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Post-Pandemic Higher Education: Arabic Universities

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Abstract
The COVID-19 pandemic has provided us with an opportunity to consider how we can improve higher education. This study looked at how Arab universities have dealt with the pandemic and how they see higher education after it is over. The study discovered that many lessons learned during the forced adoption of distance education will be used by universities to improve and expand their online learning offerings. This shift will be driven by university investments in distance education as well as increased familiarity with e-learning among students, faculty, and institutions. If face-to-face classrooms do not return, the study predicts that more sophisticated forms of hybrid campuses will be a more appropriate model for the future.

Keywords Coronavirus pandemic, distance higher education, blended (hybrid) learning.

Introduction

The COVID-19 outbreak has had a significant impact on many different aspects of society, including colleges and universities. This has made it difficult to predict the future of higher education. Many students and teachers have had to adjust to new ways of learning. Higher education is changing, and we must reconsider how it is delivered (Zhao, 2020). If COVID-19 has provided us with the opportunity to do so, we should seize it and make long-term changes that will improve higher education.

Educational institutions must now begin educating students remotely at all grade levels and across all subject areas in accordance with COVID-19. Many universities, however, are not taking sufficient steps to get ready for this transformation. Instead, they are employing the identical curricula and course material as they would if they were instructing in person. However, this has resulted in staff and students being overburdened because they must master new software (Allen et al., 2020).

It's unclear at this time if the modifications to the way education is offered online will last or not. After the pandemic is gone, some individuals predict that things will return to as they were before, while others hope that the digital revolution in education will continue. Research in higher education is to foresee the future so that decision-makers can be ready for any potential effects of the pandemic on education (Teichler, 2003). It's critical to keep in mind that the bigger global digital revolution as well as the pandemic are both contributing to the changes we are currently witnessing.

The coronavirus pandemic has caused many challenges for higher education institutions, but it has also led to new ideas about how the sector can be delivered and changed. This article looks at how Arabic universities have coped with the pandemic so far and what changes may be coming in the future.

Research Objectives

The study aimed to address the following objectives:

- To examine how Arabic universities, rank their general success in addressing the additional issues brought on by COVID-19.
- To address the legitimacy of online instruction in Arabic Higher education as a standard method of instruction for all academic disciplines.
- To identify changes that universities have to anticipate and would be seen in the future of higher education in Arabic region.

Research Questions

The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced higher education, and we are investigating how institutions are responding to the crisis. Our research seeks to learn what institutions believe is happening in higher education today and what they hope to see in the future. The study is especially eager to respond to the following inquiries:

1. How would universities rank their general success in addressing the additional issues brought on by COVID-19?

2. Did the Zoom Fatigue highlight the drawbacks of online instruction, or did the pandemic contribute to the legitimacy of this mode of instruction as a standard method of instruction for all academic disciplines?

3. What changes do universities anticipate and want to see in the future of higher education?

The significance and the study importance

Online education can range from a 2-minute phone chat to a 2-hour Zoom-based class or clinical or laboratory session. There are three forms of online schooling. The synchronous, using platforms such as Zoom, WebEx, Microsoft Teams, Cisco WebEx, Google Classroom, D2L, and Edgenuity. Asynchronous learning is accomplished through e-mail, learning management systems, and social networking services. There is also a hybrid (mixture) of the two sorts. The synchronous kind of online education is most similar to traditional on-site learning.

The online courses are separated into four groups based on time distance and number of participants. According to Knowles' paradigm, adult learning concepts such as autonomy, self-learning, and high motivation can be usefully included into programs of young people's online university courses.

The significance and the importance of the current study is addressing the challenges which higher education in Arabic region faced and which must policymakers' response to it as soon as possible to transit to new era of higher education in the area.

Of these challenges; some traditional educators may believe that online learning will reduce educational quality. Many universities still have insufficient internet technologies (IT) resources, which creates a substantial obstacle to implementing online learning. Even traditional telephone and electrical services are still lacking in several Arabic countries, which is exacerbated by the 'digital gap' between urban and rural areas, as well as between low and high-income individuals. Not all of the teaching faculty is computer literate.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive analysis approach as well as documentary analysis. Since the study described the current situation and reasonable it. On the other hand, it used documents as its resources of data.

Background and literature review

Modes of Instruction

Online learning is also referred to as remote learning, e-learning, computer-based learning, web-based learning, virtual learning, tele-education, cyberlearning, and Internet-based learning. All of these words are interchangeable in this article; we will just use the term "distance education."

Teachers can provide material to students in a variety of methods, including face-to-face instruction, blended learning, online instruction, and hybrid instruction. Real-time interactions between students and professors are a key benefit of face-to-face instruction. This necessitates that students be present in person in a classroom, which isn't always feasible. As a result, several approaches

to remote learning have evolved over time, including correspondence courses in the 1800s (Jonassen et al., 2008) and more contemporary courses provided via radio, television, computers, or satellites.

The Internet has altered the way people learn by enabling the creation of virtual classrooms in which students and teachers can interact without physically being in the same location at the same time (Picciano, 2016). Online learning has enabled people to learn in novel ways, such as having access to courses from anywhere, and has also aided those who wish to learn remotely.

There is no single definition of distance education, but it is widely accepted that it entails teaching and learning taking place in different locations, with communication between teacher and student taking place via technology (Moore and Kearsley, 2012). This can take many forms, and with the rapid advancement of technology and online education, the landscape of distance education is constantly changing (Finch and Jacobs, 2012).

Since many adults find it convenient to juggle employment, school, and family obligations, distance education can open up new options for higher education institutions. The relationship between students and professors as well as between students and institutions can be improved with the aid of cutting-edge technology and software (Bell and Fedeman, 2013).

Despite the popularity of online education, more students fail online courses than face-to-face ones. Lehman and Conceiço (2014) state that physical separation, a lack of faculty-student interaction, and a lack of academic motivation are the main causes of dropouts. Blended learning has been developed since there are divergent views on whether fully online learning is effective for students (Means et al., 2014).

There are several advantages to blended learning, which blends the best elements of online and in-person training (Boelens et al., 2015). It is adaptable to the demands of many learners and is flexible in terms of time, place, learning path, and pace. However, the lack of a uniform structure that teachers can use to implement blended learning has drawn criticism (Boelens et al., 2017). As a result, there are wide variations in the ways that various educators and institutions adopt blended learning.

Making sure that degrees obtained through distant learning are on par with degrees obtained through traditional, in-person education presents a problem. Palvia et al. (2018) claim that blended or flipped learning can provide a balance between online learning and conventional, in-person learning. A well-designed curriculum, engaging teacher-student interaction, prepared and fully supporting teachers, etc. are all necessary for effective distance learning. Given this, it is crucial to look into the effectiveness of distant learning when it is used for a brief length of time, as well as how academic staff and university administrators view it.

It is anticipated that this post will help spark a conversation about how to succeed as an online teacher. To ensure that it is compatible with conventional or in-person instruction, new standards, norms, and regulations for remote education need be created (Palvia et al., 2018). Early intervention in the transitioning phase will ensure that remote learning is of higher caliber and more regarded. This essay addresses these concerns and makes recommendations for how the findings might improve how technology is used in education. The study emphasizes the opportunities for and difficulties with distant learning that were encountered during the time of institution closures, which may be useful for the future of higher education.

The Digital Future of Higher Education

In a 2009 paper, John Sener predicted that in the following five to ten years, online education would be widely used. Although there are some barriers preventing the widespread acceptance of online education, he predicted that it will become more widespread in the next years. He anticipated that undergraduate students will be able to use online education to get degrees or certificates in any topic. As online education gains in acceptance, familiarity, and popularity, it is likely to be fully adopted.

In order to forecast future trends in online teaching and learning in higher education, Kim and Bonk (2006) performed a longitudinal survey of 562 college professors. The study discovered that online certification may see massive growth and that blended learning may increase more significantly than only online learning.

Giroux (2002) describes the dangers of switching to online education. He cites the rise of online courses that consist of recorded lectures and slides, as well as a larger market for education as a commodity, as factors that could threaten the need for academic professors if business leaders could oversee courses. According to Giroux, education should primarily serve to advance democratic discourse and the public realm. Similar to this, Head (2020) advises using prudence when using online pedagogy. Burns (2020) also rejects COVID-19's influence on the neoliberal reform of education.

The future landscape of higher education is predicted by a study done by Orr et al. in 2020. Instead of institutional improvements, the study concentrates on how changes in technology and society will affect higher education. It is predicated that changes in the following areas will affect higher education: (a) knowledge and competency requirements for the labor market and social changes in an increasingly digitized world; (b) advancement in didactics and learning theory; and (c) digital technologies that are likely to create new forms of learning and environments for learning.

There are three distinct viewpoints on the future of higher education: economic, educational, and IT, according to the study by Orr et al. (2020).

According to the economic viewpoint, the demands of the labor market will determine how colleges develop in the future. The educational perspective places a strong emphasis on the importance of education as well as the knowledge, abilities, and skills that students need to succeed in the workplace. Technology and digitization are the main topics from an IT standpoint.

The authors of the study Orr et al. (2020) draw the conclusion that all viewpoints must be taken into account to obtain a comprehensive understanding of higher education in 2030. They note that ensuring that everyone in society benefits from the growing integration of digitalization into society is a special problem of the twenty-first century. According to the authors, there will be significant changes in academic programs and curriculum as a result of labor market demands and the consequences of automation, artificial intelligence, and Big Data-based algorithms.

According to Manyika et al. (2017) and the OECD (2017), this dynamic will cause the majority of graduates to switch careers numerous times over the course of their lives, demanding training and new learning to prepare them for the rapid advancement of technology. The trend is toward jobs that call for increasingly sophisticated professional abilities, in addition to social and emotional competencies (Nedelkoska & Quintini, 2018). The number of jobs that merely require technical training and don't require an academic degree also seems to be declining. According to the OECD (2016) and Zenhäusern and Vaterlaus (2017), these professions are routine enough to be automated.

New employment categories are developing as ordinary jobs disappear. It is anticipated that many people will work in jobs that do not yet exist. For instance, a 26% decline in administrative jobs is anticipated (British Council, 2018). The most in-demand jobs in several industries did not exist ten years ago, and change is projected to pick up speed (Kandri, 2020).

Pring et al. (2017) predict that 21 new vocations, such as Big Data detectives, artificial intelligence-based personal-health technicians, digital tailors, and personal-data brokers, would be established by 2030. Although the future workforce may not have many positions like these, every employee needs to be at ease utilizing technology (Orr et al., 2020).

According to the research by Orr et al. (2020), higher education programs may need to reevaluate their learning objectives in order to better meet the demands of students, society, and the labor market. In doing so, they will explicitly link their disciplinary knowledge with fundamental, transferable, and digital abilities.

Technology advancement will require innovation at the institutional and organizational levels to support future learning situations, claim Orr et al. (2020). By 2030, digital technology will have a significant impact on traditional universities in two ways: first, by enhancing the integration of digital technology into current educational processes; and second, by facilitating the creation of new

educational providers and programs that may either supplement or completely replace traditional universities.

The coronavirus shutdown's expected fundamental changes have raised a lot of concerns about the challenges that colleges will confront in the future. By examining how colleges fared during the coronavirus shutdown and what their preferred methods of operation could be, this study aims to provide some answers to these issues.

It is crucial to take into account the long-term effects of this change as colleges continue to implement online learning in response to the COVID-19 epidemic. What benefits does distance learning provide in terms of pedagogy and technology? This study aims to investigate the future of online learning when universities have some experience with it. Previous studies have shed some light on these benefits.

Results and discussions

Given that more and more people are becoming accustomed to online learning, the coronavirus might have a long-term effect on education. The way we teach and learn may never be the same again, which could mean that institutions will never return to their pre-pandemic state. This will have a significant impact on everyone's education, both now and in the future.

It is anticipated that more institutions and students would desire to participate in online education as more people become aware of it. According to research on distance learning, students are substantially more likely to succeed in subsequent online courses if they have already finished one online course successfully. Due to the positive feedback loop created by successful students being more likely to continue their education online, the market for online education grows as a result. This outcome is consistent with what Cochran et al. (2014) and Hachey et al. (2015) found (2013).

The study's conclusions imply that while distant learning is growing in popularity, it is not appropriate for all topics. Distance learning cannot take the role of in-person instruction for disciplines that call for either practical or theoretical knowledge. It can, however, aid in the learning process. Online and in-person learning modes may be balanced by a blended strategy that makes use of more sophisticated educational tools to encourage student connection and participation.

As recommended by Palvia et al. (2018) new standards, norms, and regulations for e-teaching should be created to guarantee that blended learning is equivalent to face-to-face learning. Universities will also need to develop new methods for online student learning assessment in light of the research's findings and broaden existing accountability frameworks.

Accountability and institutional integrity are crucial in the post-COVID-19 era for online education to avoid compromising its quality or defrauding students

by delivering the same content with the same design and evaluation methodologies as in the face-to-face modality. To be able to show that the learning outcomes of online learning are equivalent, accrediting organizations should conduct more thorough audits of the institutions they accredit.

The concepts of learning objectives, evaluation, quality, and excellence will change in the future, according to Gurukkal (2020). "Competence in the future will be e-competence, outcomes will be computational, instruction will be linked to ICT, the evaluation will be online, quality will be related to e-competency, access will be technology dependent, and equity will be a simple jargon," the author claims.

Colleges and universities must develop both their physical and social technology in order to be ready to support the rise of online education, according to Blankenberger and Williams (2020). To adapt to these developments, campus systems can be established or improved for physical technology, while offices for admissions, academic advising, financial aid, marketing, records and registration, and online education can be modified or updated for social technologies. This can necessitate spending on both software and hardware and infrastructure.

Conclusions

Higher education is being significantly impacted by COVID-19 due to a number of factors, including an increase in the use of distance learning by students, teachers, and institutions, the expense of investing in distance learning technology by universities, changes in the needs of students and workers, and the creation and adoption of new learning technologies.

College can be pursued in one of three ways: on-campus, online, or a combination of both. Following the COVID-19 epidemic, it appears that more people will select online learning or a hybrid of both as opposed to traditional in-person instruction. Although not everyone agrees with this statement yet, the pandemic has made it clear that online learning may be just as effective as in-person instruction.

The effects of online education on the financial costs and budgets of higher education must be studied further. Some educators feel that online education can drastically lower higher education prices. Where there are no students, the expenses of operating and maintaining infrastructures are significantly reduced, and most administrators can conduct their tasks online as well. Furniture, energy and water supply, cleaning services, and catering are all significantly reduced. Institutions are no longer compelled to pay the costs of staff and worker travel, as well as travel abroad to bring employees. Cost constraints may enable institutions to enroll a greater number of qualified students. Financial resources are still required to upgrade IT systems and train faculty.

Despite these drawbacks, e-learning is here to stay. Universities will apply a number of the lessons they've learned while being compelled to adopt distant

learning to improve and expand their online learning options. A mixture of the two approaches might be preferable to the widespread use of distance education since, despite its benefits, it can never fully replace in-person instruction. Technology developments are needed in specific e-learning fields, such as interactive redesign for online courses, social e-tools that ensure student participation, and more innovative methods for creating and evaluating online tests.

Significant educational disruptions brought on by COVID-19 may cause higher education institutions to change their minds about online learning. It is believed that this will motivate academic institutions to reconsider how they conduct teaching, putting more emphasis on student needs than purely financial gain. In addition, the pandemic may lead to the emergence of new program majors, which, when coupled with the shifting demands of the labor market, may result in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

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