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Teaching During Covid-19

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Introduction

The recent outbreak of COVID-19 has enormously affected every aspect of global arrangements with its fast and lethal reach. Originating from Wuhan, a Chinese city, this highly infectious virus has forced to impose nationwide closures in many countries impacting onsite educational systems to shut down. Considering the safety of students and following the steps taken by many infected countries, the Pakistan government initially closed all the educational institutions and later allowed partial opening of schools where 30-50 % of students were allowed to attend classes in a cyclic manner. The direct and most immediate impact of this decision was an untimely break and loss of learning opportunities for all students.

In order to continue with teaching and learning, Higher education commission, developed online teaching guidelines with the instructions to resume teaching, by following these guidelines. The guidelines included development and implementation of both online and hybrid curricula.

Online teaching-learning is based on application of information technology tools to ensure access to learning resources for all students in the absence of face to face classes. It is conducted in the form of asynchronous or synchronous communication where-in asynchronous system tools like e-mail, discussion boards, learning newsgroups are used. For synchronous system webcasting, live chat and audio/video technologies are used for realtime class.

Hybrid learning can be defined as a learning approach that combines both remote learning and inperson learning to improve student experience and ensure learning continuity.

One of the biggest advantage of both remote learning and later hybrid learning conducted by institutions following Covid-19 pandemic was resumption of educational activities. However, this advantage was associated with many challenges. A few of the challenges are as follows

Difficulties with Student Engagement - One of the main challenge of hybrid learning is the concept of student engagement. It is a challenge to keep both the students who are physically present in the classroom and the students who are learning remotely as engaged as each other, in order to deliver an equal learning experience.

Technical Issues - Another possible problem that can lead to disruption of learning experience is the emergence of technical issues. These can take many different forms, but if members of a class or a course do experience difficulties in this area, it can not only disrupt their own learning, but also the learning of other students. Remote learners could have a range of different technical issues, from sound problems or difficulties connecting to a live stream, through to more complex issues with their computers or an inability to use software that is critical to the course. Depending on the severity, such issues can negatively affect the learning experience.

Problems Facilitating Collaboration - In traditional classroom settings, learners can be physically placed into groups, but this is not viable when some students are learning remotely or in a hybrid setting thus making course delivery difficult.

Challenge to Teachers - Many teachers have a fear of technology and often see a move to hybrid or online learning as a move to replace them as teachers and as a way to diminish the learning experience for students.

Student attendance issues – In an online session teacher can never know how focused/attentive a student is during a session. Or even if the student is there even.

Assessment issues - Lack of training of teachers to develop reliable and valid assessments and lack of student preparation to use the application correctly.

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