WHAT HAS CHANGED IN EDUCATION AND TEACHING DUE TO THE TRANSITION TO ONLINE LEARNING

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For a long period of time the lectures worldwide have been conducted in classes with teachers teaching in-person in their classrooms. Due to precautionary measures taken against the spread of coronavirus, this method of teaching in a very short period of time radically changes to online version. This practice could be seen as a possible silver lining in this situation. For instance, in China, students started learning through mobile apps and it broadcast school classes on public TV for 180 million primary-school students. As for Kazakhstan, universities also transited to online teaching. Despite the overwhelming consequences of the pandemic, this global crisis has also been an extraordinary time for learning. We are learning how adaptable and resilient educational systems, policy makers, teachers, students and families can be. It is due to the pandemic that the need for flexibility and more time for student-teacher interactions have been highlighted and the following changes are to be observed:

The first is the increasing use of technology. During the lockdown, the government used the electronic media to ensure learning continuity for students. Some state governments have been working with media partners to broadcast virtual classes and educational content through their regional channels. This is not only helping students in rural areas with no Internet connection but also visually impaired students. The boost to online learning has huge implications for our ability to scale and provide equitable access to millions of students. Educators, regulators and learners have to change their attitudes and accept that this will complement classroom learning.

The second change is in the increasing use of online tools and technology to enhance the learning experience. Great content is available for free online and can be used to learn from. The classroom can then become a forum for debate, discussion and a deeper delving into disciplines and promote collaboration and experiential learning.

The third change is personalisation of learning. Each student has his/her own pace of studying. While some may need more time others may need more material to achieve the same outcome. Machine learning and Artificial Intelligence coupled with strong data analytics can help customise individual learning paths at scale. The opportunity of working remotely, which allow both staff and students to continue engagement outside the confines of a traditional university classroom.

The fourth change is in making learning equitable, convenient, lifelong and accessible. Many people, not necessarily students, have enrolled for new courses during the lockdown. The fact that you don't need to travel or need to be in a classroom has democratised learning and made it convenient.

Students and staff are able to explore different learning options using technology and other online tools for instruction and learning.

Lecturers and the university administration explored the opportunity for the development of blended learning.

Having said this, colleges and schools do much more than just deliver content and teach. The teachers' ability to engage students in debate and discussion, to mentor and coach and to inspire and motivate is difficult to replicate in the online format. What is also difficult to replicate is peer learning, participation in extracurricular activities and sports, experiential learning and development of emotional quotient and leadership ability. While schools and colleges the way we know them are here to stay, the way learning happens and the way teachers teach is sure to change.