

Adjusting to Deliver Quality Education in Response to COVID-19

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Abstract: - With school closure across the globe due to coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), students can continue their education through e-learning platforms.

Key Words: COVID-19, Coronavirus, Pandemic, Crises, Outbreak, Education, E-learning.

I. INTRODUCTION

WHO declared the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak, caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), to be a pandemic on March 12, 2020 [1]. In response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, 107 countries had implemented national school closures by March 18, 2020 [1]. On March 18th 2020, the president of the Republic of Uganda, HE Yoweri Museveni in his address to the nation regarding the coronavirus status in Uganda, ordered all schools to be closed by midday 20th March 2020 [2]. Closures of schools are one of the control measures to contain COVID-19 Infection.

With the coronavirus outbreak, people need remote access to work or school for them to continue their classes while their schools are closed. Although the ability to support remote access differ from country to country and from school to school. Higher educations are ready to move teaching and learning online to preserve and continue its educational mission during the current pandemic [3]

Most institutions around the world have started exploring the e-learning approach in response to COVID-19. There is need for this adjustment requiring all tiers of education to respond to a new and evolving strategy in order to have a continuous flow in education process, making education accessible, affordable, anytime and anywhere, mitigating and restraining the effects of any gaps created by any form of disruption in education system.

E-learning is one of the most outstanding educational innovations that offer learners an alternative and innovative learning environment through different platforms [4]. "Higher education institutions (HEIs) have embarked on rigorous programs that promote the use of ICTs for effective contact and online teaching and learning and for developing cognate skills needed to make socio-economic contributions in the knowledge world" [4]. E-learning has been adopted by vast number of HEIs [5,6]. However, there has been a low rate of adoption and implementation of e-learning in HEIs in developing countries [7, 8, 9]. Majority of HEIs in developing countries has not adopted and implemented e-learning [7, 8,

9]. In view of this, the researchers want to identify how education will be delivered during this pandemic in HEIs in developing countries.

II. PROSPECT

COVID-19 has shown how school system in some countries are vulnerable in crises that allow schools to stay at home for prolong period. Such crises have different effect on workers as compared to student. For workers who cannot work from home, will wait till resumption to pick up from where they stopped. However, the case is different from students and teachers. Students and teachers have to establish how to make up lost time in other to cover the curriculum by a set date.

E-learning has started to become a prevailing technology in most higher education institution. Continuing education during crises such as COVID-19 doesn't have to be compounded. All that is needed is to create a simple e-learning platform for the students to interact with their teachers and class mates and to keep up with course work.

Adjusting to deliver education in such situation requires the following:

- Students are required to have computer (smartphone can be alternative).
- Students are required to have Internet access (Cafe cannot be used in case of Isolation).
- Students are required to have access to collaborative tools such as instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms and Net Meeting and know how to use them.
- The curriculum must be flexible enough to allow group projects to be done via collaboration or in isolation

One international university in Uganda has to respond quickly to the school closure by taking the following steps:

- All teachers were contacted immediately and meeting was organized to discuss process and content.
- The process was defined before considering any use of technology
- All teachers developed their course content and placed it on the lecture management system
- The DVC-Academics and all relevant teachers review the content on the lecture management system before releasing it to students.

- The ICT department made the content available on the Internet and the school updates content regularly
- Students were asked to create whatsapp group for each class.
- Teachers gave online assistance through whatsapp and email. Students could get to teachers through phone, email and whatsapp. Students submit their work through email/whatsapp and teachers responds through email/whatsapp.

The faculty collaborated to set up curricula in alternative forms and keep up with student's education. It took only two days to get content online.

Even though this is a short term solution to a serious problem, the school can benefit if it continue the process even after COVID-19 has subsided.

III. LIMITATIONS OF E-LEARNING

The main limitation of e-learning in this context is digital divide. In the above example, in responds to school closure, some lecturers engage their students in other Digital learning management systems and communication tools like; Google Classroom, Zoom, Skype, Google Hangouts Meet. But this cannot be generalized to the entire institution because not all students have access to these tools. There is a large gap between those who have ready access to computers and the Internet and those who do not. Until such gaps in society is closed, online education will not be able to reach all citizens

IV. CONCLUSION

Schools are recommended to do the following in response to COVID-19 outbreak

- Design a system for a crisis that requires students to be isolated for a period of time.
- Ensure that the system allows for all medium of access to the curriculum
- Invest in IT capital to keep students and staff going for a short period of time.
- Prepare teachers to help with content management
- Implement staff development training programs for e-learning
- Adopt and institutionalized more advanced e-learning

All countries should design a system that will allow students to continue their education in response to crisis that requires students to be isolated for a period of time and also offer students contact with their teachers while in isolation. Student can then continue their course work and stay up to date with their teachers and classmates.

Situation such as COVID-19, which requires students to be isolated for extended period, spot out new uses and prospect of e-learning, even at fundamental level. Access to curricula/lecture notes online, by email or other e-learning platforms should become standard practice by institutions.

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