Covid-19 and its Impacts on Educational Sector

Partha Chalise*

Kathmandu University, Nepal

***Corresponding Author:** Partha Chalise, Kathmandu University, Nepal.

The coronavirus that was recently encountered from Wuhan, WHO has named the virus a severe acute respiratory syndrome corona-virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The disease caused by the virus has been named coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Till the February 2020 China was the only country mainly affected by COVID-19, but from the beginning of March it started to spread rapidly to South Korea, at the second week of March cases increased rapidly to Italy and Spain including other European countries and at the third week of March to the United States and other countries too [1]. On 11th March 2020 WHO declares COVID-19 outbreaks of a pandemic [2]. As of 7th June 2020, there have been more than 7 million confirmed cases COVID-19, with more than 400 thousand deaths and more than 3.5 million recovered [3]. The latest data show that COVID-19 cases are increasing rapidly in poor and developing countries compared to developed and western countries [3,4].

The education sector couldn't dodge from COVID-19's impact for much longer, resulting in the closures of almost all education institutes for physical presence. Recent modeling studies of COVID-19 predicted that school closures alone would prevent only 2 - 4% of deaths, much less than other social distancing interventions [5]. School closures are based on evidence and assumptions from influenza outbreaks that reduce social contacts between students and therefore interrupt the transmission [6]. Also, Studies of UK children and young people report that the mean number of daily social contacts during school holidays is approximately half that of school term days [7,8], a fact that appeals, perhaps insist, the government to shut the education institutes as soon as possible.

Along with classes, examinations have also been directly affected. Naming, a few international examinations like Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge O Level, Cambridge International AS, and A-Level, Cambridge AICE Diploma, and Cambridge Pre-U examinations for the May 2020 series across almost all countries have also been called off and some exams have scheduled online, if possible.

The global lockdown of education institutions is going to cause a major (and likely unequal) interruption in students' learning; disruptions in internal assessments; and the cancellation of public assessments for qualifications or their replacement by an inferior alternative [9]. The education system is digitally transforming with a lot of trial and error and uncertainty for everyone.

Even a short time in school contributes to the holistic development of a child, even a short period of missed school will have costs for the growth of student's. Considering that can we guess how much the COVID-19 disturbance will affect learning in total? Not that correctly, as it is an unprecedented time, but still we can use previous data in the time of epidemic or pandemic and it suggests that the result is bound to be poor.

As of 24 May 2020, approximately 1.725 billion learners are currently affected due to school closures in response to the pandemic. According to UNICEF monitoring, 153 countries are currently implementing nationwide closures and 24 are implementing local closures, impacting about 98.6 percent of the world›s student population. 10 countries› schools are currently open [10].

In response to school closures, UNESCO recommended the use of distance learning programs and open educational applications and platforms that schools and teachers can use to reach learners remotely and limit the disruption of education [11]. But it is assured that it is not the most viable option for many.

It is also possible that some students' careers might benefit from the interruptions. For example, in Norway, it has been decided that all 10th-grade students will be awarded a high-school degree. Also, the students of Kathmandu University, School of Engineering were promoted to next semester with extrapolation of internal marks, which has made many students happy. Even though it is expected to have a negative impact, temporary, it makes students stress free at this time. Graduates without examination may cause a negative impact in the labor market resulting in experiencing slower earnings growth and higher job separation rates. So, given the evidence of the importance of assessments for learning, schools should also consider postponing rather than skipping internal assessments. For new graduates, plans should support their entrance to the labor market to avoid longer unemployment time.

Developed countries can still switch to a digital platform or use other technological tools to mitigate the effect of COVID19 on the education sector, but developing countries struggle mercilessly. With millions of students out of reach of technology, it is very difficult to even for school and government to take any step. In India, now 6th most affected country by the virus, it is the peak time for the educational sector and board examinations, nursery school admissions, entrance tests of various universities and competitive examinations, among others, are all held during this period have been disturbed, and has no certainty when they will reopen again. As the days pass by with no immediate solution to stop the outbreak of Covid-19, school and university closures will not only have a short-term impact on the continuity of learning for more than 285 million young learners in India but also engender far-reaching economic and societal consequences [12]. In India only in a handful of schools, online classes are imaginable. Most of the students are subjected to economic and social stress, so e-learning is not a viable option. Even concerning, with a major problem like migrant workers, halted economy, starvation, production of test kits, rapid formation of quarantine, and so on, education is not on the top of priority for India as of now. The DIKSHA platform and other online resources, with reach across almost all states in India, can help in the education sector, but the problem boils down to lack of technological knowledge and adequate infrastructure. Addressing the digital divide, suitable reorientation of the curriculum, and empowering a wider cadre of teachers can somehow help India in embarking in digital education media. India is not just going through a reform in the higher education sector, but now it will go through a major transformation in general [13].

India which has the unemployment rate is in higher sight, is now expected to skyrocket. Recent graduates in India are fearing the withdrawal of job offers from corporates because of the current situation. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy's estimates on unemployment shot up from 8.4% in mid-March to 23% in early April and the urban unemployment rate to 30.9% [12]. Other developing countries like its neighbor's Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, etc. are no different, and are struggling with both embarking and adjusting to education online and job losses.

No doubt COVID-19 has smashed the education sector seriously, but along with it, it has also given something encouraging to be hopeful for. COVID-19 has given a wonderful opportunity to switch to a blended learning platform, which would be beneficial to both students and teachers. In the coming days post COVID-19, Blended Learning is predicted to become an integral component of the teaching method. So, it has warned all the countries to assist their technological advancement and be prepared for upcoming digital transformation starting from the educational sector. It further allows all the educational institutions to go through the educational curriculum in this unexpected break and make it up to mark. This was a much-needed thing for students to make sure we don't give them obsolete knowledge, and we should thank COVID-19 for giving this valuable time. Also, institutes can improve learning material and make it student-friendly. Common learning platforms and increase collaborative work are something we should drag out attention towards. Faculty members/teachers can deliver online courses to even students from competing institutions. Collaborations can also happen among faculty/teachers across the nation to benefit from each other [13]. A great number of academic activities will move online and there is an opportunity that some new form of an online conferencing platform might come out as a business model as well by many tech companies.

After all this, one thing is certain that we are going to witness a great educational transformation in the days to come all over the world. COVID-19 has taught us the importance of digital education in this era and has urged all to be familiar with it. Accepting with a hard negative impact, now we should also look towards its optimistic side and be benefited from it, that's how we can turn this curse into a boon, at least in the educational sector.

Bibliography

1. Chalise HN. "COVID-19 situation in Nepal". *Archives of Psychiatry and Mental Health* 4 (2020): 033-034.

2. WHO. WHO announces COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic. WHO, Geneva, Switzerland (2020).

3. Worldometer. COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, USA (2020).

4. Chalise HN and Dhungana HN. "Fears of COVID-19 catastrophe as Nepal reports death from new Coronavirus". *Journal of Physical Medicine, Rehabilitation and Disabilities* 6 (2020): 047.

5. https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642(20)30095-X/fulltext

6. Charlotte Jackson., *et al.* "The relationship between school holidays and transmission of influenza in England and Wales". *American Journal of Epidemiology* 184 (2016): 644-651.

7. K T D Eames., *et al.* "The impact of illness and the impact of school closure on social contact patterns". *Health Technology Assessment* 14 (2010): 267-312.

8. Ken T D Eames., *et al.* "The impact of school holidays on the social mixing patterns of school children". *Epidemics* 3 (2011): 103-108.

9. https://voxeu.org/article/impact-covid-19-education

10. "COVID-19 Educational Disruption and Response". UNESCO (2020).

11. 290 million students out of school due to COVID-19: UNESCO releases first global numbers and mobilizes response". UNESCO (2020).

12. https://government.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/education/covid-19-pandemic-impact-and-strategies-for-education-sector-in-india/75173099

13. https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/featurephilia/story/covid-19-4-negative-impacts-and-4-opportunities-created-for-education-1677206-2020-05-12