Education and Society in Emergencies: Rethinking and Replanning Pedagogy

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Abstract: Learning should not be stymied irrespective of any disruptions but was learning not hampered during this seismic shift occasioned by the Coronavirus pandemic? The paper discusses i) the impact of COVID-19 on education; ii) the need to promote and meet the learning needs of students and teachers during emergencies iii) learning alternatives as mitigations in emergencies to meet learners' needs; and iv) who should partake in the mitigation-contingency plan process. The study concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic has provided opportunities not only to reconsider educational objectives and interrelatedness between education and society but also to rethink and replan the structure and workings of the x educational system for emergencies in the future.

Keyword: COVID-19, emergencies, mitigation-contingency, replanning

INTRODUCTION

In late 2019, a bizarre happening, COVID-19, traced to respiratory disease occurred in Wuhan, China. Few months after its emergence, the virus cut across many countries and claimed many lives. The intrusion, in a short while, has affected the daily living of humans around the globe[1]. Several measures were rolled out to checkmate the spread of the virus such as lockdown, confinement, quarantine, social restrictions, closure of schools, religious centers and social functions, use of nose masks, and social distancing. These measures, during these dark times, were enforced for total compliance having weighed the consequences of the pandemic. It is observed that both old and young are caught in the web of the pandemic. Morgül, Kallitsoglou & Essau (2020) note that children's well-being was negatively affected by home confinement which has altered their accustomed ways of life[2].

During the pandemic, a continuation of teaching and learning, which is one of the essential needs of teachers and learners, was halted in some countries. Observation shows that learning

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[1] Maya Puspita Dewi and Muh Barid Nizarudin Wajdi, "Distance Learning Policy during Pandemic COVID-19," *EDUTEC: Journal of Education and Technology* 4, no. 3 (2021): 325–333.

[2] Evren Morgül, Angeliki Kallitsoglou, and Cecilia A. Essau, "Psychological Effects of the COVID-19 Lockdown on Children and Families in the UK," *Revista de Psicologia Clinica con Ninos y Adolescentes* (2020).

continued for some students while learning was disrupted for some[3]. To assuage the impact of school closures, urban and well-privileged learners harness the potential of diverse alternative learning resources such as technology but what alternatives were the rural and less-privileged learners left with? Wilson[4] affirms that digital exclusion has thickened the wall of division between the children of the haves and the have-nots in society. This precarious situation has caused those in already vulnerable situations, the rural dwellers and the disadvantaged, a more grievous misfortune than they were before the pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical framework that underpins this study is Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of human learning. Vygotsky[5] explained that learning takes place in two ways. First, through interaction with others (interpsychological) and then incorporated into the individual's mental structure (intrapsychological). Vygotsky opined that social interaction plays a key part in the development of cognition. Second, cognitive development is limited to the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD)[6]. The ZPD is a cogent area to be explored but demands assistance and social interaction to fully mature even if the learner is cognitively prepared. The ZPD happens when students are guided by a more knowledgeable and experienced individual, teacher or peer during learning tasks through social interaction to achieve a task that students would not have been able to achieve independently and easily without others' assistance. Aljaafreh and Lantolf [7] note that the ZPD integrates all areas of the learning environment that facilitate learning: the learner, the teacher, their relationship and shared experiences, and the resources

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The use of digital media buttresses the essence of Vygotsky's social aspect of learning which has sustained educational activities by involving a distributed but intercommunicating audience[8]; enabling dispersed learners to be connected, motivated and independent; and hold the fort for continued learning during COVID-19 disruptions. Collaborative learning and scaffolding are facilitative and supportive strategies that are employed to intentionally develop learners' ZPD during the pandemic. The use of digital learning has shifted the pendulum of traditional learning activities from individual to cooperative performance, social interaction and sociocultural activity which have become the "new normal" of learning.

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[3] Muh Barid Nizarudin Wajdi et al., "Education Policy Overcome Coronavirus, A Study of Indonesians," *EDUTEC: Journal of Education And Technology* 3, no. 2 (2020): 96–106.

[4] Chris K Wilson, "COVID-19, Digital Inclusion and Online Education: APO Digital Inclusion Collection Brief April 2020" (2020).

[5] Lev Vygotsky, "Interaction between Learning and Development," in *Mind in Society*, 1978.

[6] "Pivoting to Inclusion: Leveraging Lessons from the COVID-19 Crisis for Learners with Disabilities," accessed August 13, 2022, https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disability/publication/pivoting-to-inclusion-leveraging-lessons-from-the-c ovid-19-crisis-for-learners-with-disabilities.

[7] James P. Lantolf, Lindsey Kurtz, and Olesya Kisselev, "Understanding the Revolutionary Character of L2 Development in the ZPD: Why Levels of Mediation Matter," *Language and Sociocultural Theory* (2016).

[8] Thakur Kalpana, "A Constructivist Perspective on Teaching and Learning: A Conceptual Framework," *International Research Journal of Social Sciences* (2014).

Impact of Coronavirus Pandemic on Education And Society

The coronavirus pandemic has negatively affected the educational system globally which is greatly felt by students. The worldwide closure of schools has no historical precedent. United Nations asserts that 188 countries have imposed countrywide closures, affecting more than 1.5 billion children and youth. COVID-19 has deep effects on the well-being of children through three main channels: infection with the virus itself; the immediate socioeconomic impacts of measures to stop transmission of the virus and end the pandemic; and the potential longer-term effects of delayed implementation of the sustainable development goals. These effects would be felt in different ways: falling into poverty, exacerbating the learning crisis, threats to child survival and health, and risks to child safety[9]. With the socio-economic divide, the impact of the pandemic aggravates the rural-urban dichotomy; the contrast between private and public schools, the rich and the poor, the privileged and the less privileged [10]. Until normalcy returns to the education sector or learning mitigation strategies are provided, school closure as a means to contain future emergencies may make the haves and mar the have-nots.

The weird scenario where children are restrained from going to school has changed their ways of life, affected their behaviors and emotional well-being, and has negatively affected one of their essential needs which is a continuation of teaching and learning. These have led to psychological distress associated with children's emotional state and behaviors owing to the long-term nature of COVID-19 such as fear of death occasioned by Corona Virus, restlessness, anxiety, sadness, nervousness, boredom, loneliness, sleeplessness, frustration, voracity, loss of appetite and serious concern for family members who left the house [11]. The impact of school closure seems to be severe on the younger students who might prefer the classroom experience through face-to-face communication compared to older students. The negative effects of physical school closure on students' learning and disposition have caused learning loss which could be felt in four ways: a reduced period spent in learning, stress symptoms, alterations in students' relationships and social interaction, and lack of learning motivation[12].

With the wave of the unexpected pandemic, students' and teachers' learning needs, especially from underdeveloped countries, abound. Some physiological and safety needs of both students and teachers which drive their instinct to learn like feeding, health, and personal security were stymied during closures owing to socio-economic disruptions thereby increasing hunger, nutritional deficiencies, security threats, and hindered psychosocial services for learners. These unwholesome conditions would affect teacher's and students' resilience and their dispositions to delivery and acquisition of quality education.

Nevertheless, for the continuation and sustenance of learning, which is one of the needs of both students and teachers, education stakeholders expect that teachers and students should swiftly adapt the 'new normal' education systems. However, the approaches adopted by some countries, rather than ameliorate the gap created by the pandemic, exacerbate the lingering

[9] "UNSDG | Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Children," accessed August 13, 2022, https://unsdg.un.org/resources/policy-brief-impact-covid-19-children.

[10] *COVID-19 and Human Rights: We Are All in This Together, UN Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG) Policy Briefs and Papers* (United Nations Publications, 2020), http://dx.doi.org/10.18356/514718a2-en; Wilson, "COVID-19, Digital Inclusion and Online Education: APO Digital Inclusion Collection Brief April 2020."

[11] Morgül, Kallitsoglou, and Essau, "Psychological Effects of the COVID-19 Lockdown on Children and Families in the UK."

[12] PIETRO Giorgio DI et al., "The Likely Impact of COVID-19 on Education: Reflections Based on the Existing Literature and Recent International Datasets" (n.d.).

educational problems owing to the unequal provision and distribution of learning modalities during closures [13]. Students and teachers who are parochial; ignoramus of ICT; skilled in ICT but lack access to facilities; bereft of proper guidance, training, resources and professional development, were saddled with the responsibilities of employing digital media modalities for teaching and learning process of online delivery in spite these deficiencies. Almarzooq, Lopes and Kochar [14] posit that before COVID-19 pandemic, several virtual learning outlets and social media have been employed in education but dearth of organization, supervision and depth of these outlets serve as hitch in the implementation of educational curriculum.

Emergencies often wreck more doom to children with disabilities in poor countries and homes as these students no longer have access to school which might provide them rehabilitative services such as speech and language therapy, words of encouragement, and physiotherapy of other care rendered. Period of school disruptions could be a trying time for parents of these children as they are expected to function in different challenging capacities; as their teachers and parents. The condition is aggravated if the parents are uneducated or need help from rehabilitation centres for care of supportive equipment and rehabilitation.

Despite diverse proffered learning solutions rolled out by different countries in emergencies, children with disabilities presumably might not have direct access to these solutions because they are likely to be also members of the needy who "do not have the necessary assistive devices or internet connectivity and remote learning platforms (digital, television, or radio) often lack accessibility" . To bridge this gap, countries; governments and education stakeholders need to ensure sustainable learning for children with disabilities through the use of learning devices prepared in diverse and accessible patterns.

Learning Alternatives as Mitigations in Emergencies to Meet Learners' Needs

The learning needs of teachers and learners are achieved during school disruptions through the use of learning alternatives as mitigations in emergencies for varied target population:

1. Learners who have no access to inexpensive learning devices and connectivity at home: it is exigent that these students are empowered, else they risk being digitally sidelined or continue to suffer inequality due to unaddressed underdevelopment-related factors that affect their 21st century specific needs like lack of internet facilities; unstable electricity; digital illiteracy; financial incapability; device possession and repair; and purchase of credit and subscription [15]. The academic needs of difficult-to-reach children are met by investing in and providing solar-powered educational gadgets, distributing educational materials and resources to support home-based learning coupled with lessons and assignment supervised by government-designated personnel. The following are usable for the learners:
   a. printed materials: textbooks, worksheet, reading books coupled with teachers' home visits to check on their learning engagement and progress;
   b. public broadcast television stations and radio: government could use the audio/audiovisual features of these broadcast tools to deliver curriculum contents and actively engage

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[13] *COVID-19 and Human Rights: We Are All in This Together*.

[14] Zaid I. Almarzooq, Mathew Lopes, and Ajar Kochar, "Virtual Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Disruptive Technology in Graduate Medical Education," *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, 2020.

[15] KT Matthew Seah, "COVID-19: Exposing Digital Poverty in a Pandemic," *International Journal of Surgery*, 2020.

learners. Radio/TV programmes on various channels/frequency bands are negotiated, date and time of lessons on air are broadcast earlier.

2. Learners without access to connectivity at home due to financial problem: government adoption of low-cost distance learning technology to reach vast number of populace will require myriad of learning-transmitted approaches that are accessible, available, affordable and known which could be easily learnt, if not known before. They include, but not limited to:
   a. E-mail, mobile phone, digital audiovisual recorders, school-designed websites or blogs in conjunction with their teachers but the intervention of government to secure zero-rated learning sites and applications is needed.

3. Learners with access to learning devices and connectivity at home employ:
   a. digital reading materials; digital teaching materials: e-books, digitalized data; digital tools: smart phones, tablet computers, notebook computers, desktop computers (Keane, 2012);
   b. offline and online learning, learning management systems; online learning applications, online learning platforms [16];
   c. digitalized curriculum;
   d. digital delivery and social media platform; Internet, satellite broadcasting, Microsoft teams, Google classroom, Google Meet, EduPage, Skype, Zoom, Ovoo, WeChat, Telegram, WhatsApp and Youtube[17].

4. Learners with disabilities and special needs: To mitigate the challenges faced by children with disabilities, Inclusive Education Initiative suggests Universal Design for Learning (UDL) techniques to sustain learning[18]:
   a. the visually impaired could be provided with talking book player, radio, print media published in braille and large print, GPS-based navigation device Braille systems for reading and writing;
   b. the intellectually impaired could be provided with easy-to-read version, smartphone with adapted task lists, schedules, calendars and audio recorder;
   c. the hearing impaired could use sign language, video with text highlights or written formats, hearing loop;
   d. screen reader and other accessible web content could be provided for categories of children using supportive technologies;
   e. online learning with different features of video, audio, sound, music and pictures could be provided for different categories of learners;
   f. digital learning systems with instructions and support;
   g. television (with direction of closed captioning, sign language interpretation and audio descriptions of visual materials) .

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[16] Bekithemba Dube, "Rural Online Learning in the Context of COVID-19 in South Africa: Evoking an Inclusive Education Approach," *Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research* (2020); Bekithemba Dube, "Rural Online Learning in the Context of COVID 19 in South Africa: Evoking an Inclusive Education Approach," *Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research* (2020).

[17] Muh Barid Nizarudin Wajdi et al., "Pendampingan Redesign Pembelajaran Masa Pandemi Covid-19 Bagi Tenaga Pendidik Di Lembaga Pendidikan Berbasis Pesantren Di Jawa Timur," *Engagement: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 4, no. 1 (2020): 266–277.

[18] "Pivoting to Inclusion: Leveraging Lessons from the COVID-19 Crisis for Learners with Disabilities."

    h. Other suggested assistive technologies include: talking calculators, word processors, spell-checking programs, optical character recognition system, speech synthesis, speech recognition etc[19].

Who Should Partake in The Mitigation-Contingency Plan Process?

Although, the economy of every country was affected as a result of the pandemic, yet anything that keeps education on the front burner should be prioritized.

1. Government bears the larger responsibility of the financial cost of teachers' involvement and motivation, provision of domestic digital and media operation, provision of adequate learning infrastructure if not available; delivery modality of learning and information to different homes; coordination of activities from the top to individual homes; and feasible policy formulation and implementation.

2. Active participation and support from the government, civil and non-governmental organizations, humanitarian organizations, immediate societies and communities affected, media houses, professional associations of trade unions, educational publishing firms, financial houses, telecommunication agencies, internet service providers, technology industries, partnership and funding platforms; Global Partnership for Education (GPE) etc. and international development organizations like World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF etc. are needed to participate in the abatement plans.

CONCLUSION

The intrusion of COVID-19 pandemic on the daily lives of school children and teachers has dealt a great blow on their psychological well-being and academics which has inhibited their social interaction, social support and stimulation with friends and family members because of home confinement, obstruction in school activities and alterations in their daily living. In spite of these challenges, it is expedient learning continues. During the seismic shift, learning continued for some students while learning was disrupted for some, this caused regrettable setbacks in education sector. To assuage the impact of school closures, some learning alternatives should be employed to meet the learning needs of the learners although these learning alternatives are not permanent replacements of face-to-face classroom teaching. Emergencies faced in the world are not limited to COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, wars and other pandemonium are problems that could disrupt human activities. The effects of the Pandemic are global, immediate and potentially catastrophic, nevertheless, this quandary presents all sincere and well-meaning developing countries an opportunity to rethink, reexamine, and restructure their educational system for prior, during and.

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