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How Covid-19 is reshaping teaching and learning

Razia Isaeva
Khazar University, Azerbaijan (Higher Education Reform Expert)

Over the past decades, we have witnessed that exceptional innovativeness of technology has been influencing educational institutions to reconsider pedagogical design of teaching and learning processes. Nowadays the role of ICT in education is even more impressive - due to the lockdown caused by COVID-19 education is provided exceptionally online. Current situation has raised many questions about the modes of education and created challenges for the actors of teaching and learning to provide a prompt response.

Many of the world universities are largely using the Learning Management System (LMS), whereas in the Eastern Neighborhood Countries limited number of universities are utilizing such a system. LMS, as it is defined by McGill & Klobas (2009), provides an opportunity to facilitate eLearning, to store and disseminate educational materials as well as provides a platform for all educational actors to communicate within the context of teaching and learning. LMS in Azerbaijani Universities is an exception rather than a norm, the Personal Learning Environment (PLE) integrated with the social software is even rarer. Few universities have been offering LMS to use it for blended learning purposes. Although some projects were implemented to improve blended learning, there was still a need to enhance it further. For instance, ERASMUS + KA2 CBHE project on Promoting Excellence in Teaching and Learning in Azerbaijani Universities (PETRA) has trained 100s of instructors to use Moodle platform to strengthen their teaching. As a result of this project implemented in Azerbaijan, member universities were relatively ready to lead the online class and provide 'techno-pedagogical design' (Coll, Mauri and Onrubia, 2008, as cited in Engel, Saz and Salvador, 2016) of teaching and learning process and were able to implement rapid transfer to online teaching and learning during the outbreak.

Now when Covid-19 is increasingly pushing countries to have a lockdown, all educational institutions have faced a reality of providing online classes. All universities are mainly concerned to keep students engaged in learning during the lockdown period. In Azerbaijan, one of the most affordable and quick solutions was to adopt MS Teams, as it was recommended by the Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan Republic. Universities were given

short time to arrange some preparations. At Khazar University, for example, all teachers and instructors were provided online tutoring to be able to use the platform effectively. Currently, with some exceptions, instructors teach online classes using MS Teams, which accounts for over 90% of the overall classes. Exceptions are those teachers who provide classes using social software to communicate with students. Some universities in Azerbaijan still use Moodle platform, Zoom and Facebook to contact with students and assist with their learning. The lockdown period has pushed the instructors to use this opportunity to excel their techno-pedagogical skills. They now are quickly progressing with newly acquired digital competence.

Reshaped student learning

The main disadvantage of the virus outbreak is that it caused social isolation. The evidence suggest that socialization is conceived as 'fundamental to cognition' (O'Sullivan, Krewer and Frankl, 2017). From a social learning theories perspective, we develop our complex skills by socialization and interaction (Ala-Mutka et al., 2008). The situation of social isolation has accentuated students' approach to learning thereby progressively turning students into self-regulated learners. However, because learning is a social process (Vygotsky, 1978), students are learning not only from an instructor but also from their peers. Following the perspectives of constructivist and sociocultural theorists, combination of formal and informal types of learning will contribute to student engagement. Along with all its negative consequences, this lockdown time can be used to effectively combine formal and informal learning strategies by integrating LMS with some social software to engage students in their studies.

Nevertheless, student engagement and interaction will highly depend on the quality of an instructor, to what extent an instructor is capable of providing a scaffolding for students to use web technologies for their informal learning (Cigognini et al., 2011). The main challenge faced by instructors is to engage demotivated and disengaged students, who can be involved in social loafing taking an advantage of a situation. To date, universities remain responsible to make certain that their academic staff are 'competent in communication and engaging students (Isaeva et all, 2020). Many questions remain unanswered, and they need further investigation: How well teachers are ready to provide equivalent quality of face-to-face teaching and learning process? To what extent they are technologically savvy to meet

students' techno-learning needs? Will this lead to an increased dropout rate? What else universities should do to motivate students to continue their online learning?

The situation with lockdown has shattered the emotional, psychological, mental states of all actors of the education process. Uncertainty is growing every day. But one thing remains clear: educational institutions should reconsider their strategy to be better prepared for uncertain situation and fitting it to include:

- Recognize the unprecedented role of ICT in education
- Design Personal Learning Environment to provide students with an opportunity to combine formal and informal types of learning
- Invest in developing digital competence of teaching staff

Educational institutions need to recognize the necessity to reshape the mode of teaching and learning and immediately respond to the challenges raised as a result of this situation to be able to meet the needs of digital natives to provide them with meaningful learning.

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