjihi. Lessons are broadcasted twice, once in the morning/early afternoon, and again in the afternoon/evening. The Darsak educational portal was launched on March 22, 2020, with The Ministry of Education and Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship managing the whole process. Edraak, Jo Academy and Abwab also provided content which included classes/subjects for all grades. The content is displayed on the platform according to a weekly schedule so that the posted content remains available for one week only, and then the next week is presented, and so on. The student can enter the materials at any time, with free browsing of the platform between 6 am and 4 pm (How countries are using edtech including online learning, radio, television, texting to support access to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020).

5. The Future of Remote Learning

Future of Remote Learning

The coronavirus crisis laid bare how ill-prepared most educational institutes had been when it came to remote learning capabilities. Many institutions struggled to get up to speed as classes moved online nearly overnight. Going forward, many educators have said they will incorporate aspects of virtual learning in their approach to teaching. Some schools have already committed to adopting a hybrid model to education in and outside the classroom in the years ahead. For starters, students will likely see smaller classes and staggered scheduling, which could include alternating days of the week or times of the day, to help limit the number of people physically present in a building at any time. As a result, kids will spend much less time in brick-and-mortar classrooms (Dickler, 2020).

As for predictions that COVID-19 will trigger a permanent exodus from brick-and-mortar campuses to virtual classrooms, all indications are that it probably won't. However, digital technologies will transform the learning experience. What is happening currently is that teachers are replicating

classroom training onto Zoom. Therefore, the learning experience is not that enriching as the full potential of remote education is not being realized and this flexible type of learning is complicated for students. However, as we move forward, the integration of technology into education will accelerate along with the creation of customized content for online education. Therefore, in the future, online resources will complement in-person learning rather than substitute it (Daniels, 2020).

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