EDUCATIONAL SET-BACKS DURING COVID-19 TIMES: A STUDY AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL A STRATEGIC PACK OF EDUCATIONAL REFORMS DURING COVID-TIMES

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ABSTRACT
The primary purpose of this paper is to highlight the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the education system. More specifically, the paper provides a narrative description of the Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning, in general, and the Teacher Education Program at the institutional level in particular. In addition, lessons, learnt and potential impacts of the pandemic on the teaching and learning landscape, and the diffusion and adoption of e-learning in teacher education is highlighted to devise a Reformational Plan of Action for meeting the challenges of the time. The narrative in this paper is based, primarily on a descriptive Analytical Method in the light of documented analysis and students' perspectives, collected through Qualitative Mode of Research Method. The findings helped in suggesting a plan of action to be forwarded in the form of recommendations as a way forward for a better strategy to be implemented in the Post COVID-19 Scenario.

INTRODUCTION
The global impact of Covid-19 is multifaceted and is clearly reflected in almost all sectors particularly the domain of education. Since the announcement of the virus as a pandemic in March 2020, there has been a plethora of daily reports on its impact on the lives of millions across the world. Along with so many other

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PJAEE, 19 (3) (2022)

concerns, strategizing educational practices as per the needs of the learners also emerged as a dire concern of the time. Accordingly, every country's primary concern was to diminish the spread of the virus and alleviate its effects on the society in general, and the most vulnerable communities in particular. Compared to its small population, Pakistan is one of the countries that were relatively being hit hard by COVID-19. As of 17 June 2020, Pakistan had reported 26,079 confirmed positive cases, 116 deaths and 11,797 recovered cases. Based on medical research, there seemed to be a global consensus among infectious disease specialists and public health officials to limit face-to-face classes as a means of protecting the students and the community at large from the spread of the pandemic.

Background

In response to a potential outbreak in the country, directives were issued to mobilize a national campaign through forming a Supreme Committee for COVID-19, and taking increasingly stringent measures to halt the virus outbreak in the country. Accordingly, the Supreme Committee took strict safety measures, based on which both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education have announced a full lockdown of all public and private schools and higher education institutions in the country since 15 March 2020.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

The primary purpose of this research paper is to:

- highlight the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the education system of Pakistan.

- Provide a descriptive insight of the Emergency Remote Teaching, in general, and the teacher education program at the institutional level in particular

- Discuss lessons learnt and potential impact of the pandemic on the teaching and learning landscape, and the diffusion and adoption of e-learning in teacher education

- Suggest a plan of action to be employed effectively during the COVID Times and after that

Challenges faced by the Teachers at Institutional Level:

Engaging Students

As students were moving towards online learning from traditional classrooms, it became difficult for teachers to adjust to a new learning platform. Teaching online may not influence and engage students for longer periods of time. (Engagement span) emerged as a great hinderance for the teachers during COVID 19 Times. They easily got distracted and lost concentration during live sessions. The fact that online learning has a lot of advantages with respect to tools and interesting platforms to engage students in learning, can not be denied. Teachers tried to include those tools and multiple types of learning approaches such as podcasts, videos (teaching channel, own videos, live classes),

discussions, various forms of text through articles and blogs, different assessment methods (tests, quizzes, assignments and projects) learning activities and collaboration for better learning outcomes.

Time Commitment

If the course content turned out to be thought in person, time commitment emerged as an over overpowering and tiring factor for both the teachers and the learners. It really turned out to be a challenging phenomenon for the teachers to convert those learning materials into effective online format, easily understandable. Assuring an effective lesson planning and workable pedagogical practices was what most of the teachers faces as a challenge. It all led to time management in terms of content dissemination. In terms of submission of assignments on the part of the students, also added extra burden on the teachers. Students delayed submission added extra load on the teachers against delayed response of the students.

Effective Communication

Communication gaps during the online teaching and learning interaction in the COVID 19 Times were a great obstacle on the way to effective learning outcome. Use of polite tone, setting reminders for the assignment and project submission worked efficiently to attain the targets.

Some of the students avoided communication or interaction with the teachers during online learning. In the online mode of teaching and learning, effective communication is the key to stronger learning outcomes but in these times, online teaching without proper pedagogical skills, turned out to be a soul less communication . Without body language, gestures and feedback, students failed to perform well which ultimately led to delayed submissions and extension in dates.

Giving flexibility for the task submission, enhancing on line interaction with the students for trouble shooting, acted as a workable strategy. Many teachers through discussions and brain storming sessions, tried to maximize students. Discussion on practical questions also went a long way towards minimizing frustration of the students. Students, through critical thinking found solutions for resolving   technical issues. In certain cases, through the teachers' involvement, effective communication and collaboration, the learning outcomes were enhanced largely.

Assessment

Assessment, during Pandemic crisis, was the most challenging area of online learning for students as well as the teachers. It added to stress to the learners and the teachers. So whenever there are assignments or projects, teachers might face a lot of questions from the students. Switching over to the online mode of questioning, assessments and quizzes was a big issue of the time. Lack of homework, assessment modes and lesser quiz load were the issues of the time

which ultimately led to difficulty in testing area for the students' enhanced learning.

The proficient teachers through efficient modes of teaching and learning, helped the learners to overcome the issue gradually.

Timely Feedback

Every student needed timely feedback for error identification and correction aiming at improvement. Teachers found it difficult to give timely feedback to all students individually. Due to time restraints, majority of the students could not get benefitted from the feedback mechanics. Teachers didn't find proper methods of providing feedback to all the students.
Personalized guidance remained as a missing gap amongst the students.

Learning Management Systems

Lack of effective Management system, posed a tough time to the teachers and learners. Teachers experienced a hard time in explaining their content to the students. There had been problems with the students in terms of understanding the course contents , practical work and assessment .The effectivity of learning , the outcome of one to one mode of learning, remained as a missing gap throughout .Strong management system and web technological enhancements to boost pedagogical and leaning patterns emerged as an area of Improvement. For both the teachers and learners to work upon.

Fear of Cheating

Fear of cheating during online exam , assignment submissions and quizzes was one of the major concerns of the teachers during COVID 19 times. In order to enhance the reliability and integrity factor during exams in the online teaching and learning practices, different educational institutions adopted different methods. Use of web cameras during exams and reshuffling of quizzes worked effectively to minimize the chances of cheating in the exams.

Technical Issues

Many learners and teachers struggled with technical issues that were unavoidable and added to stress during class times. At times, due to those technical issues, teaching and learning processes were obstructed badly. In certain cases and scenarios, the students, belonging to remote places and rural areas had faced these problems during examination which was a great concern. Different educational institutions tried to provide Technical Support Services well. Upgradation of the computers and the systems with the appropriate app supported by high-speed internet connection worked as a trouble shooter during those hours of trouble in the hours of COVID 19.

EDUCATIONAL SET-BACKS DURING COVID-19 TIMES: A STUDY AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL A STRATEGIC PACK OF EDUCATIONAL REFORMS DURING COVID-TIMES

PJAEE, 19 (3) (2022)

Alignment of the Course Contents

In the online classroom teaching and learning practices, the course contents were not rightly aligned due to sudden and unpredictable shift. The course contents were designed earlier with respect to traditional mode of classrooms interaction. But with the shift to online learning, it required redesigning and re-structuring of the course which could test the students' learning as per the changed mode of teaching and learning. In the online mode of learning, online content related activities were a big gap. Aligning the course contents with the learning outcomes and the modes and means of teaching emerged as a big gap to be bridged up.

Challenges faced by the Students:

Adaptability

Students found it difficult to adapt to an online learning environment immediately after traditional classroom learning. Due to the sudden change, they are not able to adapt to the commuter-based learning. Students who had always been studying with the traditional classroom mindset were not able to focus on online platforms and there were multiple factors behind that. Embracing the change was very much important on the part of the learners. The modern era is an era of adaptive learning, using Artificial intelligence to adjust the content according to individual needs. It helps in providing personalized courses to identify their weaknesses and strengths for better learning outcomes.

Technical Issues

Many students were not well equipped with a high-speed internet connection that was required for online learning. Due to that , they faced problems in going live for virtual learning and other platforms that required internet connections and gadgets . They faced technical issues as they were not much aware of technology and computer applications. Mostly, attending the class was also linked with a high-speed internet connection. There is a possibility of poor connectivity if you find difficulty in downloading some information related to the subject, blurred videos, etc. Different educational institutions, during the COVID 19 times, tried their best to ensure Technical support to facilitate the system and shoot the trouble at the earliest.

Computer Knowledge

Lack of computer education is a major concern in today's world. COVID 19 times turned out to be the best times of realization and identification of one's own ICT literacy level and understanding. It proved to be the best stage for many of the learners to learn more about online teaching and learning skills, to get a basic know how of the computer literacy. Due to deficient computer skill, many of the students, even did not know how to resolve , issues , related to online teaching and learning practices. They found it difficult to resolve issues created during live sessions, usage of appropriate icons, MS office,

EDUCATIONAL SET-BACKS DURING COVID-19 TIMES: A STUDY AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL A STRATEGIC PACK OF EDUCATIONAL REFORMS DURING COVID-TIMES

PJAEE, 19 (3) (2022)

communication-related apps and websites, browsing study materials, submission of assignments and quizzes etc.

Time Management

In many cases students fond it hard to manage their time with online learning. Online learning was something entirely new for the students and required intensive work and adaptability. They needed a scheduled planner to manage their time in an effective manner. Online learning provided flexible timing unlike traditional classrooms. But some of the students faced difficulties in adjusting to time required for online learning.

Time management was the most important factor in online learning. It needed time and effort for better learning outcomes.

Avoiding Distractions

In the online teaching and learning interaction, students and the teachers faced multidimensional distractions which slowed down the pace of learning process By maintaining privacy in terms of place and learning space, distractions could be avoided. Access to the smarter means of learning by adopting smarter tools and methods. Adopting to the SMART means of learning, some of the learners, for attaining better learning outcomes, followed different methods:

- prepare a list of activities on an everyday basis.
- break down large activities into smaller ones
- establish the routine that can facilitate time management practices easily

Seeking & Extending Help

During COVID times, seeking and extending help phenomenon worked excellently well. Students adopted this policy and succeeded in attaining their targets. To manage time during online learning, the learners, in order to avoid any miss out, sought help from their parents, friends, teachers and families.

Avoiding Multitasking

Do not try to take up multiple tasks at the same time. Complete one task at a time as it can make your work less effective and productive.

Self-Motivation

Students start losing hope once they find difficulty in online learning. It requires motivation to complete tasks and engage students with their learning. Lack of motivation is a common challenge for all students.

Involve Yourself

You should show up for all the activities and learning during the sessions. Make sure that you log in every day, check for the status and appear in all the sessions

and discussions. Connect with your friends and teachers for asking and sharing information.

Scheduling Time for Learning

You have to stick to a study plan for effective learning. Take a break and resume back to learning with the same interest and enthusiasm.

Staying Positive

Make sure that you are positive towards online learning. Make use of the time in the best way and gain knowledge for better learning outcomes.

Overcoming the Challenges

Learning from home, turned out to be an amazing experience. You might expect things around you to be like a school campus. But at the same time, at home, things are different. For example, you might want a massive classroom, parks, playgrounds, canteens, friends, teachers around you to guide and learn. But with online learning, you have to manage everything in one room with parents around you and some other distractions. You can easily be distracted by small things at home.

You should inform your parents and friends about the time of online learning so that there is no distraction from their side. Restrict the study area for others to come during live sessions and video calls. Make sure you relax in the breaks, set in the time table. In this way, you will concentrate on learning and spend quality time with your friends and family.

Learning Styles

Most of the students learn in the physical classroom. Online learning can make you adapt to different styles of learning. There are some students who can adapt to these styles quickly but what about the students who need time? In such cases, they lack concentration, inability to understand the live classes, difficulty in creating projects and assignments using technology.

To get better learning outcomes, it is important to understand the learning styles. You can learn through interaction, visual presentations, audio classes or written notes. Follow your own learning style that helps in enhancing your learning experience.

COMMUNICATION

Students lack effective communication skills during online learning. Teachers give assignments for improving reading and writing skills but there is a possibility that they might not be able to write so convincingly that educators understand the concept behind their assignments. There are some students who feel shy in communicating with their teachers and friends due to the new model of learning. It might happen due to lack of interest, poor technological skills

EDUCATIONAL SET-BACKS DURING COVID-19 TIMES: A STUDY AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL A STRATEGIC PACK OF EDUCATIONAL REFORMS DURING COVID-TIMES

PJAEE, 19 (3) (2022)

with apps and video calls or unable to express themselves via live chats, emails or text messages.

You should be aware of the importance of communication for better learning. (Encourage the students to interact) Online learning enhances your learning experience. It provides a platform for communication and interaction with others. In this way, you are able to learn from them and improve their knowledge and skills. If you have any issues in communication, then seek help from teachers and friends. Ask them tools that can help you improve your communication skills. You read, write and interact for better communication.

Timely Feedback

Feedback is an important element in teaching and learning interaction. It helps the learners in improving their abilities and bridging up the gaps by working on their weaknesses but unfortunately, it could not be materialized that efficiently during COVID Times. Timely feedback was not provided to the students which added to the learning gaps. Research reveals that the students hardly reviewed their assignments to check teachers' suggestions and comments provided in the online work. Personalized Teachers can give your personalized guidance for improvement and identify your weaknesses and strengths. You can improve your learning pattern based on the feedback. Unless you receive feedback from teachers, there are chances of less improvement in your learning.

LITERATRURE REVIEW:

• In response to the spread of COVID-19, a new coronavirus, many U.S. schools have implemented remote learning. This approach to education can prevent students from experiencing setbacks during school closures. However, some schools do not have enough resources to provide learning opportunities for students, and not all children have internet access at home. Schools that can implement online learning equitably can improve their approach if they follow the guidelines of reputable organizations such as the International Society for Technology in Education.

• This is a time of rapid change for college campuses. Moving to online instruction, adapting to remote student services, and implementing new procedures with no time to pause or reflect has been a common mode of operation over the last six months. Ensuring that this transition is done with accessibility in mind has been the consuming work of professionals who work and interact with college students with disabilities.

• Students with disabilities have experienced difficulty across a wide range of areas in the transition to remote education. These barriers are, in almost all cases, reported to have created more frequent difficulties for students with disabilities than that experienced by the general student population. • In the transition to remote disability services, providing documentation of a disability and discussing new access barriers and solutions were among the top issues. • Students with disabilities at two-year public institutions have experienced the most widespread difficulties across remote education and services. © 2020, The Association on Higher Education Page | 2 and Disability, Huntersville, NC USA

EDUCATIONAL SET-BACKS DURING COVID-19 TIMES: A STUDY AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL A STRATEGIC PACK OF EDUCATIONAL REFORMS DURING COVID-TIMES

PJAEE, 19 (3) (2022)

• Professionals working with students with disabilities have also faced challenges in transitioning to remote operations with greatest difficulty reported in receiving technology support and communicating with faculty about inclusive course design. Campus ADA coordinators report encountering difficulties more frequently than other professionals. Several promising practices are emerging including increasing collaboration, diversifying communication strategies with students, expanding outreach services, and modifying office procedures.

• The whole educational system from elementary to tertiary level has been collapsed during the lockdown period of the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) not only in India but across the globe. This study is a portrayal of online teaching-learning modes adopted by the Mizoram University for the teaching-learning process and subsequent semester examinations. It looks forward to an intellectually enriched opportunity for further future academic decision-making during any adversity. The intended purpose of this paper seeks to address the required essentialities of online teaching-learning in education amid the COVID-19 pandemic and how can existing resources of educational institutions effectively transform formal education into online education with the help of virtual classes and other pivotal online tools in this continually shifting educational landscape. The paper employs both quantitative and qualitative approach to study the perceptions of teachers and students on online teaching-learning modes and also highlighted the implementation process of online teaching-learning modes. The value of this paper is to draw a holistic picture of ongoing online teaching-learning activities during the lockdown period including establishing the linkage between change management process and online teaching-learning process in education system amid the COVID-19 outbreak so as to overcome the persisting academic disturbance and consequently ensure the resumption of educational activities and discourses as a normal course of procedure in the education system.

• COVID-19 has presented a period of unprecedented challenge for schools in the United States. Thousands of school buildings across the country were closed in the spring of 2020 through the end of the school year to slow the spread of the global pandemic. Plans to reopen schools in many states remain uncertain as the virus continues to spread across communities. Current and future challenges are complex, with significant impacts on the global economy, health care system, and overall well-being. When schools reopen, students will present with a wide variety of academic and social-emotional needs, and schools will need to mindfully adjust systems and practices to meet the needs of their unique student population. This paper provides educators with suggestions on how to adapt existing multitiered systems of support using a trauma-informed lens to support students during this unusual time.

• Due to COVID-19 majority of the public and private institutions around the world went to lockdown for an unknown end. One of the most important sectors, which faced trouble was education, hence many universities and academic institutions have shifted to online learning via various platforms to make their academic year going. Tishk International University as one of the private universities in Sulaymaniyah has conducted different online platforms

to survive academic year. Students' perception toward online education became a great question to be answered during the coronavirus period. Secondary data were collected via questionnaire based on Likert Style, and the results showed that, minor majority of the answers were satisfied in term of experiencing online education, which is considered as accepted because it was first experience. Moreover, even though 40% of them were happy about online education more than half of the respondents received lower than what they have expected.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has become a critical challenge for the higher education sector. Exploring the capacity of this sector to adapt in the state of uncertainty has become more significant than ever. In this paper, we critically reflect on our experience of teaching urban design research methods online during the early COVID-19 lockdown in the UK. This is an exploratory case study with a qualitative approach with an aim to inform resilient practices of teaching in the face of public health emergencies. Drawing on the experience of teaching the Research Methods and Techniques subject during lockdown, we discuss the rapid transition from face-to-face to online teaching and point to the challenges and opportunities in relation to the learning and teaching activities, assessment and feedback, and digital platforms. This paper concludes by outlining some key considerations to inform the development of more adaptive and resilient approaches to online teaching in the context of unprecedented global health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. We argue that it is critical to move beyond fixed pedagogical frameworks to harness the productive capacities of adaptive teaching.

- In the Netherlands, the 2019 coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic had a significant impact on daily life, with two extensive lockdowns enforced to combat the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. These measures included the closure of bars and restaurants, and the transition from face-to-face to online education. A survey was conducted among Dutch pharmacy students and PhD-candidates to investigate the impact of COVID-19 lockdown on alcohol consumption, hangovers, and academic functioning. The analysis revealed a significant reduction in both quantity and frequency of alcohol consumption during the COVID-19 lockdown periods. This was accompanied with a significant reduction in hangover frequency and lower hangover severity during COVID-19 lockdown periods. The distribution of scores on academic performance showed great variability between respondents: while some participants reported impairment, others reported improved performance during the COVID-19 pandemic, or no change. Women reported that significantly more time investment was associated with maintaining these performance levels. Consistent among participants was the notion of reduced interactions with teachers and other students. Participants who reported more hangovers and most severe hangovers before COVID-19 benefited from the lockdown periods in terms of improved academic performance. Positive correlations were found between study grades/output and both the frequency and severity of hangovers experienced before COVID-19, suggesting that heavier drinkers, in particular, improved academic performance during the lockdown periods. In conclusion, COVID-19 lockdowns were associated with a significant reduction in both alcohol consumption and experiencing hangovers, which was, among heavier

drinkers particularly, associated with significantly improved academic functioning

• The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has adversely affected economy, social life, and educational services all around the globe. Medical colleges and universities are facing challenges to provide quality education to their students during this prolonged period of lockdown. Technologically advanced countries have systems in place for e-learning and online medical education. This is not the case with most of the low-income countries like Pakistan. Here, we describe the challenges being faced by medical faculty members and students in Pakistan while engaging in online medical education during the COVID-19 pandemic. These include lack of faculty training and institutional support, internet connectivity issues, maintaining student engagement, online assessments, and problems with understanding the unique dynamics of online education. A collaborative approach involving all stakeholders, intuitional support, use of free online training resources, and out of box thinking can help overcome these challenges.

• E-learning has become the mandatory component of all educational institutions like schools, colleges, and universities in and around the world due to the pandemic crisis of COVID-19. This deadly situation has flipped out the offline teaching process. E-learning provides an effective teaching method that brings out the best in students. To find out the student's attitude towards e-learning, primary data has been collected from national and international wise through Google forms which include the student community from various schools, colleges, and universities. This research paper aims to study the E-learning process among students who are familiar with web-based technology. It also helps to find out solutions to improve the self-study skills of students. The stratified sampling method has been adopted in this study and the sample size is 175 across the world. The findings of the study reflect the impact of E-learning, students' interest in using E-learning resources, and their performance. In conclusion, this study shows that E-learning has become quite popular among the students all over the world particularly, the lockdown period due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

METHODOLOGY /SURVEY:
Qualitative Research Method was adopted to collect data. The findings helped in suggesting a plan of action to be forwarded in the form of recommendations as a way forward.
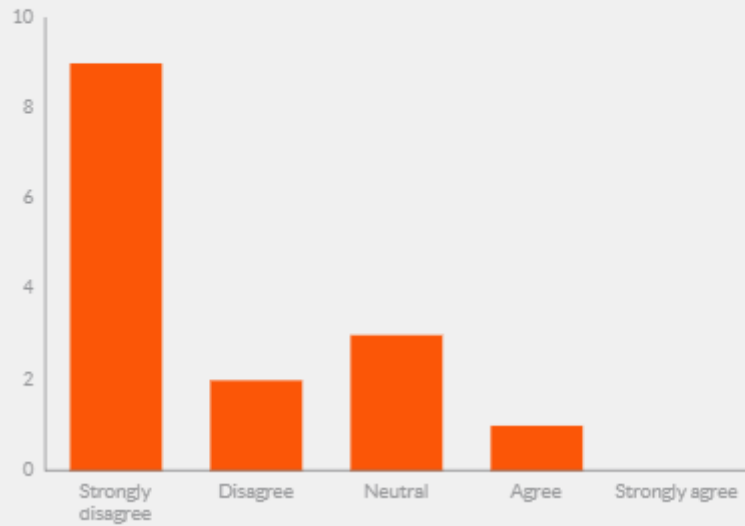
1. Our Education System has created a huge gap among the nation and even has deeply penetrated into the cultural veins of the nation.
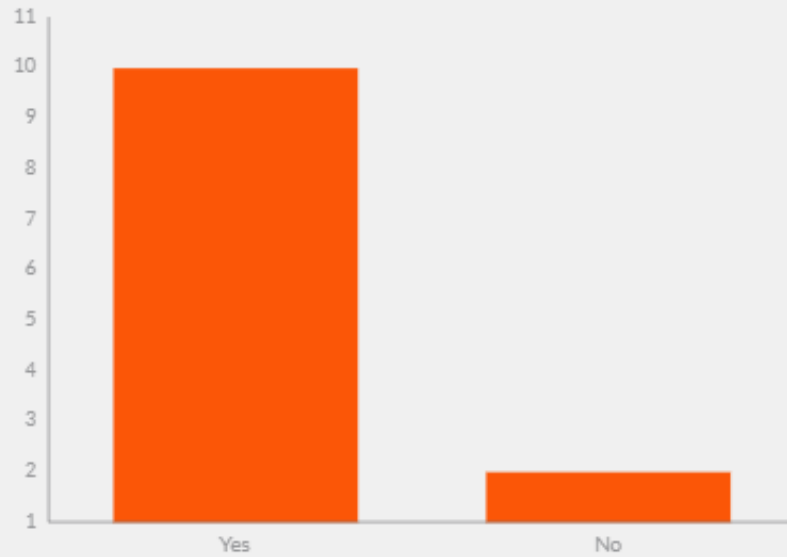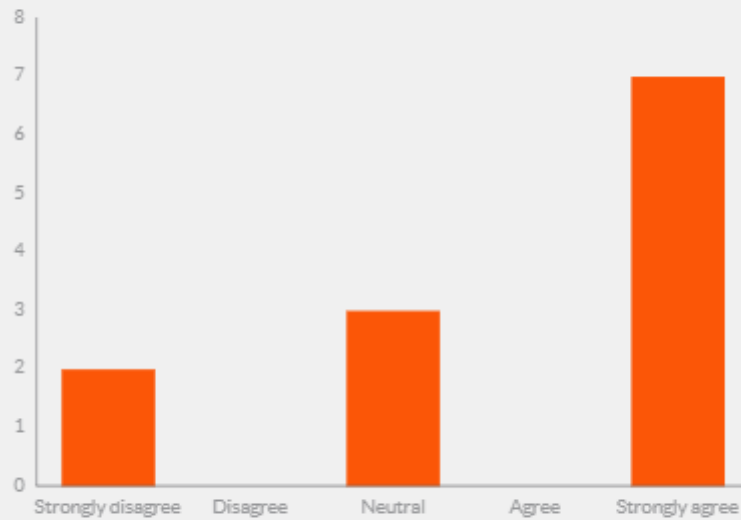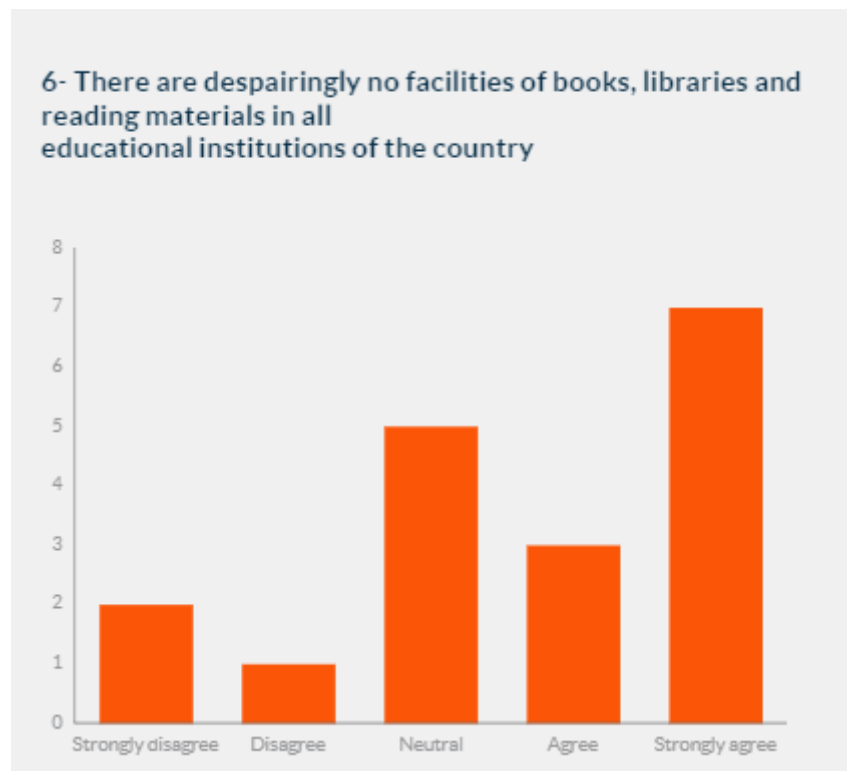

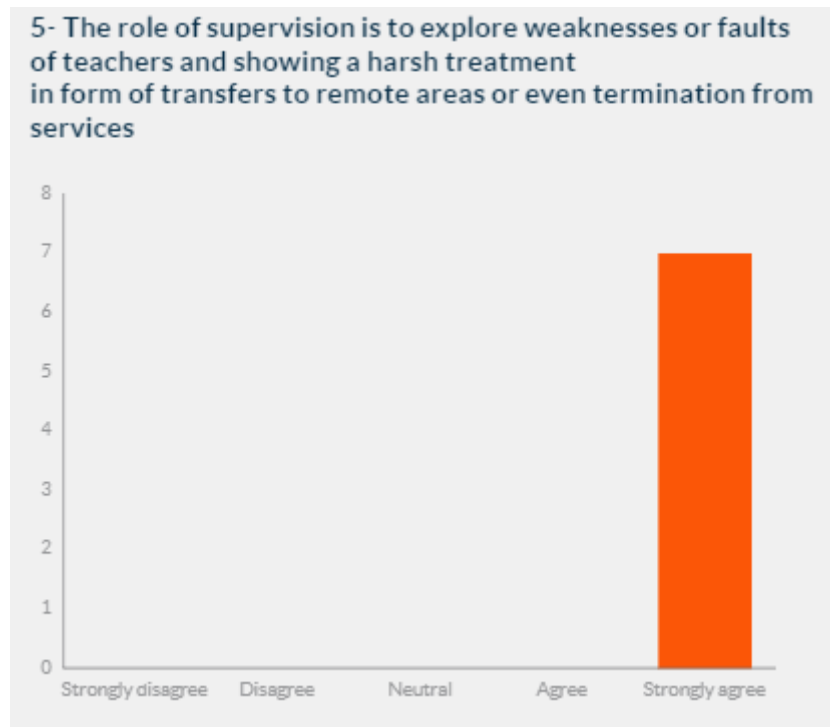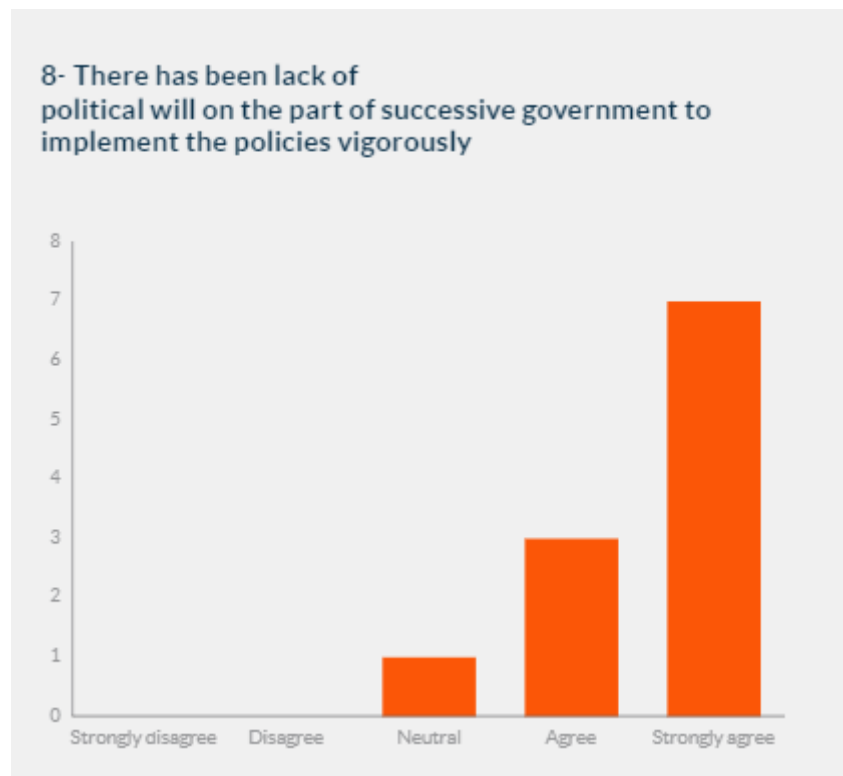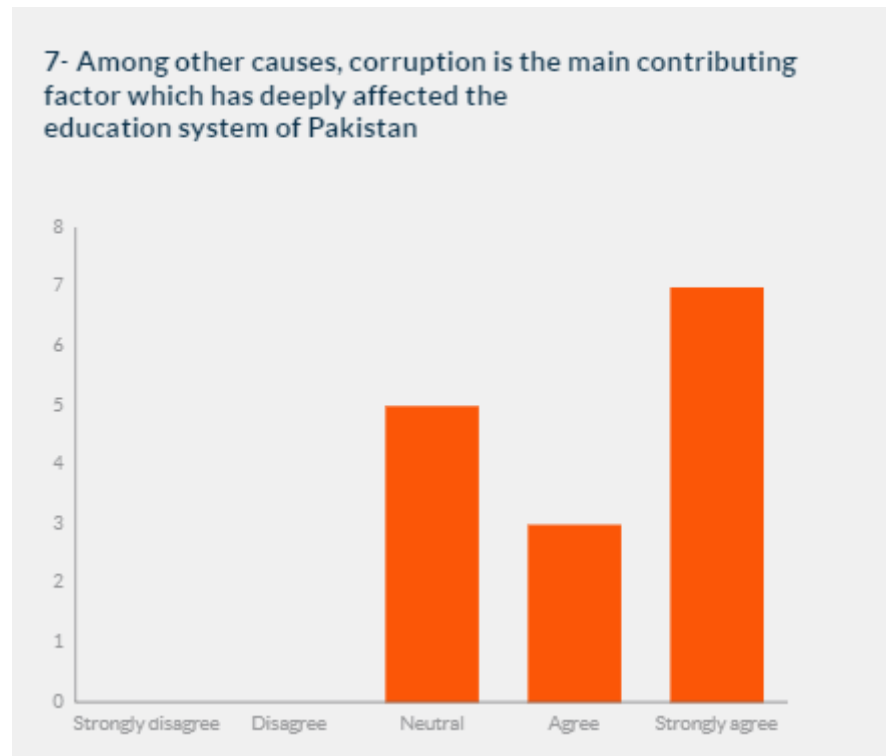2- The quality of teachers in Pakistani schools is deplorable.
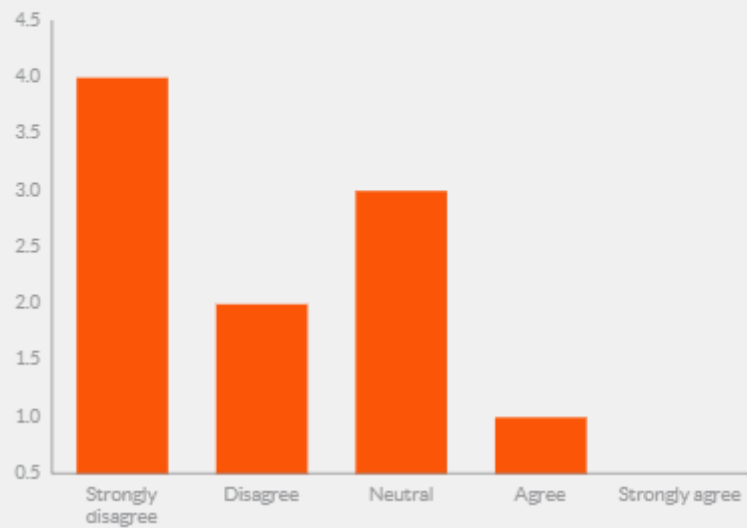
3- Due to lack of effective management of schools there is lack of discipline in schools and other educational institutions which leads to high scale dropouts of students.

4- Examination is the evaluation of student's learning

1415

EDUCATIONAL SET-BACKS DURING COVID-19 TIMES: A STUDY AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL A STRATEGIC PACK OF EDUCATIONAL REFORMS DURING COVID-TIMES

PJAEE, 19 (3) (2022)

5- The role of supervision is to explore weaknesses or faults of teachers and showing a harsh treatment in form of transfers to remote areas or even termination from services

6- There are despairingly no facilities of books, libraries and reading materials in all educational institutions of the country

7- Among other causes, corruption is the main contributing factor which has deeply affected the education system of Pakistan

8- There has been lack of political will on the part of successive government to implement the policies vigorously

9-Education system in Pakistan is not free from external and internal influences

10- The examinations are influenced by external and internal forces which have encouraged
the trend of illegal practices such as unfair means.

Findings/ Lessons Learnt:

- Majority of the students 93 -95 agreed with the idea that Educational System during COVID 19 times has created a big gap in the Educational System of educational Pakistan.

- Majority of the students, expressing their views about Educational Standards, expressed their concern.

- Majority of the students agreed with the idea that the ineffective management added to discipline issues in the online teaching & learning pedagogical practices

- Inefficient management in the online teaching ad learning practices led to an increase in the dropout rates.

- Educational institutions need to be facilitated in terms of educational material i.e. books, libraries and educational material

- Need to enhance political role and contribution in policy making and implementing procedures.

- Unfair means during online examination should be controlled and monitored strictly.
Need to adopt strict measures to control copying and use of unfair means in the online teaching

CONCLUSION:
- COVID-19 has been a real test for higher education institutions around the globe in terms of their readiness, flexibility and adaptability in responding to similar global crises.

- It served as an effective "change agent" for promoting rapid adoption of E-learning at classically change-resisting institutions.

- The forthcoming normalization of the current emergency E-learning does not necessarily mean extending the limitations faced upon face-to-face schooling, but rather, it refers to strategies that frame the prevalent adoption of online learning under COVID-19 as a pathway to a new conventional rather than an emergency response. Although Emergency Remote Teaching has been initially introduced as a safety and security measure to protect the community, it will eventually change the learning landscape in both schools and higher education institutions.

- It is important, therefore, to reflect on the lessons learned from the current experience so that higher education institutions will be better prepared for a possible extension of the emergency e-learning through the upcoming fall semester. Examples of these learned lessons include, but not limited to:

- Students' equal access to e-learning environments should not be taken for granted. It is essential that student's needs and technical profiles be carefully assessed in advance for a better learning outcome.

- It is still early to assume that e-learning is the only viable alternative to replace face-to-face teaching. Live interactions among students and teachers would still need to be catered for in online environments.

- The assessment of student's performance in online environments remains to be a challenge to both instructors and students, particularly the assessment of practical skills, technical competencies and teaching practicum. It is important, therefore, to incorporate various types of alternate assessment methods and relevant online rubrics.

- Although digital literacy skills appeared to be a crucial prerequisite for the instructors to teach online classes, the need for faculty training in instructional design is becoming an increasingly critical training need. In order to reduce the burden from faculty members, this can be provided in a form of embedded electronic support systems in a form of readymade templates.

The global lockdown of education institutions is going to cause major (and likely unequal) interruption in student's learning; disruptions in internal assessments; and the cancellation of public assessments for qualifications or their replacement by an inferior alternative.

What can be done to mitigate these negative impacts? Schools need resources to rebuild the loss in learning, once they open again. How these resources are used, and how to target the children who were especially hard hit, is an open question. Given the evidence of the importance of assessments for learning, schools should also consider postponing rather than skipping internal assessments. For new graduates, policies should support their entry to the labor market to avoid longer unemployment periods.

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EDUCATIONAL SET-BACKS DURING COVID-19 TIMES: A STUDY AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL A STRATEGIC PACK OF EDUCATIONAL REFORMS DURING COVID-TIMES

PJAEE, 19 (3) (2022)

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